



Forensic Interview Training Matters for Children

How Forensic Interview Training Goes Beyond the Standard.
This training is specialized, providing unique skills and knowledge.



Child Development
& Trauma



Memory & Non-
Leading Questions



Protecting Accuracy
& Integrity of Cases

One Interview. One Team. A Coordinated Response.
A joint approach minimizes trauma and duplication.

In an overwhelmed system, this approach improves efficiency for law enforcement, child protection, and courts while strengthening accountability for abuse and neglect.



The Minnesota Children's Alliance supports forensic interview training and coordinated responses so children talk about what happened once, in a safe and trauma-informed way. Continued investment helps close access gaps and ensures children across Minnesota receive consistent, high-quality care.

Chief Deputy County Attorney
Scott K. Springer

Office Administrator
Lynn M. Gibson

Assistant County Attorney's
Michael J. Boese
Nicole L. Tiemann
Amy E. Voss
Demonte G. Noble
Ryan A. Logan

Victim Services Coordinator
Hayley Bercier
Phone 218-384-9170

February 23, 2026

Re: HF2136/SF2551 grant funding

I am writing to express my strong support for HF2136/SF2551 grant funding provided for forensic interview training scholarships, and money appropriated.

Prosecution of child abuse cases are critically important to the Carlton County Attorney's Office. Successful prosecutions require the best available evidence and the forensic interview process provides for stronger criminal cases with the added benefit of easing the process for children and families.

Children who suffer abuse face tremendous challenges that require a specialized approach. Forensic interviewers play a pivotal role in ensuring children are heard in a way that is sensitive to their experiences while also gathering the reliable information necessary for legal and protective actions. Training programs such as those offered by Child Advocacy Centers (CAC), like First Witness or Minnesota Children's Alliance, are recognized for preparing forensic interviewers to navigate these sensitive cases effectively.

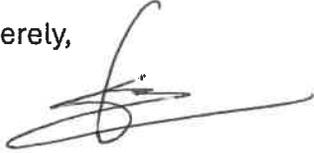
Unfortunately, the demand for trained forensic interviewers continues to outpace available resources. Funding for scholarships allows professionals from diverse backgrounds to access this essential training, ensuring more children in need are supported by individuals who understand how to minimize retraumatization and maximize accuracy in child abuse investigations. This is particularly critical in our communities that do not have a CAC available to them.

Funding forensic interviewing aligns with our mission to protect the community by prosecuting crime. By equipping more professionals with the skills necessary for effective forensic interviewing, we can create better safety plans, ensure the well-being of children, and foster environments where they can thrive.

Investing in training scholarships is a long-term investment in the health and safety of our community's most vulnerable members. I urge you to support the appropriation of funds for this vital purpose and to champion the important work being done in the field of child protection.

Thank you for your time and consideration. Together, we can make a meaningful difference in the lives of children and families. I urge you to support HF2136/SF2551.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jeffrey LH Boucher', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Jeffrey LH Boucher
County Attorney

/lmg



PUBLIC HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

Annie Napoli, Director

February 25, 2026

Marcia Miliken
Minnesota Children's Alliance
165 Western Ave N, Suite 8 - The Coven
St. Paul, MN 55102

RE: Appropriations for Forensic Interview Training Scholarships

Dear Ms. Miliken:

I am writing to express strong support for HF2136/SF2551 and the appropriation of funds for forensic interview training scholarships. Effective child protection depends on having well-trained forensic interviewers who can gather accurate information while minimizing trauma for children. Programs offered by Child Advocacy Centers—such as First Witness and the Minnesota Children's Alliance—provide the specialized, evidence-based training required for this work.

Across Minnesota, the need for trained interviewers continues to exceed available capacity. Scholarship funding is a practical, cost-effective way to expand access to high-quality training, particularly for professionals in communities without a Child Advocacy Center. Increasing the number of qualified interviewers strengthens investigations, improves safety planning, and supports better outcomes for vulnerable children and families.

This investment directly aligns with our shared commitment to protecting children and ensuring the child welfare system has the tools it needs to function effectively. Funding forensic interview training is both an immediate necessity and a long-term strategy for ensuring the health and safety of our community's most vulnerable members.

I respectfully urge your support for HF2136/SF2551 and the continued investment in this critical area of child protection. Thank you for your leadership and consideration.

If you have any questions about this letter of support; you can contact me at annie.napoli@carltoncountymn.gov or at 218/878-2899.

