



Center for Children's Advocacy

Improving the lives of Connecticut's most vulnerable children

KidsCounsel®

Newsletter for Connecticut Attorneys and Child Advocates

October 2010

Center for Children's Advocacy 2010 Annual Report



With great appreciation to our generous donors, this year the Center for Children's Advocacy legal staff provided individual representation to over 500 children statewide and our systemic advocacy and legal rights trainings helped improve the lives of thousands of our most vulnerable youth. We wrote and led the effort to pass groundbreaking legislation that provides educational stability for children in foster care and requires emergency shelter and support services for homeless youth.

Stories from our Annual Report

One morning, when Ephraim was eight years old, his mother put on her coat, lifted a bag filled with laundry, and told Ephraim to stay in the apartment . . . she'd be back in a few minutes. When she didn't return in half an hour, Ephraim was worried. When an hour had passed, he was scared. By afternoon, he was crying as knocked on neighbors' doors to see if anyone knew where his mother had gone. . .

Arthur, born with spina bifida occulta, is a frequent visitor to the emergency room. Early surgical intervention resulted in the discovery of additional complex congenital abnormalities, referred to medically as VATER syndrome. Now thirteen years old, Arthur suffers constant physical distress, and - most recently - a painful and depressing awareness of how different he is from other 13 year old children. . .

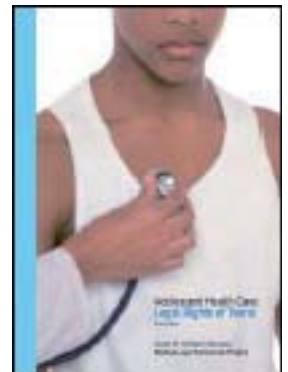
Read these stories and more in our Annual Report at <http://www.kidscounsel.org/2010AnnualReport.pdf>

Adolescent Health Care: Legal Rights of Teens Fourth Edition now available!

The newly printed fourth edition of Adolescent Health Care: Legal Rights of Teens is now available. This updated 96 page book provides practical assistance for health care and mental health care providers, policy makers, and attorneys who represent adolescents. It covers explicit references to Connecticut and Federal law regarding confidentiality in adolescent medical care.

This edition includes important information on topics including:

- Access to Medical and Mental Health Care
- Reproductive Health Care
- Emancipation
- HUSKY Insurance
- Access to Medical Records
- Privacy Rights



- School-Based Health Clinics
- Privileged Communications
- Mandated Reporting
- Statutory Rape
- Advanced Directives and Living Wills
- Law on Bullying
- Immigrants and Refugees: Access to Benefits
- Utility Shutoff
- Statutes and Resources

Read sample pages and order your copy of this important book at

http://www.kidscounsel.org/order_publications_adolescent-health-care.htm (www.kidscounsel.org/publications)

CCA and Partners Begin Truancy Prevention Project in Bridgeport

A new partnership between Center for Children's Advocacy, Child and Family Guidance Center (formerly Greater Bridgeport Child Guidance Center), Bridgeport Public Schools, and the Connecticut Judicial Department has created a new Truancy Court Prevention Project (TCPP) at Jettie S. Tisdale School in Bridgeport, CT. The new program is modeled after CCA's Hartford-based TCPP, which is a collaboration that includes CREC, the Village for Children and Families, Hartford Public Schools, the Judicial Department, and CCA.

The TCPP intervenes with students whose truant behavior puts them at risk of a Families with Service Needs (FWSN) petition in Juvenile Court. Child and Family Guidance provides case management, monitoring the students' attendance and academic achievement, and connecting students to pro-social extracurricular and community activities. CCA provides legal advocacy to help students succeed at school and at home. For example, a student may be truant because of bullying at school, special education issues, or problems with a parent or guardian. CCA works to resolve the legal component of those issues to help improve school attendance.

Judicial involvement in the TCPP is critical to its success. Judge Carol Wolven, from Bridgeport Juvenile Court, conducts bimonthly "court sessions" at the school, monitoring students' progress on various goals. These sessions provide a measure of formality to the process (though they are not legally binding), and allow the judge to interact with students who are in need of her mentoring and guidance, hopefully preventing the need for them to appear before her on the bench.

During the past 6 weeks, each student has been connected to an appropriate tutoring program and enrolled in an after-school program that is best suited to his or her interests. We have provided special education advocacy and conducted a court session with Judge Wolven.

Students are developing good relationships with their case managers and the administration at Jettie S. Tisdale school is cooperative and helpful, providing space for the TCPP, facilitating selection of students, and offering options for after-school programs.

Email CCA attorney Kathryn Meyer for more information on CCA's Bridgeport TCPP: kmeyer@kidscounsel.org

CCA Legislative Success Creates Pilot Project for Homeless Youth

DCF Moving Ahead with Homeless Youth Program

As a result of passage of Connecticut's Homeless Youth Act and the authorization of much-needed services for this invisible population, the CT Team on Runaway & Homeless Youth, chaired by Center for Children's Advocacy Attorney Stacey Violante Cote, has been working with DCF to build a program that will address current gaps in services. The proposal, approved by DCF in September, calls for pilot programs in New Haven and Hartford which will include outreach workers/case managers and "systems navigators" to identify homeless youth and connect them with available resources.

