



Center for Children's Advocacy Program to Assist Child Immigrants Receives Grant from Latino Endowment Fund at Hartford Foundation for Public Giving

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Caraly was born in Honduras. Her father abandoned the family when Caraly was only three years old. They struggled on the brink of homelessness, and Caraly's mother made the heartrending decision to look for work in the United States. Caraly was left with her grandmother in the city of San Pedro Sula, Honduras.

San Pedro Sula is known as the murder capital of the world. When Caraly was twelve, her grandmother began to receive demands for protection money from a known criminal gang. Living in fear for almost a year, Caraly's grandmother finally was able to make arrangements to get Caraly to her mother in Connecticut – only to be met with deportation proceedings from the U.S. Immigration agency.

The Center for Children's Advocacy represented Caraly in a successful petition to the Court. Caraly is now doing extremely well in school and plans to graduate from high school in June 2017.

The needs of immigrant children can be highly complex. With a \$20,000 grant from the Latino Endowment Fund, the Center's Project LLEGAR can provide holistic support for more immigrant children like Caraly. The Center will provide legal representation for undocumented minors who may qualify for special immigrant juvenile status, an alternative form of immigration relief available to abused, neglected or abandoned children.

"There is nothing more important than protecting children who have no one else to turn to," said Attorney Edwin Colon, director of Project LLEGAR. "This grant from the Latino Endowment Fund allows the Center to help undocumented children access safety and the educational services they need to achieve their full potential. Project LLEGAR's legal services, training and advocacy improve the ways the education system and the Department of Children and Families meet the needs of Latino children and youth."

While this grant focuses on children, Project LLEGAR will work with families, community providers, legal professionals and schools to create a holistic model of service that can be implemented by school systems throughout Connecticut. Project LLEGAR staff will train Connecticut lawyers to provide pro-bono representation, building their capacity to provide legal support for immigrant children.

"The members of the Latino Endowment Fund always seek to support organizations and initiatives that serve some of our most vulnerable residents," said Nelly Rojas Schwan, chair of the Latino Endowment Fund steering committee. "We are proud to support the Center for Children's Advocacy's effort to support immigrant children who have suffered a great deal and have come to our country to have a new start in life and need supports to be healthy, stable and productive."