Sincerely,

Annie Napoli

Annie Napoli, Director
Carlton County Public Health & Human Services

Minnesota Children's Alliance
165 Western Ave N, Suite 8 – The Coven
St. Paul, MN 55102

February 10, 2026

RE: Support for Forensic Interviewing – HF2136/SF2551

On behalf of the Council for Minnesotans of African Heritage (CMAH), we are writing to express our strong support for the continued use of forensic interviews within Minnesota's child protection and criminal justice systems. These interviews are essential tools for gathering accurate, unbiased information from children when allegations of abuse arise, and they play a critical role in helping Multidisciplinary Teams (MDTs) make informed, coordinated decisions.

Forensic interviewers are specially trained to create a safe, developmentally appropriate environment that allows children to share their experiences in their own words. This approach minimizes trauma, reduces the need for repeated questioning, and increases the reliability of the information gathered. Effective forensic interviewing strengthens collaboration among professionals across sectors, including child protection, law enforcement, medical providers, and mental health practitioners, assuring that each child's needs are understood and addressed holistically.

The use of forensic interviews is vital not only for investigative accuracy but also for supporting children's overall well-being. A child's experience during this process can shape their trust in the systems designed to protect them and influence their willingness to engage with supportive services in the future.

CMAH strongly supports the continued investment in forensic interviewing and urges ongoing funding for training, professional development, and infrastructure that upholds best practices. Ensuring that children's voices are heard clearly, respectfully, and without harm is essential to building a just and responsive system for all Minnesotans.

Thank you for your attention to this important issue.

Sincerely,
Council for Minnesota of African Heritage



Mike Ceynowa, Chief of Police

218-730-5400 | mceynowa@duluthmn.gov

2030 North Arlington Avenue | Duluth, Minnesota 55811

www.duluthmn.gov

February 24, 2026

Minnesota Children's Alliance
165 Western Ave N, Suite 8 – The Coven
St. Paul, MN 55102

RE: Support for Forensic Interviewing – HF2136/SF2551

I am writing to express my strong support for HF2136/SF2551 grant funding provided for forensic interview training scholarships, and money appropriated.

As you know, children involved in child protection cases often face tremendous challenges that require a trauma-informed, developmentally appropriate approach. Forensic interviewers are trained professionals who play a pivotal role in ensuring that these children are heard in a way that is sensitive to their experiences while also gathering the reliable information necessary for legal and protective actions. Training programs offered by Child Advocacy Centers (CAC), including First Witness and the Minnesota Children's Alliance, are recognized for preparing forensic interviewers to navigate these sensitive cases effectively.

However, the demand for trained forensic interviewers continues to outpace the available resources. Funding for scholarships allows professionals from diverse backgrounds to access this essential training, ensuring more children in need are supported by individuals who understand how to minimize additional trauma and maximize accuracy in child protection investigations. This is particularly critical in our communities that do not have a CAC available to them.

In addition to supporting children and families, trained forensic interviewers significantly strengthen public safety and law enforcement efforts. Properly conducted forensic interviews produce accurate, defensible information that can be used effectively in investigations and court proceedings. When professionals are thoroughly trained in evidence-based interviewing techniques, cases are built on reliable information, increasing accountability for offenders while protecting the well-being of victims.

Investing in training scholarships is not only a matter of addressing immediate needs; it is a long-term investment in the health and safety of our community's most vulnerable members. I urge you to support the appropriation of funds for this vital purpose and to champion the important work being done in the field of child protection.

Thank you for your time and consideration. Your support of HF2136/SF2551 can help make a meaningful difference in the lives of children and families.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Mike Ceynowa".

Michael J. Ceynowa
Chief of Police



I am writing to express my strong support for HF2136/SF2551 grant funding provided for forensic interview training scholarships, and money appropriated.

For the past fifty years, FamilyWise has been strengthening families by promoting the safety, stability and wellbeing of children. Responding to the needs, wisdom, and goals of the communities and families we partner with, FamilyWise has been keeping children safe and helping families lead stable, healthy, and productive lives. We support families experiencing complex barriers to success through integrated services that build stability and increase wellbeing for two generations at once.

Our work intersects with the child welfare sector. As you know, children involved in child protection cases often face tremendous challenges that require a trauma-informed, developmentally appropriate approach. Forensic interviewers are trained professionals who play a pivotal role in ensuring that these children are heard in a way that is sensitive to their experiences while also gathering the reliable information necessary for legal and protective actions. Training programs ensure that forensic interviewers are prepared to navigate these sensitive cases effectively.

