



Center for Children's Advocacy KidsCounsel® News

Summer 2015

Fighting for the legal rights of Connecticut's most vulnerable children

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Center's Attorneys Achieve Another Remarkable Year of Legislative Success

Legislative Wins Resonate for Connecticut's Most Vulnerable Children

Connecticut is First to Prohibit Out-Of-School Suspensions and Expulsions for Young Children

Why is this important?

Early identification of behavioral health issues is key to future academic success. Public Act 15-96 makes Connecticut the first state to pass a comprehensive ban on out-of-school suspension of very young children. The legislation creates a new national model, prohibiting most out-of-school suspensions and expulsions for students in preschool or kindergarten through grade two.

Go to kidscounsel.org and click on events to register for our September 29 seminar on this new legislation.

Track and Tackle Chronic Absenteeism

Why is this important?

Chronic school absence reflects underlying problems. Public Act 15-225 requires the State Department of Education to help develop prevention and intervention plans for districts to tackle chronic absenteeism. Schools must establish attendance teams, track and publish chronic absenteeism data, which is a measure of all absences, excused or unexcused.

Reduce Shackling of Children in Court

Why is this important?

Children and youth deserve respect and have the right to fair representation. Public Act 15-183 creates the legal presumption that a child will have all shackles and mechanical restraints removed before entering a juvenile courtroom, unless the judge determines the child is a safety risk to the court. The Center worked with our juvenile justice partners to pass this new law.

Standardize Alternative Education Programs

Why is this important?

All schools must meet educational standards. Public Act 15-133 directs the establishment of standards for the state's alternative education programs. Alternative Schools are maintained or operated by local or regional boards of education and address the social, emotional, behavioral and academic needs of their students. These programs will be regulated by the Department of Education to assure standards that meet students' needs.

Teach Infant Safe Sleep Practices

Why is this important?

Preventing infant deaths is imperative. Public Act 15-39 requires each hospital, through its maternity program, to provide the parent or guardian of a newborn with written information about safe sleep practices. The Center worked with the Office of the Child Advocate, Child Fatality Review Panel, and Senate Leadership to pass this critical legislation.

Prevent Child Deaths

Why is this important?

Reporting on child deaths is essential to policies that protect children. Public Act 15-221 requires the state's Child Fatality Review Panel to review the policies, practices and procedures used to protect children birth to three from unexpected

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Police-Youth Engagement Center Launched Innovative Training to Promote Understanding

Implicit bias, racial stereotypes, mental health, and psychological trauma impact interaction between law enforcement and youth of color. Adolescent coping behaviors can escalate police interaction into arrest.

The Center recently completed a McArthur Foundation grant to develop a curriculum and train law enforcement and youth to understand and adjust police response to adolescent behavior.

The program was offered at Connecticut Juvenile Training School and included police from Hartford, Bridgeport and New Haven and the most serious youthful offenders returning to the community. Discussions and role-playing improved law enforcement's understanding of traumatic stress reactions—and the experience youth of color often have in interactions with police officers—to help defuse escalation and reduce the arrest rate among youth with traumatic stress and other mental health challenges.

"We had great dialog and I think the program was a success," said Sergeant Al McFadden of the New Haven Police Department.

Youth voiced similar feelings, saying, "We should do more... law officers should know we are scared just like they are... It's not easy once you are stereotyped."

The Cross-Network Law Enforcement Project is a collaboration between the Center for Children's Advocacy, DCF, Yale Consultation Center, Judicial Department (CSSD), and Youth-Law Enforcement Corporation in Philadelphia.



New Legislation (continued)

death or critical injury. The Center worked with the Office of the Child Advocate, Senator Beth Bye, the Co-Chairs of the Children's Committee and Connecticut's Child Fatality Review Panel to pass this legislation.

Permanency, Adoption and Sibling Visitation

Why is this important?

Children's relationships with their siblings help promote stability. Public Act 15-199, Sec18(o) allows children to petition the court for the right to maintain contact and visitation with siblings who live in different homes.

Support and Services for Homeless Youth

Why is this important?

Youth who are homeless and on their own need support. Housing, case management and crisis management are critical. Section 417 of this year's budget implementer bill includes funding for the DCF Homeless Youth Program and changes the age that youth are eligible from 21 to 23.

