
PROVIDING TRAINING TO CACS

READINESS GUIDE FOR STATE CHAPTERS



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INTRODUCTION

State Chapters have been in a period of rapid growth and development over the last several years. Perhaps you have been at a conference or in a collaborative meeting and learned about an exciting initiative another Chapter has undertaken that sparked your interest. Amidst the generosity of idea sharing, many Chapters learn about and wish to pursue projects that run a spectrum—from the next right step to a step that will overrun their current capacity.

Southern Regional CAC has designed a series of readiness guides to assist CAC state Chapter organizations in conducting reflective self-analysis before committing to any one specific statewide project. These readiness guides are not intended to be used together or to build upon one another. Rather, they are designed to address the implementation of specific, standalone state-wide initiatives. Our hope is that these guides will help you grow your capacity to prepare for the initiative you wish to undertake, or perhaps help you understand when an initiative may not be the right fit at your current stage of development. To develop the guide, we consulted with several Chapters that have experience providing training to Children’s Advocacy Centers (CACs) in their state. The guide is built on the wisdom and insight they shared with us. Each of these readiness guides was also reviewed by our national Victims of Child Abuse Act (VOCAA) partners and include the Midwest, Northeast, and Western Regional Children’s Advocacy Centers; National Children’s Advocacy Center; National Children’s Alliance; Zero Abuse Project; and the National Native Children’s Trauma Center.

Wherever you find yourself on the spectrum, your Regional CAC is here to help your Chapter grow and evolve to meet the emerging needs of the CACs in your state—and, ultimately, to ensure survivors of child abuse in your state find hope and healing.

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HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

This guide starts with why and why not. We believe the best initiatives are always grounded in the why, and we also believe understanding why not may help you weigh the choice about whether to proceed with becoming a provider of training for your Children’s Advocacy Centers (CACs).

Next, you will find a checklist that asks you to answer a series of questions. These questions are centered around items it would be wise to consider before undertaking this initiative. Answer the questions as accurately as you can, because they will serve as key components for evaluating your readiness.

Following the checklist, you’ll find information that explores those central components—or readiness focus areas—with a description of what you may want to consider. You don’t need to answer *yes* to every item on the checklist in order to pursue becoming a provider of training, so we have designed the descriptions to help you weigh each area’s importance. In addition, we have included a guided reflection section at the end, so you can reach out to your Regional CAC for assistance moving forward.

Finally, we hope you don’t review this readiness guide alone. This guide will be most useful if you use it with a committee, workgroup, or team. You may want to consider including key staff at your Chapter, representatives of CACs in your state, and board members. Becoming a provider of training to CACs will impact your Chapter staff, board, and membership for years to come, so including them at the onset of the project will help you evaluate undertaking this role.

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WHY CHAPTERS PROVIDE TRAINING TO CACS IN THEIR STATE

At one point or another, your Chapter will likely encounter a training need. In the case of some Chapters, local CACs originally met this need themselves, but, once established, the Chapter began to coordinate and provide training as an economy of scale. For others, a substantial need was identified, and the Chapter was the most natural fit to meet that need through training.

The need to advance practice, disseminate up-to-date information, and grow and deepen the CAC/multidisciplinary team (MDT) model exists in every state. In many places, the state Chapter is an ideal entity to facilitate these goals through a training program. The National Children's Alliance Standards for Accredited Chapter Members include a standard devoted to the provision of training and technical assistance. Many Chapters see training as central to their mission to support the CAC model in their state.

Providing training as a state Chapter can address unmet needs, enhance consistency of service provision across the state, position the Chapter as a leader and authority on the CAC/MDT model, and ultimately improve the response that child victims of abuse receive in your state.

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WHY CHAPTERS DON'T PROVIDE CERTAIN TRAININGS TO CACS IN THEIR STATE

Most Chapters provide some training in their state, even if that training is simply an introduction to the CAC model. However, many Chapters make a decision to focus their limited resources in other areas, such as public policy, awareness, or assisting communities in starting new CACs.