However, the demand for trained forensic interviewers continues to outpace the available resources. Funding for scholarships allows professionals from diverse backgrounds to access this essential training, ensuring more children in need are supported by individuals who understand how to minimize retraumatization and maximize accuracy in child protection investigations. This is particularly critical in our communities that do not have a CAC available to them.

As the home of Prevent Child Abuse Minnesota, funding forensic interviewing is a critical step to ensure abuse is recognized, addressed and treated. By equipping more professionals with the skills necessary for effective forensic interviewing, we can create better safety plans, ensure the well-being of children, and foster environments where they can thrive.

Investing in training scholarships is not only a matter of addressing immediate needs; it is a long-term investment in the health and safety of our community's most vulnerable members. I urge you to support the appropriation of funds for this vital purpose and to champion the important work being done in the field of child protection.

Thank you for your time and consideration. Together, we can make a meaningful difference in the lives of children and families. I urge you to support HF2136/SF2551.

Ann Gaasch

CEO





MACSSA

Minnesota Association of County Social Service Administrators

February 17, 2026

Re: Support for HF2136

Dear Co-Chairs West and Kotyza-Witthuhn and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of the Minnesota Association of County Social Services Administrators (MACSSA), I am writing to express our strong support for House File 2136, which appropriates funding for forensic interview training scholarships. This legislation provides \$250,000 in fiscal year 2026 and \$250,000 in fiscal year 2027 to support nationally recognized forensic interview training programs.

County human services agencies play a critical role in protecting children and responding to allegations of maltreatment. High-quality, developmentally appropriate forensic interviews are essential to ensuring that children are heard, protected from further trauma, and supported throughout investigative and legal processes. Properly trained professionals help ensure that interviews are reliable, ethically conducted, and defensible in court.

HF2136 supports this vital work by expanding access to standardized, evidence-based training for professionals in child protection, law enforcement, prosecution, health care, and children's advocacy centers. These scholarships will strengthen Minnesota's multidisciplinary response to child maltreatment and improve outcomes for vulnerable children and families.

Counties across Minnesota, particularly rural and greater Minnesota communities, often face financial and staffing barriers to accessing advanced forensic interview training. This investment helps ensure equitable access to high-quality training regardless of geography or county size. It also supports workforce development, retention, and professional competency in an increasingly complex child welfare environment.

By investing in forensic interview training, the Legislature is strengthening public safety, enhancing system integrity, and prioritizing the well-being of children who have experienced abuse or neglect. This funding will improve investigative quality, reduce the risk of re-traumatization, and promote fair and just outcomes for families.

MACSSA strongly urges your support for HF 2136 and this critical appropriation. We appreciate your continued commitment to protecting Minnesota's children and strengthening our child welfare system. Thank you for your leadership and consideration.

Sincerely,

Paul Verrette

Executive Director, Minnesota Association of County Social Service Administrators



February 12, 2026

Re: HF2136, SF2551 | Forensic Interview Training Scholarships

Dear Chair and Members of the Committee:

The Office of the Foster Youth Ombudsman (OOFY) strongly supports scholarships to increase availability of Forensic Interview Training for Multi-disciplinary team members and interviewers at Children's Advocacy Centers.

Ensuring that individuals who complete Forensic Interviews receive basic and advanced training on nationally recognized protocols, helps promote experiences that are focused on healing, justice, and safety for children and youth. It helps minimize situations where youth who have experienced abuse or neglect are re-traumatized by well-intentioned interviewers who lack the necessary skills, knowledge, and training on best practices, or through unsound procedures that succumb children to redundant interviews about sensitive and painful experiences.

Thank you for supporting this legislation and your continued efforts to improve the experiences of youth survivors of abuse and neglect.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Misty Coonce'.

Ombudsman for Foster Youth

651-946-2941

Misty.coonce@state.mn.us

Website: mn.gov/oofy



February 25, 2026

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing in support of HF2136/SF2551 to provide grant funding for forensic interview training scholarships. I have served as a consultant to a child advocacy center for 20 years, provide expert testimony and consultation in the field of childhood trauma, and provide therapy services to children involved in the child welfare system, many of whom have been victims of child physical or sexual abuse.

