

Kansas Department of

Social and Rehabilitation Services

Janet Schalansky, Secretary

Senate Ways and Means Committee
March 31, 2004

HB 2569 - Child Advocacy Centers

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HB 2569 - Child Advocacy Centers

Senator Morris and members of the committee, I am Candy Shively, Deputy Secretary with SRS. Thank you for the opportunity to appear today to discuss House Bill 2569. This bill supports child advocacy centers which are child-focused, supportive environments in which forensic interviews of children who have been abused or neglected are completed. Child Advocacy Centers reduce the number of times a child must be interviewed which improves the quality of information obtained from the child. This in turn, increases achievement of prosecutions. This proposal would require specialized training, tracking of cases referred to the facility and a multi-disciplinary case review team. The centers would either provide or refer children for medical examination services and/or mental health therapy.

Currently, there are six child advocacy centers in the state. An additional center is being developed. These centers are funded primarily from sources such as grants and private donations. SRS staff have worked well with the existing centers and would welcome the opportunity to work with additional centers. Child advocacy centers are an excellent example of how SRS has come together with community partners to improve outcomes for children.

SRS supports the House amendment to this bill to include forensic interviews with children suspected of sexual abuse as well as physical, mental or emotional abuse. Sexual abuse interviews are one of the specialties of these centers and forensic interviews are extremely valuable in these cases.

SRS believes child advocacy centers are a positive addition to the child welfare system and the addition of more centers will benefit communities. Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this bill.