

February 12, 2019

Chairman Wilborn and Members of the Senate Judiciary

Testimony Reference SB77

Thank you for the opportunity to share our support for SB77 regarding service provision for children exhibiting problem sexual behavior.

The Children's Advocacy Center of Kansas (CAACKS) is the State Chapter member association representing the 16 nationally accredited Child Advocacy Centers (CAC) in Kansas. In 2017, Kansas CACs provided direct services to 4,573 children ages 0-18 following a report of abuse. Seventy-five percent of these cases involved sexual abuse. In a report compiled by the National Children's Alliance, in 20-25% of cases handled by Children's Advocacy Centers (CACs), youth or children under age 18 have acted out against another child.<sup>1</sup>

Youth with problematic sexual behavior (PSB) are a diverse population of children and adolescents who have, for a variety of reasons, engaged in problematic sexual behavior. To help decrease the likelihood of these children exhibiting further problematic sexual behavior, it is paramount to ensure immediate access to evidence-based services for the youth and the family. Best case scenario is to have access to a therapist with specific training in PSB.

Children's Advocacy Centers have an interest in addressing this issue and serving children and youth with problematic sexual behavior, their victims, and families. There are several CACs in Kansas currently able to provide expertise and therapeutic services and other CACs are interested in advancing their services once they have the proper training. Kansas CACs are already working in partnership with the Department for Children and Families and law enforcement. With guidance of informed multiple disciplinary teams, both policy and professional responses to problematic sexual behavior of youth can be coordinated through collaboration among agencies.

In addition to services being available for children with PSB, we are also in support of the provision of services denoted in SB77 for the child's family. Often times the child victim of a child exhibiting PSB is a sibling, relative or other child living in the home. Parents and other adults in the home need to understand the risk and protective factors for children with PSB in order to provide proper guidance and close supervision, in addition to teaching accurate information about children's bodies and respectful behavior.

SB77 brings focus to a critical issue facing some children in our Kansas communities and we, again, support the actions this bill addresses. We would request one minor change to the bill under Section 1 (2): replace the words "sexual abuse" with "problem sexual behavior".

Thank you for your time and consideration.

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1. National Children's Alliance 2015 statistical data submitted by Children's Advocacy Center members.