



Center for
Children's
Advocacy

Important News

March 2016

Growing National Spotlight for Center for Children's Advocacy

Six out of 120 . .

Center for Children's Advocacy Awarded Funding from Open Society Foundations for New Deep End Diversion Project

The Center for Children's Advocacy was awarded a \$173,000 competitive grant from the Open Society Foundations to develop and support our new Deep End Diversion Project.

Following a nationwide request for proposals, Open Society considered 120 applications and awarded project grants to two national organizations and four state-based organizations as part of their Transformative Youth Justice Initiative. The Center's Deep End Diversion Project will develop innovative mechanisms to reduce arrests of youth living in Connecticut's juvenile justice congregate care facilities.

Deep End Diversion

Youth who get arrested can be placed in juvenile justice residential facilities for treatment to reduce future behavior problems. When a youth continues to have behavior problems inside his residential facility, he can be arrested again, even though his behavior often stems from mental health issues the facilities are supposed to be treating, leading to further penetration into the juvenile justice system.

Diversion programs, which respond to behavior without arrest, can reduce juvenile justice involvement and help youth develop skills to manage behavior and relationships. Youth who commit offenses in the community have the opportunity to participate in diversion programs; youth in the deep end of the juvenile justice system - those living in juvenile justice facilities - do not have access to diversion programs.

The Center's Deep End Diversion Project grew from the work of our Disproportionate Minority Contact Committees, active in four Connecticut cities, which found that high numbers of arrests of youth living in juvenile justice congregate care facilities contribute to racial and ethnic disparities in Connecticut's juvenile justice system.

Deep End Diversion brings together a diverse group of partners to infuse restorative justice practices inside juvenile justice facilities. Project partners include the Department of Children and Families, Center for Restorative Justice, Community Mediation, Connecticut Juvenile Training School, Waterford Country School, and youth with personal experience in the deep end of the juvenile justice system. The program will be piloted at the Connecticut Juvenile Training School and Waterford Country School.

The Deep End Diversion Project is unique:

- The Center for Children's Advocacy is committed to supporting youth voice, and project design ensures that youth help structure the program rather than providing input only after the fact.

- Most restorative justice initiatives are found in schools or at the front end of the juvenile justice system. This project focuses on youth at the deep end of the system.

The Consultation Center at Yale University will evaluate the pilot program for replication in facilities across the state. Information will be disseminated nationwide to address the scarcity of literature about arrests inside facilities and successful strategies to address this.



Steven Hoffer, PhD, LCSW joins Center for Children's Advocacy as Deep End Diversion Project Coordinator.

Steven has held clinical, supervisory and administrative positions at Yale New Haven Hospital, the Connecticut Department of Children and Families and the Annie E. Casey Foundation through Casey Family Services. His clinical experience includes positions as a Mental Health Consultant for Yale Medical

School and their Juvenile Detention Program and Hartford Hospital's Institute of Living in the child, adolescent, and young adult treatment programs. shoffler@kidscounsel.org

CNN in Connecticut to Interview CCA Executive Director Martha Stone

CNN's Poppy Harlow lives in Brooklyn, NY, and has a personal interest in the re-zoning of her school district. She was recently in Hartford to put the focus on Hartford's voluntary school integration program under Sheff v. O'Neill, the city's educational equity lawsuit.



[Watch CNN's interview with Center for Children's Advocacy Executive Director Martha Stone. Click for more photos.](#)

Center for Children's Advocacy and National Center for Youth Law File Expulsion Complaint

The Center for Children's Advocacy, the National Center for Youth Law, and international law firm K&L Gates, filed a lawsuit on behalf of Connecticut families who are suing the state over the

inferior education given to students who are expelled from school - in violation of Connecticut's constitutional guarantee of an adequate education and the right to equal protection under state and federal law.

The lawsuit names the State of Connecticut, State Board of Education and Department of Education, and the Hartford, Bloomfield and Manchester public school districts.

Expelled students, who are disproportionately children of color, receive an unacceptably inferior education in violation of Connecticut's constitutional guarantee. Connecticut routinely pushes out students through disciplinary proceedings and relegates them to an education that does not meet basic standards. The lawsuit calls on the court to affirm the plaintiffs' constitutional right to a meaningful education, to prohibit the practice of offering independent study as an alternative educational opportunity, and to order the state to establish guidance for districts educating students who have been expelled or otherwise removed from school.