Forensic interviewing is imperative in providing a solid, consistent, research supported method of obtaining valid and accurate information from children who have had abusive experiences. Scholarships ensure that such training is available to professionals across that state. Such interviews help minimize the distress caused to children by the system response. They are as imperative in obtaining information about cases of child abuse as they are in obtaining information to identify that no abuse or neglect occurred. It cannot be overstated how different a forensic interview process is from a general interview or conversation with children.

Such interviews can start children who have been abused and neglected on a path towards recovery by providing a safe, supportive, validating space for them to share the worst things that have happened to them.

The availability of such interviews to children should not depend on a child's geographical location in regard to the financial ability to train interviewers, as such, scholarships to support the training of professionals is important to the safety and welfare of our most vulnerable citizens.

Thank you for the consideration of this bill.

Respectfully Submitted,

Saprina Matheny, MSW, LICSW, LCSW
Psychotherapist



February 9, 2026

I am writing to express my strong support for HF2136/SF2551 grant funding provided for forensic interview training scholarships, and money appropriated.

As you know, children involved in child protection cases often face tremendous challenges that require a trauma-informed, developmentally appropriate approach. Forensic interviewers are trained professionals who play a pivotal role in ensuring that these children are heard in a way that is sensitive to their experiences while also gathering the reliable information necessary for legal and protective actions. Training programs such as those offered by Child Advocacy Centers (CAC), such as First Witness or Minnesota Children's Alliance, are recognized for preparing forensic interviewers to navigate these sensitive cases effectively.

However, the demand for trained forensic interviewers continues to outpace the available resources. Funding for scholarships allows professionals from diverse backgrounds to access this essential training, ensuring more children in need are supported by individuals who understand how to minimize retraumatization and maximize accuracy in child protection investigations. This is particularly critical in our communities that do not have a CAC available to them.

Funding forensic interviewing aligns with QPI-MN's mission to promote excellent parenting and strong, nurturing relationships for children in the child welfare system. By equipping more professionals with the skills necessary for effective forensic interviewing, we can create better safety plans, ensure the well-being of children, and foster environments where they can thrive.

Investing in training scholarships is not only a matter of addressing immediate needs; it is a long-term investment in the health and safety of our community's most vulnerable members. I urge you to support the appropriation of funds for this vital purpose and to champion the important work being done in the field of child protection.

Thank you for your time and consideration. Together, we can make a meaningful difference in the lives of children and families. I urge you to support HF2136/SF2551.

Sincerely,

Kate Rickord, MA, LP, SEP

Director, QPI-MN

Kate@qpimn.org

612.619.0086 (direct)

Ensuring excellent, developmentally informed parenting in the child welfare system.

February 24, 2026

Minnesota Children's Alliance
165 Western Ave N, Suite 8 – The Coven
St. Paul, MN 55102

RE: Support for Forensic Interviewing – HF2136/SF2551

Greetings!

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Thank you for your time and consideration. Together, we can make a meaningful difference in the lives of children and families. I urge you to support HF2136/SF2551.

Sincerely,



Kimberly J. Maki
St. Louis County Attorney

DULUTH COURTHOUSE
100 N. Fifth Ave. W. #501
Duluth, MN 55802
218-726-2323

GOVERNMENT SERVICES CENTER
320 W. Second St. #403
Duluth, MN 55802
218-726-2034

VIRGINIA COURTHOUSE
300 S. Fifth Ave. #222
Virginia, MN 55792
218-749-7101

HIBBING COURTHOUSE
1810 Twelfth Ave. E. #107
Hibbing, MN 55746
218-312-8158



Saint Louis County

Sheriff's Office • 100 N. Fifth Ave. West, Room 103 • Duluth, MN 55802
Phone: (218) 726-2340 • Fax: (218) 726-2171

Gordon Ramsay

Minnesota Children's Alliance
165 Western Ave N, Suite 8 – The Coven
St. Paul, MN 55102

February 23, 2026

RE: Support for Forensic Interviewing – HF2136/SF2551

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Thank you for your time and consideration. Together, we can make a meaningful difference in the lives of children and families. I urge you to support HF2136/SF2551.

