



Center for Children's Advocacy

Improving the lives of Connecticut's most vulnerable children.

July 2011 Newsletter

This newsletter is emailed throughout the year. If you would like to receive our email newsletters, please send your address to jbrady@kidscounsel.org Thanks!

Spring for Kids! Center Honors 2011 Champion of Children Award Recipients

In April, the Center for Children's Advocacy celebrated the accomplishments of our organization and paid tribute to the Center's 2011 Champions of Children.

Below from left: Ann Taylor, Sr. VP and General Counsel, Connecticut Children's Medical Center; Senator Toni Harp; Bill Carbone, Executive Director, CT Judicial Dept. Court Support Services Division (with Kathryn Carbone); Representative Toni Walker.



All were inspired by our youth ambassadors and speakers. At left, Center Attorney Stacey Violante Cote shares a moment with client Jenille after Jenille's moving presentation.

To see all event photos, please go to www.kidscounsel.org and click on *Event Photos*.



Above, Center for Children's Advocacy Executive Director Martha Stone welcomed a crowd of over 200 to the reception at Braza in Hartford.

Jason's academic struggles began long before the day he was arrested at school for a fight in the cafeteria.

Jason is only 14 years old, but he has a long history of academic failure. In the 2009-2010 school year, he accrued over 60 unverified absences and over 50 days of outside-school suspension. He lost over half the year of education.

Despite an early diagnosis of depressive disorder, difficulty controlling his anger,

and a long history of academic failure, Jason had never been evaluated for special education.

Teacher reports continually noted severe behavior problems. Jason's grades re-



flected his struggles, revealing significantly below grade level performance in every subject.

The school had a legal obligation to refer Jason to

special education - his academic performance was consistently unacceptable, and he had severe attendance and behavior issues - but no evaluations were done until the Center for Children's Advocacy got involved.

Center for Children's Advocacy attorney Hannah Benton reviewed Jason's educational records, helped Jason's mother request educational evaluations for her son, and secured a stay of the recent expulsion, pending Jason's placement at a therapeutic school.

(continued on next page)

Center Achieves Phenomenal Success in Passage of Five New Bills to Protect Connecticut's Children

The Center for Children's Advocacy wrote and secured passage of new legislation which directly improves the lives of Connecticut's most vulnerable children.

Child Welfare

Public Act 11-116

Increase Kinship Care for Abused and Neglected Children

Placing an abused or neglected child with relatives can greatly ease the trauma a child suffers when removed from home. Connecticut's kinship care rate lags far below the national average. This legislation requires DCF to take several steps to increase the number of abused and neglected children placed in relative foster care. Effective Oct. 1, 2011.

Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking

Public Act 11-180

Require Law Enforcement to Report Youth Arrested for Prostitution to DCF

Within 48 hours of leaving home, one in three youth are lured into prostitution (domestic minor sex trafficking). Law enforcement is the most likely entity to come into contact with these victims and DCF is best suited to provide help. This law requires DCF to conduct child abuse or neglect investigations of youth who get arrested on prostitution charges. Effective Oct. 1, 2011.

Health

Public Act 11-80

Protect CT's Youngest Citizens

Legislation creates a new category of utility protection for the youngest and most vulnerable citizens. If a child under 24 months of age is to be discharged from the hospital and the household is threatened with utility termination, the physician can complete a certification stating that the health and well-being of the child is in jeopardy if the utilities are terminated. This protection is part of this session's sweeping reform of utility law in Connecticut. Effective July 1, 2011.

For links and more information about significant recent state legislation, please go to www.kidscounsel.org/legislative_state_SigRecent.htm

Juvenile Justice/Education

Public Act 11-115

Juvenile Reentry and Education

Youth released from the juvenile justice or criminal justice system face numerous barriers to their successful return to school and the community. This legislation addresses the refusal of school districts to promptly enroll students upon their return, and credits students for instruction completed while in juvenile justice placements. Effective Jul. 1, 2011.