One of the plaintiffs is an African-American boy who was expelled from Bloomfield Public Schools for allegations that were never substantiated. While out of school, he was offered two hours of daily supervised independent study as an educational alternative. After three months, support for his independent study abruptly stopped. He moved to Hartford and tried to enroll in Hartford Public Schools the following school year but was illegally denied admission, even after his expulsion was over. When he was finally enrolled, one year later, he was required to repeat his eighth grade year, and offered no remedial support for the 12 months he was out of school.

The second plaintiff is an African-American girl expelled by Hartford Public Schools for fighting. HPS offered a minimal alternative education program. After repeated interventions by the student's mother, the school began providing the student with schoolwork, but the work did not cover all the courses she was taking. She had to complete most of the work independently, with little instruction. Despite diligently completing all work assigned, the student never received grades or credit for the work she completed.

Initially filed in state court, the Center's lawsuit has been removed to federal court.

National Media Coverage

[National School Board Association Legal Clips](#) - National updates on school law issues.

[Youth Today](#) - Published by the Center for Sustainable Journalism, publisher of the Juvenile Justice Information Exchange (JJIE.org)

Center's Youth/Law Enforcement Trainings Continue

Unique Trainings Diffuse Encounters between Police Officers and Youth

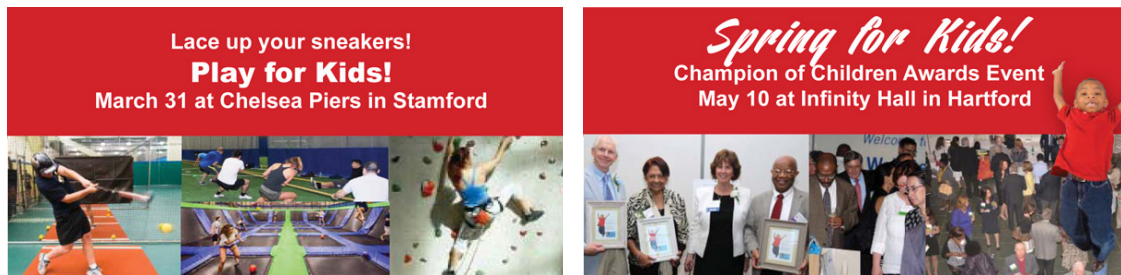
The Center's Youth/Law Enforcement training sessions bring together youth of color and law enforcement officials to promote understanding and help prevent youth involvement with the juvenile justice system.

Our most recent training took place in Bridgeport in December, with a focus on youth who are on parole or probation. Interactions between public safety officers and youth of color determine long and short-term outcomes - will youth remain in the community or return to the juvenile justice system.

The most recent session included 12 youth, 8 facilitators, 5 Bridgeport police officers and 2 staff from the Pennsylvania DMC Youth Law Enforcement Corporation. Discussions focused on bias and stereotypes, tips from each group to encourage positive outcomes, the impact of mental health challenges and psychological trauma on youth behavior, and role play to further understanding.

After the training, youth who participated reported more comfort with law enforcement officials. Law enforcement reported a better understanding of mental health challenges and the impact of trauma on youth behavior.

Save the Dates and Join Us Please!



To attend, play, sponsor, celebrate: click above or email Susan Stein.

Center for Children's Advocacy Attorneys Invited to Present from Coast to Coast

Stacey Violante Cote, Director of the Center's Teen Legal Advocacy Project, presented at the **National Conference on Ending Family and Youth Homelessness** on February 18-19 in **Oakland, CA**. The Conference was organized National Alliance to End Homelessness.

Stacey will present March 15-16 in **Washington, DC**, at the **National Summit on Youth Homelessness**, organized by the National Network for Youth (NN4Y).

Kathryn Meyer, Director of the Center's Speak Up Initiatives, presented at the **US Department of Education's School Discipline Conference** in **Atlanta, GA** on February 17-18 and at the **Rebellious Lawyers Conference** at **Yale Law School** on February 19.

Attorney Edwin Colon will present on **LGBTQ Youth Issues and the Law** at the **Connecticut Public Interest Law Journal and Connecticut Bar Foundation Symposium** on March 4 at UConn Law School.

Edwin will speak at the **Intersectionality: True Colors Conference** at **University of Connecticut** on March 18.

Executive Director Martha Stone presented to the Connecticut Legislature's **Juvenile Jurisdiction Policy Oversight Committee** on January 28 on Recommendations Relating to Ensuring **Educational Excellence and Opportunity for Students in Connecticut's Juvenile Justice System**.

