



**Performance Note**  
**SB0081 - Children's Justice**  
**Center Program**  
Sponsor: Sen. Okerlund, Ralph



**Performance Note Report**

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Agency: Attorney General

**Funding For:**

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Serving a New or Larger Population

**Public Benefit:**

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**Purpose:** Children's Justice Centers provide a compassionate, collaborative, community-based response to child abuse in a safe, child-friendly environment. They emphasize the use of evidence-based, forensically sound interviewing techniques, provide vital trauma-informed victim services, and facilitate a coordinated approach to the investigation and prosecution of cases. Families are not forced to go to multiple agencies for the investigation, victim services, medical services, etc--the CJC brings all of the agencies/services together for the family in one child-focused setting. A national cost-benefit analysis showed that CJC-collaborative investigations cost 36% less than non-CJC. The Attorney General's Office is statutorily charged with administering the Utah Children's Justice Center Program and establishing CJCs throughout the state to provide services as outlined in Title 67 Chapter 5b Section 102. In its 24 years of operation, the Program has established and now maintains 22 locations. The program's expansion into Juab will serve both Juab and Millard to ensure that the residents of those counties will have reasonable access to said services.

**Services:** The funding increase will enable the Program to establish a center in Juab County, with services to be funded including: 1) a child-focused setting to make children feel safe while they are being interviewed; 2) recorded interviews to ensure accuracy, objectivity, and transparency; 3) support services to inform families about the investigative process and connect them with resources; 4) coordination of the multidisciplinary team to facilitate effective case review, reduce duplicative efforts, and support the state's mandated joint response to child abuse; 5) coordination of forensic medical exams and treatment; 6) evidence-based training to ensure sound investigations and compassionate treatment of victims; 7) education to enhance the community's understanding of child abuse, the judicial process, and available resources.

**Expected Outcome:** The center will promote a joint response to reported cases of alleged child abuse in Juab and Millard counties and will coordinate said response with partner agencies. Children will be interviewed at the center using forensically sound techniques and will receive medical exams by trained professionals, as well as mental health services provided by professionals trained in trauma informed, evidence based treatment. The use of evidence based interviewing techniques will protect both the interests of the alleged victim and suspect by emphasizing the interview as a neutral, objective, fact finding tool. Families will receive information and referrals regarding victim assistance, and services will be coordinated as needed. The CJC's multidisciplinary team will conduct regular case reviews to

facilitate the case's progress through the judicial process. Public benefits: CJs have been proven to minimize trauma, reduce duplication of efforts, promote objectivity and transparency in the interview process, and facilitate better case resolution. Families report more satisfaction with the investigative process in a CJC setting vs. non-CJC.

Implementations and Resources: CJC Program administrators have been working closely with the Utah County CJC, the host CJC that will help initially operate the new center through an expanded contract with the goal of it transitioning to an independent center. The Utah County CJC, with the support of its own local officials, has worked closely with Juab and Millard officials to prepare a facility in Nephi, relying in part on contributions from the private community. They have also been working with state and local partner agencies (DCFS, law enforcement, county attorneys) to coordinate the multidisciplinary team and prepare them to provide services to families. The Utah County CJC received a federal grant to help cover costs of a part-time victim services provider pending the outcome of the legislative session. Through yet another federal grant secured by the Utah County CJC, children seen at the new center will be eligible for mental health services. The Utah CJC Program will administer funding and provide ongoing training, technical assistance and other support to the center, just as they do with the other CJC locations.

How: By promoting a joint response and the multidisciplinary team approach, the centers will reduce duplication of efforts, as agencies will coordinate on interviews and collaborate on cases. Regular case review will allow the tracking of cases through the judicial process. CJC personnel and other professionals will coordinate the interview and related services (including medical exams, treatment referrals, etc). They will inform families about the investigative process and as the case progresses, and provide support and assistance as needed. They will also enhance community awareness of child abuse and of CJC services by providing education and resource information to residents in the newly served areas.

## Performance Measures

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### Goal

Title: The children's justice center facilitates healing for children and caregivers.

Description: The children's justice center will rely on evidence based practices and operating protocols to promote a joint response to child abuse cases, with a goal being to better facilitate investigations.

Collection Method: The system enables us to easily collect data to evaluate the quality of services provided to members of the multidisciplinary team.