In addition, there are other entities that provide training and technical assistance to CACs, multidisciplinary team members, and child abuse practitioners. Regional CACs are dedicated to providing training and technical assistance to MDTs, CACs, and Chapters in their respective regions across the country. Furthermore, many states have governmental agencies or other state-level organizations that are charged with and/or funded to provide similar services. It is common for Chapters to establish a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) or similar agreement with these entities to coordinate efforts and avoid duplication of services.

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TYPES OF TRAINING

Chapters generally provide training in a few different areas. The first and most commonly provided training for many Chapters is training on the CAC/MDT model. As Chapters work to support the growth and development of Children’s Advocacy Centers, educating communities and stakeholders about the CAC model is key. This is a good place to start in the provision of training for your Chapter. Remember, you can work with your Regional CAC to develop this training content, if needed.

As your Chapter continues to grow and evolve, you may provide training in the areas below. Each has its own set of considerations, and Chapters should weigh these considerations as they make a decision about whether or not to provide this type of training. When referenced in the guide, the type of training will be in bold.

1. Discipline-specific training

Because CACs are a multidisciplinary model, Chapters may receive requests to provide training with an array of professions relevant to the identification of and response to allegations of child abuse. Chapters can provide training for what may be in-house functions of a CAC—forensic interviewing, victim advocacy, mental health provision, and medical treatment and evaluation. Chapters may also provide training to the disciplines that constitute the MDT—prosecution, law enforcement, Child Protective Services, medical and mental health providers, and other victim advocates.

2. Conferences

One way to provide a wide variety of training to a large group of attendees is to host a conference. Some Chapters host statewide conferences as a way to widely disseminate best practices information, new research, and inspiration to CACs and their MDTs.

3. Customized local trainings

CACs have an array of training needs, some of which can be met by bringing training to a local community. Some Chapters may offer strategic planning, staff retreat facilitation, or localized team training for CACs in their state. Of all the training types, this type of training often relies heavily on facilitation skills and requires a degree of sophistication in the structure and delivery of these offerings.

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ITEM	YES	NO	DON'T KNOW
Did membership request this training?			
Is the Chapter able to measure the effectiveness of this training?			
Will this training be the only one of its kind in your state?			
Do your CACs have capacity to engage with the training initiative?			

Did membership request this training?

Sometimes CACs request training, and sometimes the Chapter identifies a need and develops a training initiative to meet that need. There is no right or wrong way to initiate a training project, but beginning a training initiative that is Chapter-identified often requires more groundwork. First and foremost, CACs need to understand the reasoning behind developing the training initiative, particularly if there is a strong need for the training from a statewide perspective. Secondly, the Chapter must foster a shared vision for what can change because of the training.

Remember, NCA Standards require you to assess training needs from your CACs on a regular basis.¹

Is the Chapter able to measure the effectiveness of this training?

Oftentimes, a Chapter is developing a training to evolve practice in some way. Because Chapters may devote substantial resources—time and money—to a training initiative, it is important to know if the training is actually producing the desired results. Methods of measuring effectiveness can range from simple to sophisticated. For example, you might measure forensic interview peer reviews by question coding, which can be done by hand by a person trained in forensic interviewing. Or, on the more sophisticated end of the spectrum, you could partner with a university to develop a tool or even a study that measures effectiveness. Many Chapters use

¹ Training and Technical Assistance Standard, Essential Component A. Standards for Accredited Chapter Members. National Children's Alliance, 2020 Edition.

the Outcome Measurement System to make a case for and assess the impact of their trainings. Sometimes it is very difficult to measure effectiveness, especially for **customized local trainings** like staff retreats or MDT retreats. For those trainings, it is a good idea to get clear on the goals of the training up front. It is always wise to consider measuring effectiveness early on, as doing so will help the Chapter understand the impact of its efforts.

Will this training be the only one of its kind in your state?