T. Wade Rasch

T. Wade Rasch

Division Commander, Duluth Office
MN Children's Justice Act Task Force, Law enforcement representative
St. Louis County Sheriff's Office
2030 Arlington Ave.
Duluth, MN 55811

Phone: 218-336-4347

Mobile: 218-969-2855

Email: rascht@stlouiscountymn.gov

Reply to:

Public Safety Building
2030 N Arlington Ave
Duluth, MN 55811
Phone: (218) 336-4379
Fax: (218) 336-4370

County Jail
4334 Haines Rd.
Duluth, MN 55811
Phone: (218) 726-2345
Fax: (218) 725-6134

Emergency Management
5735 Old Miller Trunk Hwy.
Duluth, MN 55811
Phone: (218) 625-3960
Fax: (218) 625-3965

Sheriff's Office
300 S. 5th Ave.
Virginia, MN 55792
Phone: (218) 749-7134
Fax: (218) 749-7192

Sheriff's Office
1810 12th Ave. E.
Hibbing, MN 55746
Phone: (218) 262-0132
Fax: (218) 262-6334



VIOLENCE FREE
MINNESOTA

THE COALITION TO END RELATIONSHIP ABUSE

March 24, 2026

Dear Chairs and members of the House Children and Families Finance and Policy Committee:

Violence Free Minnesota, the coalition to end relationship abuse, writes in support of HF 2136/SF2551, a bill to provide new funding for scholarships to improve the quality of forensic interviews of children. Our coalition has over 90 member programs from every county of the state, all of whom provide direct services to victims and survivors of domestic and sexual violence. Services include advocacy, shelter, healthcare navigation, court accompaniment, and more. We support this bill because it will help improve the overall quality of investigations while limiting the trauma experienced by child survivors.

Children are often witnesses to and victims of relationship abuse. Whether they are witnessing abuse in their own home or the home of a friend, or they are the direct victim of teen dating violence, relationship abuse has a profound and negative impact on children. When these cases need to be investigated, it is crucial that the investigator questions the child in an evidence-based, calm, and careful manner.

Being victim-centered means understanding the special vulnerabilities that a victim may experience. A child speaking to an investigator— a stranger— about a trusted authority figure like a parent is incredibly difficult. It is crucial that the investigator ascertain accurate, reliable information without exposing the child to unneeded secondary trauma. These skills must be learned, practiced, and evaluated.

This bill provides a path towards ensuring that our investigations involving child-witnesses and child-victims are up to the highest standard. As a relationship abuse coalition, our members see children in our shelters and advocacy centers all the time. These children remind us of why we do this work. Our resolve to build a violence free Minnesota is fueled not just by their trauma, but also by the smiles, laughter, and energy that we often see when children are in a safe place. We want more safe places. Improving investigations is an important step towards ensuring that every place is safe for our children. Please support this bill.

Thank you,

Katie Kramer and Nikki Engel
Co-Executive Directors
Violence Free Minnesota



The First Conversation Matters

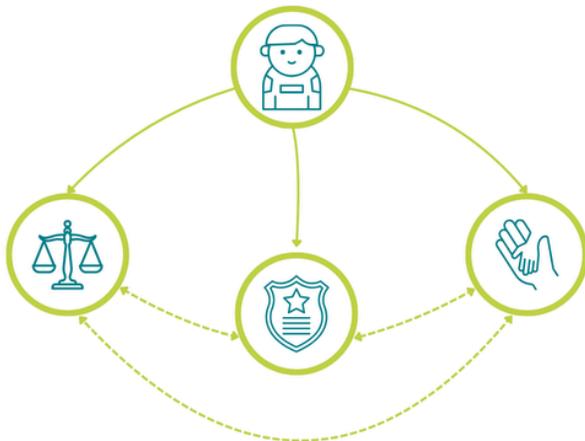
When child abuse is suspected, a child must be able to share their experience. In many cases, the child is the primary source of information, and there may be little or no physical evidence for investigators to rely on. How and with whom that conversation happens matters greatly.

Without coordination, multiple systems may attempt to gather information independently, increasing the risk that a child is questioned repeatedly, inconsistently, and in ways that can cause additional trauma or compromise the integrity of the information shared.

What Is a Forensic Interview?

A forensic interview is a structured, neutral, child-centered conversation conducted by a specially trained professional to gather accurate information in a developmentally appropriate way. It follows nationally recognized, evidence-based protocols that protect both the child's well-being and the integrity of the investigation.

- ✦ **Neutral and non-leading**
- ✦ **Developmentally appropriate**
- ✦ **Conducted once, non duplicative**
- ✦ **Defensible and usable in court**



Without a trained forensic interviewer



With a trained forensic interviewer