More information about new legislation is available on our website at kidscounsel.org/newstatelegislation.

Center's June Seminar Draws Large Statewide Audience

Children with healthcare challenges are protected by Federal Law, yet violations of the Americans with Disabilities Act persist. Sponsored by Rutkin, Oldham & Griffin, LLC, the Center's seminar on Preventing Discrimination against Children with Disabilities drew an overflow crowd to the Stamford Government Center. Information and presentations are online at kidscounsel.org/events.



Congratulations to Our Attorneys for Well-Deserved Recognition!



Martha Stone

On June 18, Center for Children's Advocacy executive director Martha Stone was honored with the Pro Bono Award from the Connecticut Law Tribune. Martha founded the Center for Children's Advocacy in 1997. Prior to that, she was the legal director of the Connecticut Civil Liberties Union for 18 years and served as associate director of Children's Rights Inc.



Kathryn Scheinberg Meyer

At a June 25 event at Norwalk's Maritime Aquarium, Center for Children's Advocacy attorney Kathryn Scheinberg Meyer was named one of Fairfield County's 40 Under 40 Leaders by the Fairfield County Business Journal. Kathryn began work at the Center in 2009 as an Equal Justice Works Fellow. Her ability to analyze a case to ensure the best outcome for a vulnerable child, to compose legislation or institute systemic action to benefit thousands of children throughout the state, is remarkable.

Welcome!

New Staff



Tasha Jackson is the Center's new Finance Director. With over ten years of senior level experience in the financial arena, Tasha has directed finance, information technology and human resources at Hartford area nonprofits. She holds a BS in Insurance and Finance and an MBA in Leadership. Reach Tasha at tjackson@kidscounsel.org

New Board



Elise Rosen is a native of Baltimore who has lived in the greater Hartford area since 2003. She is a Business Project Senior Specialist at Cigna Fee for Value Operations. With a BS in Economics and Finance and an MBA, Elise is currently pursuing a Masters in Organizational Psychology at the University of Hartford. Elise looks forward to giving back to Hartford, her adopted community.



Scott Brabant is Chief Financial Officer of Community Health Services. He holds a BS in Finance and Investments, and is an incoming Board Member of the Mental Health Association of CT. As a leader in the healthcare community, Scott is interested in improving the social determinants of health for youth. Scott looks forward to working with the Center for Children's Advocacy to continue to find ways to bridge the healthcare gap.



Claude Mayo is the Coordinator of Early College Programs at Goodwin College. He joined the Goodwin faculty in 2012 after academic and administrative positions at other institutions and has experience in the graduate and undergraduate classroom, student and organization advising, residential life and student conduct. Claude holds a JD from Pennsylvania State University's Dickinson School of Law and is currently an ABD PhD candidate at Cornell University. He has a Master of Public Administration and BS in Applied Economics and Management.

Summertime is raffle time!

Amazing prizes include
Yankees/Red Sox Tickets
Cape Cod Weekend Getaway
Fishing Expedition, Theater Tickets

Tickets are just \$10 each.

Can you volunteer to help us sell tickets or would you like to buy your own tickets? Please email ewilson@kidscounsel.org

Center Launches Racial Justice Project

In Connecticut's largest and poorest cities, youth of color are subject to harsh school discipline, illegal push-out to inferior alternative school programs, and unconstitutional targeting by law enforcement.

The Center recently launched the Racial Justice Project, led by attorney Leon Smith – whose work with education officials, legislators, teachers and families on statewide alternative school programs resulted in recent legislation to standardize and improve the quality of those programs for students, disproportionately youth of color, who attend.

Legislative and administrative advocacy, litigation and collaborative community work help identify and reform policies that lead to racial inequities in educational services, school discipline and treatment by the juvenile justice system.

