



The National Assessment Center Association

Five Years in the Making

Founded in 2019, the National Assessment Center Association (NAC) has been making strides providing support to the Assessment Center community nationwide. With the financial support of the 18th Judicial District Juvenile Assessment Center in Colorado, the NAC became fully operational in February 2020 and set the stage for Assessment Center collaboration and shared innovation. Over the past five years, we have developed comprehensive, essential tools for the field that are grounded in diversion and prevention best practices and support Assessment Center operations. Through technical assistance, we have supported the launch of over 10 new Assessment Centers that have now served over 4,000 youth in their communities. The NAC has developed critical partnerships with local and national organizations in order to leverage impact and streamline support to the field. In 2024, we celebrated a landmark moment with our inaugural in-person Leadership Symposium held in Las Vegas, NV, fostering connections and driving innovation in the field.

Assessment Centers are transforming the future of youth justice emphasizing the importance of connection to community instead of systems. Over the past five years, we have witnessed extraordinary progress as centers across the nation have embraced innovation, equity, and community-driven solutions. Each assessment, each connection, and each act of care reinforces the belief that every young person deserves the chance to thrive. Together, we are breaking down barriers and building pathways to resilience and opportunity. As we look ahead, we remain steadfast in our commitment to empowering youth and their families and strengthening the communities that support them.

Impact Snapshot

15

new Assessment Centers have launched or are in the process of launching with NAC support

4,000+

youth served through Assessment Centers launch with support from the NAC

1,500

Assessment Center staff the NAC has reached with its trainings





What is an Assessment Center?

Assessment Centers aim to prevent and divert youth from involvement in juvenile justice and child welfare systems by acting as a central point of contact. This involves identifying underlying issues contributing to concerning behavior and collaborating with youth and families to access tailored services and resources. These centers intervene in various settings, including schools, post-arrest, and upon parental request, often in partnership with community stakeholders. Utilizing detailed interviews and validated screening tools, centers delve into the challenges faced by youth and families in their home, school, or community environments. Following assessment, centers work alongside youth and families to access personalized resources and services, fostering a stable environment conducive to their well-being. Additionally, when appropriate, centers liaise with educational, social service, and justice agencies to offer a comprehensive understanding of the family's and youth's strengths and needs.

Juvenile Justice:

Assessment centers serve as the initial contact point when youth encounter law enforcement, offering comprehensive assessments to identify needs and inform diversion recommendations or court proceedings. These centers facilitate connections to services/resources or coordinate with probation departments.

Child Welfare:

Collaborating with child welfare agencies, assessment centers conduct assessments to address underlying issues affecting youth and families, aiming to strengthen familial bonds and support individuals' well-being.

Prevention:

Assessment centers engage proactively with youth and families, providing assessments and connections to services/resources to address concerns before law enforcement or child welfare involvement, thereby preventing escalation of issues.





Best Practice & Resource Development

In 2020, the NAC set out to address the need for standardized practices and support across the 100+ Assessment Centers in the United States, ensuring consistency, quality, and effectiveness in serving youth and families. An advisory group comprised of Assessment Center leaders, field experts, and youth and caregivers with lived experience in the child welfare and justice system convened to develop core components grounded in research and best practices. In 2021, the NAC released the [Assessment Center Framework](#) that now serves as the best practice guide for the field. To date, the Assessment Center Framework has been accessed almost 14,000 times on our website.

Building on the Assessment Center Framework, the NAC has developed the following resources and tools to help support it's implementation:

- [Assessment Center Self-Assessment Tool](#)
- [Assessment Center Outcome Reporting Network \(ACORN\)](#)
- [Assessment Center Planning and Implementation Guide](#)
- [Pathways to Excellence Program](#)

More Resources for Members:

- Youth and Family Feedback Forms
- Assessment Center Resource Library
- Screening and Assessment Tool Inventory

The NAC logo was crafted by a Miami-based artist with previous involvement in the juvenile justice system, received support from an assessment center.



Technical Assistance



Over the past five years, the NAC has provided technical assistance to over **32** of Assessment Centers through one-on-one assistance or cohort support. Below are just a couple of examples of technical assistance provided to the field.

- **[Shelby County, Tennessee](#)** - With technical assistance from the NAC, the Shelby County Youth and Family Resource Center (YFRC) opened its doors in 2022 in an effort to divert youth from the justice system. The YFRC is partnering with law enforcement to implement a pre-arrest diversion initiative identifying 14 eligible offenses that would have traditionally gone through the justice system that will now be referred to the Assessment Center for connection to community services. Since opening in May 2022, the YFRC has served 890 youth.
- **[State of Idaho](#)** - The Idaho Legislature approved proposals for increased resources, and in FY 2023 allowed Idaho Department of Juvenile Corrections (IDJC) to establish youth assessment centers to connect youth & families with long term community-based resources within their area, thus preventing entrance or further entrance into the juvenile justice and child welfare systems. In an effort to align Assessment Center projects with evidence-based investments, IDJC partnered with the National Assessment Center (NAC) Association to provide technical Assistance. **[HERE](#)** is a great video on Assessment Centers and their development throughout the State.
- **[ACORN Cohort](#)** - The Assessment Center Outcome and Reporting Network (ACORN) initiative was established to create a more consistent performance and outcome measures for Assessment Centers nationwide. This allows us to assess impact on prevention, diversion, and early intervention and is a necessary step prior to broad scale assessment of the Framework.