Team members will be trained in the identification of and services for youth who are victims of sexual exploitation/domestic minor sex trafficking. Given the scarcity of housing for homeless youth in CT, DCF will provide funding for basic needs

and urgent supports and services, including housing. The goal is for these teams to interface regularly with other state agencies including Court Support Services Division, Departments of Mental Health and Addiction Services, and Social Services. Additionally, the pilot programs will help fill the existing data gap by documenting the number of homeless youth served or turned away.

The Request for Proposals is slated to be released this month. For more information about the Connecticut Team on Runaway & Homeless Youth or about the new legislation, please go to www.cceh.org/youth.htm or e-mail Stacey Violante Cote. The contact person at DCF is Jamie Lehane. Connecticut's new Homeless Youth legislation was written by CCA attorney Stacey Violante Cote. **For more information, please contact Stacey at sviolant@kidscounsel.org.**

CCA's Work Results in New Policies and Programs for Youth Involved with the Juvenile Justice System

At CCA's urging, the Judicial Department's Court Support Services Division (CSSD) has instituted more rigorous oversight over youth "stuck" in detention.

As a result of her work on the Emily J. lawsuit, which created an array of community based mental health services for juvenile justice youth, CCA's Executive Director, Martha Stone, was asked to be the only non-state employee member of the Judicial Department's Detention Review Committee. This Committee, composed of officials from the Judicial Department and DCF, reviews issues relating to youth waiting for a psychiatric evaluation or residential placement.

The Center for Children's Advocacy urged CSSD to take a closer look at the youth getting "stuck" in the system, waiting inordinate lengths of time for necessary services. As a result, CSSD has promulgated a new policy entitled "Juvenile Residential Services Complex Detention Case", and revised its previous "Juvenile Services Detention Case Processing" policy, both of which now require more intensive oversight and tracking of these youth.

CSSD has opened three new Family Support Centers in response to the work of the Connecticut Legislature's Families with Service Needs Advisory Board. As co-chairs of the Connecticut Legislature's Families with Service Needs Advisory Board, Martha Stone and University of Connecticut Professor Preston Britner played major roles in spearheading the systematic overhaul of the Families with Service Needs process. The Advisory Board's tenure ended on June 30.

Adding to the four existing Family Support Centers for the status offender population (Bridgeport, New Haven, Hartford, Waterbury), three new Centers will be opening by November 1 in Waterford, Middletown, and New Britain. In addition, currently operating YES programs in areas without Family Support Centers will expand their services to handle status offenders by December 1, 2010 (Stamford/Norwalk, Rockville, Danbury and Torrington).

The Connecticut Legislature's FWSN Advisory Board issued two reports, available on CCA's website at http://www.kids-counsel.org/aboutus_programs_teamchild.htm

CCA Advocacy Helps Close Hartford's 2550 Main Street Facility to Improve City's Special Education Program

The start of this school year saw big changes in Hartford Public Schools' in-district special education programming. Chief among these changes was the closing of the 2550 Main Street Academy, the self-contained, in-district special education program for high school students that was the subject of a Center for Children's Advocacy administrative class complaint.

In January 2010, CCA Attorney Hannah Benton filed the administrative class complaint with co-counsel Maria Morelli-Wolfe from Greater Hartford Legal Aid (GHCLA). In May 2010, the State Department of Education (SDE) found in favor of CCA and GHCLA that 2550 Main did not provide a structured, therapeutic setting, in violation of legal requirements for the students who were enrolled there. SDE also found that 2550 Main was "noisy, volatile, and dangerous to students and staff alike." Given these findings, SDE concluded that 2550 Main would have to be moved from its prior location to meet state and federal standards.

Over the summer, Hartford decided to place special education students in out-of-district, private special education schools

or return them to their regular schools, depending on the recommendations of the student's planning and placement team (PPT). Hartford leased a building to High Roads School of Wallingford, a private therapeutic school, to open a Hartford branch of their school. Many of the 2550 Main students were placed at the new High Roads location; others were placed at other private schools or returned to their home schools.

Through continued advocacy, we obtained additional relief for the class beyond that ordered in the original corrective action. First, Hartford must provide to each family of a student who attended 2550 Main a copy of the original SDE decision. Second, each student's planning and placement team (PPT) is required to determine what compensatory educational services the student should receive due to time at 2550 Main. Attorneys Benton and Morelli-Wolfe viewed these provisions as critical to ensuring that families were aware of SDE's findings and corrective actions to better protect their children's rights in the future and to remedying Hartford's failure to provide an appropriate education to these students while at 2550 Main.

Attorney Deborah Marcuse Joins CCA's Teen Legal Advocacy Clinic in Fairfield County

Deborah Marcuse, PhD, JD, has joined the Center for Children's Advocacy as Staff Attorney for the Center's Fairfield County Teen Legal Advocacy Clinic, with an office located at Harding High School in Bridgeport, CT. Prior to joining CCA, Deborah represented plaintiffs in employment discrimination and related matters at the Washington, DC office of Sanford, Wittels & Heisler. As an Arthur Liman Public Interest Fellow in 2008-2009, Deborah helped establish the City of New Haven's Prison Reentry Initiative. She is a graduate of Yale University, Duke University and Yale Law School.

You can reach Deborah at dmarcuse@kidscounsel.org or 203-223-8975.

**Center for Children's Advocacy
www.kidscounsel.org
860-570-5327**