In the nonprofit world, where resources are scarce, funders often ask about duplication of services. However, it is not uncommon for Chapters to encounter concerns over the quality or availability of a training offering from a partner agency, resulting in CACs asking the Chapter to take on a training initiative that may, on the surface, appear like a duplication of services. Some questions you may want to consider when creating a training initiative already offered by a partner agency or MOU:

- Why have CACs asked you to create this offering?
- Have you met with the organization that already provides this training to encourage them to improve the quality or availability of the training?
- Is there a way to partner with them to increase the quality or availability of the training?
- If the Chapter is going to pursue creating their own unique offering, how will this be communicated with the partner organization?

Sometimes a Chapter is able to offer training in a more timely, affordable manner. Sometimes a Chapter is well-positioned to provide a training that is of higher quality than that which is currently available. However, it is wise to thoughtfully consider all these points before devoting time and resources to duplicating an offering. We encourage you to communicate with your Regional CAC to ensure a healthy partnership in provision of training to CACs and MDTs in your state. There is more need than any of us can meet alone, so partnerships can leverage resources to meet a wide range of needs in the field.

Do your CACs have capacity to engage with the training initiative?

There is only so much learning that can occur at one time. A Chapter who has successful training initiatives may be inclined to continue adding relevant trainings upon request and identified needs. However, you may want to ask yourself what volume of training the CACs can handle. Your Chapter trainings, in combination with those available by NCA, Regional CACs, and partner organizations, may stretch the capacity of CAC staff members to integrate learning in a deep way. One of the best ways to assess this is by directly having a conversation with CACs in your state to understand their capacity to engage with additional training.

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STAFF CAPACITY

ITEM	YES	NO	DON'T KNOW
Does the Chapter have the capacity to dedicate adequate staff time to the initiative?			
Does the staff or consultant providing the training have appropriate subject-matter expertise?			
Is the staff member or consultant providing the training equipped to use effective learning modalities for adult learners?			
Has the Chapter developed a plan to support the professional development of the staff member or consultant providing the training?			

Does the Chapter have the capacity to dedicate adequate staff time to the initiative?

It is easy to underestimate the impact a training initiative will have on staff capacity, especially when you are putting in the energy to make it as effective as you can. For any training initiative you are contemplating undertaking, remember to consider the time it takes to plan for, develop and design, facilitate, and follow up after the training. Ensure this includes administrative time to schedule all of the logistics, travel time for the Chapter team (if applicable), and managerial time to supervise the initiative, as well as the time commitment of the person conducting the training.

The Chapters participating in the workgroup for this guide typically started with 0.5–1 full-time equivalents focused exclusively on training, and they all grew their capacities over time.

In addition, you will want to think about the potential future growth of the initiative. A training may start as a small initiative, but it can grow significantly over time, moving from something requiring a part-time staff member to requiring multiple staff members. Once you take on an ongoing initiative, you set a ball in motion that may grow and take on a life of its own without careful planning and consideration.

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Does the staff or consultant providing the training have appropriate subject-matter expertise?

It is uncommon for a person running a Chapter to have the capacity to be a good manager and leader and to facilitate the range of offerings a Chapter may engage in over time. In addition, you may find it challenging to hire a person who both is an effective trainer and has the administrative skills necessary to coordinate a training. Marrying skillsets is difficult when it comes to this area of Chapter focus, and you often need to be creative about how you fill those different roles. It is vitally important that the Chapter utilizes individuals with subject-matter expertise when providing **discipline-specific trainings**. After all, you want to promote best practices in MDT members' wide variety of intersecting disciplines, and you want a trainer who can relate to the professionals they train. Some Chapters utilize contractual trainers for this reason, as it may not make sense to employ a person full-time.

One Chapter participating in the workgroup uses training partnerships with trainers from member centers or from partnered entities in state government. (If you utilize trainers from other member centers, be sure that you are also communicating with the member center's Executive Director and that they approve of the arrangement; otherwise, this could create conflict between you and the other center. The Executive Director should be a part of all discussions around this issue.) Potential trainers have to apply, sign an agreement, and be onboarded to participate with the Chapter in this way. However, the Chapter continues to invest in their professional development. Some ways to invest in professional development are:

- Supporting attendance at professional conferences
- Shadowing other trainers inside or outside the state
- Taking classes in instructional design
- Coaching or mentoring from a seasoned trainer

Is the staff member or consultant providing the training equipped to use effective learning modalities for adult learners?