Public Act 11-154

Detention of Children and Disproportionate Minority Contact in the Juvenile Justice System

Disproportionate minority contact (DMC) in Connecticut's juvenile justice system has persisted for decades. Youth of color are more likely to enter and progress further through the juvenile justice system than their white peers. This legislation requires a court order before a child can be sent to detention, a practice that has proven effective in eliminating DMC at the point of entry to detention, and requires state agencies to report on plans and progress to reduce DMC. Sec. 1 effective Oct. 1, 2011; Sec. 2 effective upon passage.

Public Act 11-136

Revisions to the Education Statutes

When a child is truant, there is often no action taken until attendance issues are at a critical stage, making it difficult to re-engage a struggling child in school, particularly where the child suffers from undiagnosed or unrecognized mental health or educational disabilities. This legislation requires schools to file "Families With Service Needs" Petitions within fifteen days of a parent's failure to cooperate with school efforts to address a truancy issue. Sec. 16(a-e), effective Jul. 1, 2011.



Jason (continued from page 1)

Jason's diagnostic evaluations determined a language-based learning disability. He was found eligible for special education and placed in a therapeutic program, and the school agreed with Attorney Benton that Jason should not be expelled.

Jason's academic career has changed dramatically. At his new school, Jason receives individualized course work and significant therapeutic supports within a structured behavioral redirection program. He has flourished with these supports, both academically and behaviorally, and received an A or a B in each of his classes. He was not suspended once during the 2010-2011 school year.

Teacher reports indicate a striking difference in Jason in the therapeutic setting, emphasizing his hard work and ownership of his own behavior. The school social worker describes Jason as a role model for other students.

School staff are working with Jason on effective communication of his thoughts and feelings and to develop a mechanism to cope with his emotions. Jason will continue to receive educational services and evaluations through the summer to insure that his progress continues.

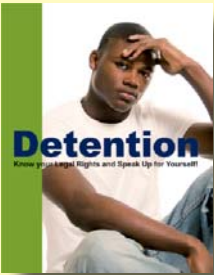
With the Center's intervention and support, Jason has had no further arrests and is happy at school.

Read more about the Center's Team-Child Juvenile Justice work at www.kidscounsel.org/aboutus_programs_teamchild.htm.

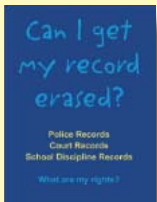
Center Releases New Legal Rights Publications



Immigration Law in the Medical Setting
New book assists providers who work with immigrants and refugees, covering legal issues regarding healthcare and benefits eligibility. Includes case scenarios/legal dilemmas often encountered.



Legal Rights in Detention
For youth in juvenile detention, this newly updated book outlines legal rights and responsibilities of the Detention Center and others to keep them safe. Written by the Center and published by the CT Judicial Dept CSSD.



Records Erasure
New topic from the Center's Teen Legal Rights series, written for youth and for attorneys and advocates.

To order publications, go to www.kidscounsel.org/publications or call 860-570-5327.

Helping Hands

Community Thrift Store
and Furniture Bank, New Haven

Shop or Donate to benefit the Center.
Call 203-782-4800 for pick-up

Please designate the Center for Children's Advocacy as the beneficiary.

Center for Children's Advocacy Awarded National Grant to Reduce Racial & Ethnic Disparities & "School-to-Prison Pipeline"

Connecticut's juvenile justice system incarcerates more minority youth than almost any other state in the country.

Connecticut also has the worst school achievement gap in the country and minority youth are disproportionately suspended and expelled. These factors combine to create a school-to-prison pipeline, pushing minority youth out of the education system and into the juvenile justice system.

The Juvenile Justice Advisory Committee of the state's Office of Policy and Management commissioned three studies of Disproportionate Minority Confinement (DMC) in Connecticut, published in 1995, 2001 and 2009. Despite more than 15 years of attempts to reduce this inequity, the most recent study found that DMC continues to be a significant problem.