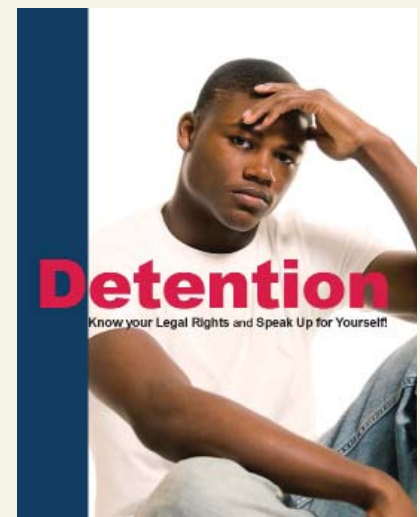
The Center initiated and now co-chairs the state's four Disproportionate Minority Contact (DMC) committees in Bridgeport, Hartford, New Haven and Waterbury, to identify and change policies and practices that result in different treatment for youth of color.

To date, DMC Committees have greatly reduced school-based arrests and suspensions in Bridgeport and Hartford, reduced disparities in the length of time youth of color wait in detention for placement in residential treatment, and reduced court referrals of New Haven and Waterbury youth by allowing minor behavior problems to be handled outside of court, in the community.



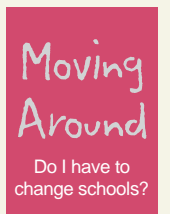
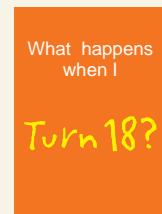
The Center recently expanded its Racial Justice work to Norwalk in response to requests from the Norwalk community. The Center is advising a Norwalk DMC Committee on reducing racial disparities in the juvenile justice system and is representing youth with special needs to address racial disparities in access to Special Education services in Norwalk, as well as other Connecticut cities.

New Updated Publications from the Center



Youth in detention often think they have no rights. Newly updated, *Legal Rights in Detention* helps youth understand the responsibility of the detention center to keep them safe and helps them learn to advocate for their rights.

The book is available in print and online at kidscounsel.org/detentionrights.



We recently updated and republished three of our Teen Legal Rights brochures.

See the full list of publications we offer at kidscounsel.org/publications.

To order, go to kidscounsel.org/publications or email ewilson@kidscounsel.org.

We are very proud of our clients!

(photos on back cover)

1. Terri T. (mother) with **Keyanna T-W** who graduated from Weaver Journalism and Media Academy in Hartford. Shown with Center for Children's Advocacy attorney Marisa Halm.
2. **Jasmine G.** graduated from Glastonbury High School. Shown with Center for Children's Advocacy attorney Zoe Stout.
3. **Mariah P.** graduated from Woodland School in East Hartford.
4. **Keon H.** graduated from 8th grade at Woodland School in East Hartford.
5. **Sierra O.** and **Nyla C.** from the Burr School at Hartford Truancy Court Prevention Project end-of-year celebration.
6. **Aldane R.** from Martin Luther King School at Truancy Court Prevention Project end-of-year celebration in Hartford.
7. Case Worker Brandon Knight, Village for Families and Children, with **Elijuan C.** from Martin Luther King School at Truancy Court Prevention Project end-of-year celebration.
8. **Paola M.** from the Burr School, with her younger sister at the Truancy Court Prevention Project end-of-year celebration.

Wonderful, Heartwarming, Inspirational Evening



Shipman & Goodwin Presenting Sponsor for Center's 2015 Spring for Kids Event

Scott Murphy, Managing Partner of Shipman & Goodwin, LLP and a great friend to the Center for Children's Advocacy, introduced the Center's 2015 Spring for Kids presentations. A special thank you to Shipman & Goodwin for their ongoing, generous support.

Over 200 guests attended the May event at Hartford's Mark Twain House. Our clients shared moving stories that inspire us all to do more.

This year's event raised over \$92,000 to support programs and services! A heartfelt thank you to all our sponsors and all who attended.



Center for Children's Advocacy 2015 Champions of Children

Spring for Kids 2015: Executive Director Martha Stone presented the Center's 2015 Champion of Children awards to (from left): Julian Ford, PhD, Professor, Department of Psychiatry and Director, Child Trauma Clinic, UConn Health Center; Marta Bentham, Director of Family Services and Ombudsman, Hartford Public Schools; James Comer, MD, Professor of Child Psychiatry, Yale Child Study Center and Assistant Dean, Yale School of Medicine.

Corporate Games Challenge

CCA Fundraiser
October 22, 2015

Want to play?

Contact Susan Stein
860-570-5327 ext. 231
sstein@kidscounsel.org



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We are very proud of our clients!



Look inside to learn more about these amazing kids!