



February 27th, 2014

TO: Senator John Coghill

RE: Senate Bill NO. 171

Dignity • Care • Compassion

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I am writing this letter in support of Senate Bill 171 and the revisions proposed by the Alaska Children's Alliance. I am the Program Manager at the Southeast Alaska Family Evaluation Child Advocacy Center (S.A.F.E. CAC) located in Juneau. I help facilitate the multidisciplinary team (MDT) that serves our region. The MDT is a vital part of our ability to effectively respond to issues of child maltreatment and create a system of accountability for the outcomes for the victims that we serve. It is important that we have statutory support for how a MDT, in best practice, should function.

At the S.A.F.E. CAC our referrals either come from the Office of Children's Services (OCS) or a Law Enforcement Agency. The majority of our referrals come from Law Enforcement. Many of our cases have OCS involvement but there are a number that do not. When we present cases at our MDT meetings many times OCS does not have an open case file on the child in question because the incident occurred outside of the home environment. It is important the MDT statute reflects the parties involved in the case process and mirrors what the CAC's across the State are actually doing in practice.

The S.A.F.E. CAC is an accredited member of the National Children's Alliance (NCA). The NCA establishes the standards and best practices that are required for accreditation and have been proven as the most effective way of responding to child maltreatment. One of the standards set by the NCA is the involvement of certain parties in the MDT. The required parties include: a representative from OCS, a law enforcement representative, a participant from the CAC, medical staff trained in child abuse assessment, a mental health provider, a prosecutor and a victim advocate. As an accredited member of the NCA we have established a MDT that meets these requirements and find that each of these members play a vital role in our ability to respond to child maltreatment. We also have other parties serving on our MDT but this core group is essential. The revisions proposed by the Alaska Children's Alliance reflect the importance of establishing this core group in building an effective multidisciplinary response to child abuse cases.

Respectfully Submitted,

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