

## Funding for Tribal Child Advocacy Centers

NCA Accreditation Standard This Brief Addresses:  
9: Organizational Capacity  
Essential Element G

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In listening sessions and informal discussions with stakeholders interested in developing Tribal Child Advocacy Centers (CACs), one of the most common questions we at NCARC hear is, “How does a CAC fund its operations?”

As with many funding-related issues in human services systems, there is no single answer that will fit all Tribal communities and contexts. Almost all CACs obtain funding for their operations through a variety of sources. In fact, the [National Children’s Alliance \(NCA\)](#) strongly recommends that CACs avoid over-reliance on a single source of funding and suggests that CACs aim to develop five to seven reliable funding sources in order to avoid shortfalls over time. As of 2017, the most recent year for which data are available, the national average blend of CAC funding stood at 68 percent public and 32 percent private. Public funding sources include federal and state grants, subgrants, and non-competitive set-aside programs. Private funding sources may include foundation grants or other agreements, donations from individuals, and fundraising events or campaigns. Tribal CACs may also obtain funding through existing Tribal revenue streams.

The appropriate mix of funding for a given Tribal CAC is likely to vary based on location, state policies, local needs, and the existing local community service array, among numerous additional factors. Below, NCARC offers some guidance about potential public and private funding sources.



**Tribal Funding.** Tribal Nations themselves may be able to fund or develop collaborative solutions for the funding of CAC operations. Individual Tribes have widely varying resources, so direct Tribal funding may or may not be a key component of a CAC's overall financial resources. Nevertheless, buy-in from Tribal leadership and from the leadership of Tribal agencies is an essential first step in CAC development. Maintaining collaborative relationships with leadership across election cycles and amid agency turnover is essential not only for ensuring effective operations and services to children and families but also for identifying funding and other collaborative possibilities that may emerge in the future. Individual Tribal departments and programs across justice, child welfare, victim advocacy, health, and mental health systems may have resources to contribute to CAC operations such as physical space and staff time. Such departments or programs may also be eligible for grants or other funding that, while not focused on CACs, overlap with CAC needs. In such cases, a Tribe may be able to enhance two separate entities (for example, Tribal Victim Services as well as a CAC) with the same funding source.

**Federal Grants, Subgrants, and Set-Aside Awards.** Federal agencies operate numerous programs and opportunities through which Tribes may apply for funding to develop or enhance CAC operations. The following list of programs and opportunities is not exhaustive, and federal grant programs are subject to change each year depending on a variety of factors. Tribes may be able to access funding for CACs through some of the following programs but should not limit their searches to these:

- The Department of Justice's (DOJ) Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) makes funds available through its [Children's Advocacy Centers National Subgrants Program](#). This program is operated by [NCA](#), which uses OJJDP funding to make annual grants to CACs, multidisciplinary teams (MDTs), and state chapters. Recipients of these grants are expected to work toward NCA Accreditation, and they enjoy access to a wide range of training and technical assistance (TTA) through [NCARC](#), the [National Children's Advocacy Center](#), [Regional CACs](#), other OJJDP-funded TTA providers, and state chapters.
- DOJ's [Coordinated Tribal Assistance Solicitation \(CTAS\)](#) offers multiple funding possibilities annually for Tribal justice systems, including funding that may be used to operate CACs. CTAS offers a process for using a single DOJ application to apply for multiple different DOJ Tribal grant programs. Grant programs are identified as individual [Purpose Areas within the CTAS application](#). Two Purpose Areas may be particularly appropriate for Tribal CAC development or enhancement:
  - Purpose Area 4: Tribal Justice System Infrastructure Program. This Purpose Area provides funding that Tribes may use to renovate, expand, or replace existing justice-related facilities or build new prefabricated or permanent modular facilities. These facilities can include buildings or rooms suitable for CAC activities.
  - Purpose Area 6: Children's Justice Act Partnerships for Indian Communities. This Purpose Area's overall goal is to help American Indian and Alaska Native Communities develop, establish, and operate programs designed to improve the investigation, prosecution, and handling of cases of criminal child abuse and

neglect (particularly child sexual abuse cases) in a manner which lessens trauma for child victims. This funding is well-suited to develop or enhance Tribal CACs.