Deputy Director Jay Sicklick and Medical-Legal Project Medical Director Ada Fenick, MD, will speak April 7 at the **National MLPP Conference** in **Indianapolis**. They will lead a discussion on **Aligning a Medical-Legal Partnership with a Healthcare Institution's Vision of Health**.

Bonnie Roswig, Senior MLPP Staff Attorney, will present April 7 at the **National MLPP Conference on Patient Crisis and Loss of Heat and Electricity**; and MLPP attorneys' use of the **Americans with Disabilities Act: A Powerful Tool for Justice**.

Ada Fenick, MD Appointed Medical Director of Center's Medical-Legal Partnership Project

Ada Fenick, MD has been appointed Medical Director of the Center for Children's Advocacy Medical-Legal Partnership Project. Dr. Fenick joined the MLPP in 2013 as medical-site director at Yale New Haven Hospital, where she is Associate Medical Director for Pediatric Primary Care. Her practice has focused on improved healthcare delivery for at-risk children. She is co-chair of the Special Interest Group for Continuity for the Academic Pediatric Association (APA), serves on the Executive Committee for APA Healthcare Delivery, and is Medical Director for Connecticut's WIC program. ada.fenick@yale.edu



Sabrina Tavi, Esq. Joins Center's Child Abuse Project

Sabrina Tavi began her career with the Juvenile Rights Division of the Legal Aid Society in New York and represented hundreds of children in child protective and juvenile delinquency proceedings. She was a senior attorney in the Special Litigation Unit of the New York Legal Assistance Group, conducting systemic reform and impact litigation on behalf of low-income and indigent clients. She clerked for the Honorable John T. Nixon in United States District Court for the Middle District of Tennessee. stavi@kidscounsel.org



Center's Seminars at Full Capacity Excellent Presentations on Critical Topics

Special Immigrant Juvenile Status Huge Statewide Response for Three-Part Attorney Training

In response to the growing need of undocumented children in Connecticut for legal representation in our state courts, the Center held a three-part training for 42 Connecticut attorneys.



Undocumented children who have been abused, neglected or abandoned may qualify for Special Immigrant Juvenile Status. The Center successfully matched children to trained attorneys who are providing pro-bono representation. Legal representation in state and immigration court proceedings is critical for this vulnerable population. Email Center for Children's Advocacy Attorney [Edwin Colon](mailto:Edwin.Colon@yale.edu) if you would like to help or for information on upcoming training.

Autism: Research, Diagnosis, Intervention Over 200 Attendees

Our recent seminar on Autism at Bridgeport Hospital featured Dr. Fred Volkmar, primary author of the American Psychiatric Association's DSM-IV autism and pervasive developmental disorders section. Speakers included Debra Anderson, Project Manager, Autism Spectrum Disorder, DDS; Ada Fenick, MD, Associate Professor of Pediatrics and Associate Medical Director, Yale-New Haven Children's Hospital; Ellen Livingston, Assistant VP of Community Support, Beacon Health Options and Director, Autism Services Disorders Department; Lois Rosenwald, Executive Director, Autism Services & Resources, Connecticut; and Jay Sicklick, Esq, Deputy Director of the Center for Children's Advocacy and Director of the Center's Medical-Legal Partnership Project. The seminar was generously sponsored by the Bridgeport Law Firm of Cohen and Wolf. [Click for seminar presentations](#)



Jonathan's Adoption!



The Center for Children's Advocacy met Jonathan and his sisters in 2011, when Jonathan was 5 years old. They were victims of severe neglect and emotional trauma, and DCF removed the children from their mother's home.

The Center worked to bolster supports that would allow Jonathan to reunify with his biological father, but those efforts did not succeed. We helped ease Jonathan's transition to a nurturing foster family, where he developed a strong relationship with his foster father, Michael Jones.

CCA Deputy Director Jay Sicklick worked with Jonathan's clinical providers for a therapeutic educational placement, ensuring that his emotional and behavioral needs were met. And in January, Michael Jones adopted Jonathan. He is in a supportive permanent home and continues to have an important relationship with his sisters.

Youth Day at the Capitol

Center for Children's Advocacy Attorney Zoe Stout and Youth Advocate Lishkaly Padilla at "Letting Kids be Kids," Youth Day at the Capitol, January 14, 2016. Lishkaly suggested that DCF provide Foster Family Profiles to help youth entering foster care know more about the family they will join.



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