Chapters that participated in the workgroup for this readiness guide shared that they all wished they had known more about learning modalities for adult learners when they began their training programs. An effective learning modality has a significant impact on how information is learned and retained, and, once again, you want to make sure your investment of time and resources is worthwhile. If you—or a consultant with whom you are partnering to deliver training—aren't familiar with the term *learning modalities*, this is likely an area of focus or growth for your Chapter.

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Has the Chapter developed a plan to support the professional development of the staff member or consultant providing the training?

Growing the professional competencies of a staff member or consultant providing training is an essential part of establishing a training program at your Chapter. In particular, growing facilitation skills is of critical importance: how to craft an agenda, manage a room, adapt to various learning styles, and give effective feedback. Many Chapters have found that one of the most helpful ways to grow these skills is to create opportunities to learn from other trainers. Having strong peer and mentor relationships will grow these skills over time.

In addition, the trainer's supervisor should set aside time to help the trainer prepare for training, to periodically observe that trainer in action, and to debrief after the training occurs. Participant evaluations should be designed to gain useful insight into the student experience, and they should be included in the debriefs. It may also be useful to record the trainer and have them complete a self-evaluation using the footage of their work. A simple debrief structure can include self-analysis of strengths and challenges they encountered, as well as a supervisory assessment of these.

If you need help thinking through professional development for staff, reach out to your Regional CAC.

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RISK MANAGEMENT

ITEM	YES	NO	DON'T KNOW
Does the Chapter have contracts that protect ownership of curriculum developed by the Chapter?			
Does the Chapter have agreements or processes that mitigate the risk of Chapter-sponsored training utilizing outside trainers?			
If using online training portals, is the information being shared appropriately protected?			
Is the training consistent with MDT members' professional and legal obligations?			

Does the Chapter have contracts that protect the ownership of curriculum developed by the Chapter?

Protecting the ownership of curriculum may or may not be important, depending on the type of training being offered. However, Chapters in this workgroup have had experience with Chapter-created or Chapter-owned training curricula that has shown up in court via a defense expert or that has been co-opted by an individual or organization who began to offer the training as their own. The Chapter may want to consider crafting agreements to protect the intellectual property of the training and ensure its intended use. These agreements may include clauses on how the training is to be used, who is authorized to use it, and the process for modifying the training content.

Does the Chapter have agreements or processes that mitigate the risk of Chapter-sponsored training utilizing outside trainers?

When the Chapter presents a training, it is commonly perceived as an endorsement of the material presented. Particularly at conferences, when Chapters are dealing with a significant number of trainers, it can be difficult to vet or control the content that is delivered. Your Chapter may want to consider implementing written agreements or processes that convey your expectations to speakers, such as appropriate use of CAC client images or videos, protection of privacy in case studies, and sensitivity to vicarious trauma. These agreements or processes can range from structured conversations to signed agreements. If you decide to draft a contract or

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signed agreement, it is wise to ask for feedback from an attorney on the provisions of your agreement to ensure it adequately mitigates risk in the way you intend.

If using online training portals, is the information being shared appropriately protected?

Some training offerings may necessitate a higher level of security. In particular, peer reviews, where confidential and sensitive client information is utilized for professional development purposes, will require enhanced security on the platform used. The Chapter should work to ensure security appropriate to the content of the training. You may want to consider engaging an IT security consultant to meet this need.

Is the training consistent with MDT members' professional and legal obligations?

If you are providing a training specific to a particular discipline, it may be wise to consult with an individual with expertise in the professional and legal requirements of that discipline. For example, trainings that include legal information should be developed in consultation with prosecutors or the judiciary to evaluate the content and avoid potential unintended consequences.

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FINANCIAL RESOURCES AND SUSTAINABILITY

ITEM	YES	NO	DON'T KNOW
Does your Chapter have the budget to pay for the initial implementation of the training initiative?			
Is the Chapter in a position to pay for unanticipated costs that come up during the course of the initiative?			
If the training you are considering is a conference, will registration fees cover the costs associated with hosting the conference?			