In collaboration with the National Center for Juvenile Justice (NCJJ) and Dr. Jeff Kretschmar, the NAC supported cohort of six Assessment Centers to identify opportunities to align Assessment Center performance and outcomes to the Framework. This project first conducted a wide-scale assessment of Assessment Center's information systems and data capacity. It then worked with the six Assessment Centers through training and technical assistance to identify gaps in data collection and create an "action plan" that identifies enhancement and improvement goals.

[Click here to access the final ACORN pilot report.](#)





Information And Training

Over the past five years, the NAC has hosted over **35 virtual trainings** involving over **1,500 professionals** in the field on topics such as diversion and prevention best practices, youth behavioral health, adolescent development and more! Below are just a couple highlights of our training efforts:

- **98 Professionals were trained on Motivational Interviewing.** A skill-set foundational to the Assessment Center Framework helping staff develop a skill-set to implement collaborative communication techniques that helps people make changes in their lives.
- Since 2021, the NAC has hosted an annual conference to bring the field together for networking, education, and advocacy purposes. With the first three conferences delivered virtually due to the Covid-19 pandemic, in **2024 the NAC hosted our first in-person Assessment Center Symposium!** The symposium was attended by over **80 Assessment Center** leaders and partners and was hosted by The Harbor Juvenile Assessment Center in Las Vegas, Nevada!

Getting timely and relevant information to the field that highlights best practices of Assessment Centers, opportunities for Assessment Center growth, and sharing Assessment Center success and impact continues to be a NAC priority. Below are just a few of the publications released by the NAC with the input and support of our members: (Click on the publication below to access the article)

- [The Benefit of Neutrality](#)
- [The Connector Role](#)
- [The Journey Establishing an Assessment Center](#)
- [Expanding Diversion Through Assessment Centers](#)



NAC's 2024-2025 | Board Members

The NAC was established to serve as a resource and advocate to the Assessment Center community. In order to understand and respond to the needs of Assessment Centers and the youth and families they serve, a minimum of 50% of NAC Board of Directors are leaders working within the Assessment Center community. The NAC Board also prioritizes the voices of youth and families served by Assessment Centers by recruiting those with lived experience to serve on the Board of Directors. [Click here to learn more about the NAC Staff and the Board of Directors.](#)





Upcoming Opportunities for Assessment Centers Across the Nation

The upcoming opportunities for assessment centers are poised to bring about significant advancements in various facets of community intervention and support.

- Expansion of **diversion eligibility** signifies a shift towards more rehabilitative and restorative approaches within the juvenile justice system, providing assessment centers with a broader scope to offer tailored interventions and support services to individuals in need.
- The increasing focus on **violence prevention** presents assessment centers with the chance to implement proactive strategies and initiatives aimed at addressing root causes and mitigating risks before they escalate.
- Integrating **peer-support or youth and family advocates** into assessment center frameworks enhances the effectiveness and relevance of interventions, fostering a sense of understanding and trust among those seeking assistance.
- The **redirection of funds** from downstream to upstream initiatives empowers assessment centers to invest in preventive measures and community-based programs, ultimately yielding long-term societal benefits.
- **Legislative innovation**, exemplified by initiatives in places like Idaho and Colorado, provides a legislative framework that aligns with the goals and missions of assessment centers, offering opportunities for collaboration and advocacy to enact meaningful change at both local and state levels. Embracing these opportunities positions assessment centers as vital agents of positive transformation within their communities, driving progress and fostering resilience.

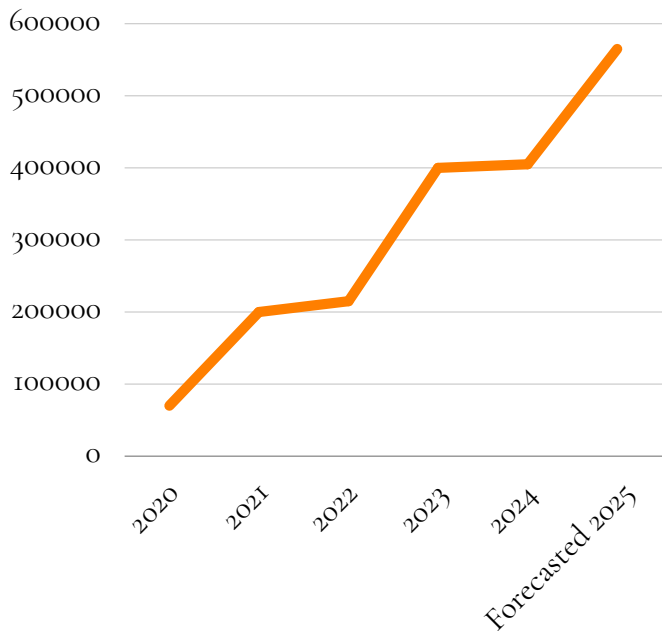
"We are helping families build the momentum they need to connect to community supports."