- DOJ's Office of Victims of Crime (OVC) operates a [Tribal Victim Services Set-Aside Formula program](#), which offers non-competitive funding for Tribes that submit appropriate certifications and on-time applications. These funds are appropriated from the Crime Victims Fund, which is financed by fines and penalties paid by convicted federal offenders. The total amount of the Fund varies each year, and Congress annually authorizes a certain percentage of the Fund for allocation to Tribes (between three and five percent in recent years). These funds can be used for a range of activities and expenses related to developing or improving services for victims of crime. While not specific to CACs, this program allows for funding a variety of CAC operations and may additionally help with enhancements to a Tribe's overall victim services capacity.
- OVC funds [a variety of other competitive grant programs](#) annually to enhance victim services, including programs specifically designed to develop the victim services workforce in AI/AN communities.
- DOJ's Office of Violence Against Women (OVW) offers several grant programs focused on supporting adult and child victims of violence in Tribal communities. As with the OVC funding described above, these programs are not specific to CAC services but may significantly overlap with them. These programs include the [Tribal Governments Program](#), the [Tribal Jurisdiction Program](#), and the [Tribal Sexual Assault Services Program](#). Each of these programs releases funding opportunities annually.
- The [Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration](#) within the [Department of Health and Human Services](#) funds projects focused on the development of mental and behavioral health resources in Tribal communities through its Circles of Care and Systems of Care programs.

**State Funding.** Many CACs access state revenue streams for the largest portion of their funding mix. [According to the NCA](#), state funding accounts for roughly a third of all CAC funding nationally. State funding for CACs may be sourced from general revenues (money from taxes), from special revenues (money from fines, fees, permits, licenses, and other similar sources), and/or from federal funds over which the state has the discretion to decide on spending allocations. The amount of funds available for CACs varies widely from state to state and changes frequently in response to changes in state laws, policies, and administration priorities. Likewise, procedures and formulas for distributing state funds to CACs vary from state to state.

As a starting point in learning how to pursue available funding from your state, NCARC recommends asking for guidance from your state's CAC chapter. State chapters are dedicated to the development and growth of CACs in their state, and as such, they are likely to have the most detailed available knowledge of state funding streams. Links to state CAC chapters are listed on the websites of their respective Regional CACs:

- Midwest Regional CAC: <https://www.mrcac.org/about-mrcac/midwest-region/>
- Northeast Regional CAC: <https://www.nrcac.org/find-a-cac/>
- Southern Regional CAC: <https://www.srcac.org/cacs-chapters/>

- Western Regional CAC: <https://www.westernregionalcac.org/our-region/>

**Private Foundations.** Philanthropic foundations are a key source of funding for many CACs. Some private foundations that fund child advocacy and other child well-being initiatives have a national focus, and among these, some have a particular focus on Tribes and/or AI/AN communities. Many other private foundations have missions focused on specific geographic areas such as a county, a group of counties, a state, or a multi-state region.

Locating private foundation funding for your Tribal CAC therefore requires research into the missions and geographic catchment areas of individual foundations' grant programs. The industry-standard database of private foundations is the [Foundation Directory](#), operated by [Candid](#). Access to the Foundation Directory is subscription-based and may not be affordable for individual Tribal programs. However, the nonprofit [Native Americans in Philanthropy](#) has partnered with Candid to provide a free resource based on the Foundation Directory database.

This resource, the [Funding Map](#), is a searchable online map of the U.S. that allows the user to click on specific locations to see details about recent funding provided for Native organizations in that area. For each location, users can learn about individual funders, recipients, and specific grants made over the preceding years. Users can also access more detailed information about individual foundations to better understand their missions and areas of focus. With the information provided by the Funding Map, users can then search individual foundation websites to learn more about current and future funding opportunities as well as application procedures.

If your Tribe has a grants development office or regularly contracts with a grant writing firm, consider asking whether these entities might be able to conduct this research for you. Foundation searches are a typical service often provided by grants professionals.

**Other Private Funding.** Donations from individuals, local companies, and other groups may be another viable source of funding for CACs. Many CACs host annual fundraisers or funding drives to generate donations. The ability to rely on individual donations varies widely depending on the concentration of wealth in a given community or region. Additionally, the best approach for raising funds in this way is likely to vary widely by location and community characteristics.

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