Does your Chapter have the budget to pay for the initial implementation of the training initiative?

There are many costs associated with provision of training. To get a complete picture of costs, you may want to consider the following:

- Staff time devoted to organizing the training
- Staff time or speaker fees devoted to training design, facilitation, and follow-up
- Staff or speaker travel costs, including mileage, flight, taxi, meals, lodging, and time associated with travel
- Training facility cost
- Audio/visual rental for training room
- Training materials
- Costs of online platforms for e-learning
- Assessments (e.g., mental health assessments to measure participant practice change)
- Participant costs (e.g., if the Chapter is paying for travel or lodging)
- Potential cost for curriculum development and evaluation and additional cost for updating the curriculum if it will be an on-going training

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Is the Chapter in a position to pay for unanticipated costs that come up during the course of the initiative?

As with any project, the Chapter may encounter unanticipated costs associated with providing training. One significant area to consider is costs that are unallowable under a grant. If your Chapter is using a grant to provide training, there may be restrictions around the costs billed to that grant, as well as costs incurred for the training in general. Other unanticipated costs may come from food, service charges, taxes, licensing fees, materials fees, or cancellation fees.

If the training you are considering is a conference, will registration fees cover the costs associated with hosting the conference?

Chapters participating in the workgroup felt it was important that a **conference** cover costs associated with hosting it and that it generate revenue. Conferences may not be the best mechanism for training and education targeted toward outcomes. Since conferences are time-limited experiences with minimal follow-up, a goal of creating behavioral change may not be best supported by this training delivery modality. However, conferences do have a host of other benefits, including introducing new information to the CAC/MDT field in your state, encouraging networking, and building the reputation of the Chapter with a broader audience. Conferences can generate revenue for Chapters, and you should decide if this is the goal for your conference.

Chapters who consulted on this guide all strongly encouraged other Chapters to think of the return on investment with conferences. The time and effort required to hold a conference means a significant opportunity cost in terms of other ways the Chapter might focus its energies. Revenue generation is a possible positive outcome, but it must be weighed with careful consideration.

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EVALUATING READINESS

Revisit your readiness checklist. Items checked “yes” indicate areas of readiness. Items checked “no” indicate you may have work to do. This list is not intended to be exhaustive—there are many other variables that may affect your Chapter’s decision about whether to pursue the development of a particular training initiative at this time.

You may be wondering if there are any deal breakers—questions that, if answered “no,” mean you should not undertake this initiative at this time. Because every Chapter’s choices around training, scope, and intent of the initiative vary substantially, there is no standard answer to this question. The questions at the end of this guide are intended to assist you in thoughtful reflection around what impact, if any, your “no” answers will have on your initiative.

If you have one or two “no” answers, your Chapter may decide to proceed with the project and work on these items along the way. If you have several “no” answers, it may be wise to delay taking on this initiative. Developing a 2-3 year work plan that will prepare you to undertake this initiative in the future is a wise, strategic decision.

Remember, your Regional CAC is here to help. If you have questions about any of the items listed, call your Regional CAC for assistance.

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As we reflect on our answers to the readiness checklists, what strengths do we have that will contribute to the success of this initiative? What will be our areas of challenge?

What other information do we need to make a decision about moving forward with this initiative?

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How will we make the decision about whether or not to move forward with this initiative? Who needs to be involved in the decision-making process? Important constituencies to consider may be your board of directors, your membership, and the staff of the Chapter.

How will we communicate the decision once it has been made?

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CONCLUSION

No matter what you decide about pursuing a training initiative or putting it on hold, considering it in the context of a larger strategy ensures your choice advances the mission and goals of the Chapter. Every initiative you take on can hold opportunities and costs, and we hope this guide has helped you thoughtfully weigh the two. Ultimately, making a choice to devote time and energy to a training initiative should 1) fit into your larger strategic plan, 2) be carefully designed to facilitate positive change, and 3) be a high priority in terms of time commitment and focus. Remember, your Regional CAC is available to help you think through the timing, design, and implementation of your training initiatives.

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