The 2009 report found that Black and Latino youth were more likely than White youth to be:

- referred to court rather than a community agency
- brought to detention
- held in detention prior to adjudication
- transferred to adult court
- sent to a secure juvenile justice facility post-adjudication



Although the Committee issued recommendations to reduce this disparity, few substantive reforms have been implemented.

The Center for Children's Advocacy was recently awarded a grant by the Public Welfare Foundation in Washington, D.C. to partner with the national Center for

Children's Law and Policy. This work will help participating sites identify and implement innovative solutions to DMC.

Using an approach that has proven effective in other parts of the country, staff from the two agencies will work with Hartford and Bridgeport service teams to analyze local data, identify specific points where DMC occurs and develop interventions to reduce racial and ethnic disparities.

As part of this initiative, the Center for Children's Advocacy recently secured passage of state legislation that implements recommendations of the statewide studies, focusing on the requirement of a court order prior to detention, and accountability reporting by state agencies.

Please read the article on newly passed legislation and check our state legislative page at www.kidscounsel.org for information and links to Public Act 11-154, Concerning Detention of Children and Disproportionate Minority Contact.

Seven year old Leo struggles to cope.

Leo is talking about killing himself. His father died this year and at just seven years old, Leo feels the trouble and sadness that surround his family each day.

Leo's mother is struggling. She has three young children to care for - and she is completely on her own. Leo's youngest brother was born with health problems that require frequent medical appointments and hospitalizations. The middle brother has mental health issues that require his mother's constant supervision.

Leo is bullied at school and he cries a lot. He is often not clean and his classmates tease him. Read about Leo and learn how an attorney from the Center helped his family at www.kidscounsel.org/aboutus_programs_childabuseprogram.htm



Center for Children's Advocacy

65 Elizabeth Street
Hartford, CT 06105

PRESORTED
FIRST-CLASS MAIL
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
PERMIT #130

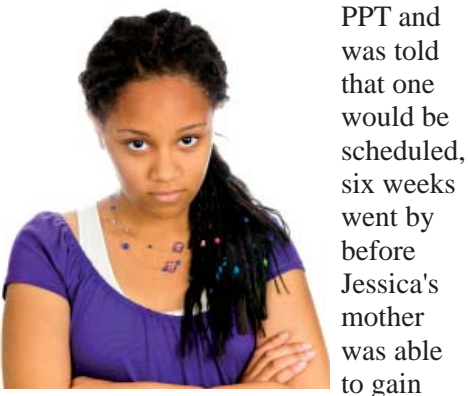
Center Attorneys Fight to Stop "Pushout" of Bridgeport Students

Alternative school programs can be an appropriate option for students who prefer to complete their education in a non-traditional setting. But for many students, Bridgeport schools have violated state law by dictating alternative placements without presenting available options to the student and his/her family.

Connecticut law requires that a PPT (Planning and Placement Team meeting) occur before a student's placement is determined. Working with several teen clients in Bridgeport, attorneys from the Center's Teen Legal Advocacy Clinic learned that students were routinely being placed in alternative programs without the required PPT.

For Jessica, a Harding High School special education student, the school mandated her transfer to the District's Alternative Day program. Jessica's

mother was called by a school administrator and informed of the school's decision. Although she asked for a



PPT and was told that one would be scheduled, six weeks went by before Jessica's mother was able to gain

adequate information about her child's new placement in the Alternative Day program. Read about Jessica and the efforts of the Center's attorneys on behalf of students being "pushed out" of high school at www.kidscounsel.org/about-us_programs_tlac.htm.



Center for Children's Advocacy is a private non-profit, dependant on donations from individuals like you.

We recently received a \$20,000 challenge grant and need your help.

If you would be one of 50 people to each donate \$50 this month, we'll meet our goal.

Our kids count on us.

Can we count on your support?

Please

Donate today at www.kidscounsel.org
or mail your check to
Center for Children's Advocacy
65 Elizabeth St, Hartford, CT 06105