-Lauren Johnson, Executive Director of the St. Charles Care Center on the work of Assessment Centers during our Youth and Family Engagement Panel at the 2024 NAC Leadership Symposium.

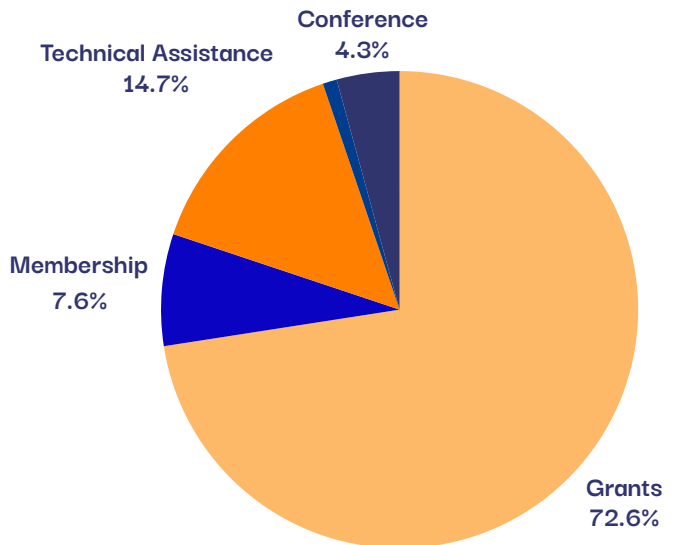




NAC Funding Snapshot



Total Organization Revenue



Total 2024 Revenue by Source

Financial support provided to the National Assessment Center Association allows us to develop and deliver essential resources and support to existing and developing assessment centers and, in turn, youth, families, and communities. Approximately 87% of revenue goes back to the field by way of technical assistance, training, and resource development with approximately 13% of revenue allocated to administrative costs.

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to our member centers, board members, donors, and partners, whose unwavering support and collaboration are crucial to advancing youth justice and fostering safer, more resilient communities. We extend special thanks to the 18th Judicial Juvenile Assessment Center, the Annie E. Casey Foundation, the Stoneleigh Foundation, the State Justice Institute, and the National Center for State Courts for supporting our work over the past five years. Together, we are making a significant impact, and we are truly grateful for your ongoing partnership and commitment to our shared vision.





The National Assessment Center Association Member Centers:

2020 - 2025

18th Judicial District Juvenile Assessment Center (CO), 20th Judicial District Juvenile Services (KS), Ashtabula County Juvenile Court, Bannock County Juvenile Justice, Bay Area Youth Services, Inc., Community Youth In Action, Denver Juvenile Services Center (DJSC), Douglas County Juvenile Assessment Center, Durham County Youth Home, Fairfield County Juvenile Court Resource Center, Greene County Youth Assessment and Intervention Center, Hale Kipa, Inc., Hawaii 1st Circuit Court, Huckleberry Youth Programs, Jefferson County Juvenile Assessment Center, Joint Initiatives for Youth and Families, Seward County Juvenile Corrections and Prevention Services, Lorain County Domestic Relations Court- Lorain County Juvenile Court Assessment and Resource Center, Loudoun County (VA) Juvenile Court Service Unit, Marion County Family Resource Center, Miami Dade-County Juvenile Services Department, Office of Juvenile Justice Services - Multi Agency Resource Center (MARC), OJJ - Louisiana Multi-Agency Resource Center (LA MARC), Philadelphia JAC, Shelby County Juvenile Court, Shelby County Youth and Family Resource Center, Split Mountain Youth Center, St. Charles CARE Center, The Bridge Youth and Family Resource Center, Utah Division of Juvenile Justice Services - Castle Country Youth Center & Central Utah Youth Center, Wasco County Youth Services, Washington County Youth Center, Delaware County Juvenile/Probate Court, The Harbor, Simply Hope Family Outreach, Inc., Boulder County Juvenile Assessment Center, Cache Valley Youth Center, Cuyahoga County Juvenile Court, Family Support Center at Children's Village, Hamilton County Juvenile Court Assessment Center, Hilltop Community Resources, Johnson County Department of Corrections Juvenile Intake and Assessment Center, Utah Juvenile Justice Services, LC Valley Youth Resource Center Inc, Legacy of Legacy CDC, Linn County, Louisville Metro Youth Transitional Services, Hawaii Office of Youth Services, Paulding County Juvenile Court, PbS Learning Institute, Riley County Community Corrections, SLC/Utah/Toole Youth Services, The Front Porch, The JAC - 16th Circuit Court - Family Court Division - Kansas City, The Link - A Community Assessment & Resource Center, The Reception Center, Twin Falls Youth Services Center, UTHSC Center for Youth Advocacy and Well-Being, & Weber Valley Youth Center-Youth Services.

Curious to learn more or become a member? Click the links below to explore our membership options, connect with us on social media, check out upcoming events, trainings, and so much more!



nacassociation.org



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