

Who Will Speak For Me?



Your Support Means So Much to So Many Children

Connecticut cities are among the poorest in the country, and low-income children continuously fall through the cracks of state support systems.

The Center for Children's Advocacy serves thousands of these children each year.

With your ongoing support, children in need will continue to receive the legal representation and services necessary to help them achieve a secure, self-dependent future.

The Center for Children's Advocacy is a private, non-profit, public interest legal organization dedicated to the promotion and protection of the legal rights of poor children who are dependent upon a variety of Connecticut systems – judicial, child welfare, health, mental health, education, and juvenile justice. The Center is funded primarily by grants and contributions.

Affiliated with the University of Connecticut School of Law, CCA's twin missions are to provide holistic legal services to children in their own communities, and to improve the quality of legal representation of children through interdisciplinary models and training programs.

"I am bounced around from home to home. I miss a lot of school, wake up in a house that's not mine, sleep in a bed that's not mine. I always feel like an outsider."

CCA attorneys help children's voices be heard.

Child Abuse Project

The Center's Child Abuse Project provides legal representation for Connecticut's most vulnerable children.

CCA attorneys represent many abused and neglected children each year.

We listen very carefully to build a relationship with the child; we give each child a voice so we can secure the best possible child welfare, health, mental health and educational opportunities for each individual.

In addition to our individual legal representation, CCA's systemic advocacy helps improve the system for all children.

In the past year, we have written and sponsored important legislation to open the courts in child protection cases.

We helped establish Connecticut's Child Protection Commission, and we served on committees that initiate statewide system changes.

Under contract with the Judicial Department, the Center provides training for all new lawyers hired by the state to represent children. We operate a mentoring program for new attorneys and those currently in the system, to improve the quality of legal representation for all children.

The Center provides key information to children in the child welfare system, empowering them to speak up and request the services they need. Recent materials distributed to children statewide include an important question and answer book and video for children in foster care that help them get the support they must have to lead healthy, productive lives.

In the next few months, we will introduce another legal rights video package for children who are living in emergency shelters or group homes throughout Connecticut.



Miguel was only 12 years old when his mother died. He was suffering from psychiatric disabilities and had no family who could help care for him.

DCF hospitalized Miguel for several months, and upon his release placed him in an out-of-state residential treatment center where his prognosis steadily improved.

When the treatment center recommended that Miguel be discharged to a less restrictive setting, he was eager to return to his community.

CCA worked with DCF and participated in treatment plan meetings. Miguel's clinician recommended his timely transition to the community, but Miguel remained institutionalized for months.

DCF could not find an appropriate home for Miguel because of a "lack of openings."

State and federal law mandate that Miguel be allowed to live in the community, and CCA went to court to ask that he be immediately referred for a therapeutic group home or foster home.

Soon after the court hearing, Miguel was approved for placement in a therapeutic

group home very near his extended family.

CCA worked with the local school district to develop an educational plan that would provide for Miguel's complex, evolving needs.

Miguel now lives in the group home, attends public high school, and visits with family members often.

Medical-Legal Partnership Project

The Center's Medical-Legal Partnership improves children's health outcomes by ensuring that basic needs are met for the child and for the family.

Growing up in poverty presents a serious threat to a child's health.

CCA's collaboration with health providers in central Connecticut is an ongoing, expanding success. The Partnership provides medical-legal advocacy that is accessible to virtually 100% of Hartford families, improving health outcomes for many low-income children.

MLPP offices are on site at the Connecticut Children's Medical Center and Saint Francis Hospital and Medical Center. In addition, our attorneys work on site at Burgdorf/Bank of America Health Center, Charter Oak Health Center, and Community Health Services, and provide consultation services to scores of community-based pediatric practices in the capitol region.

The Partnership eliminates barriers to legal assistance and provides a cross-disciplinary response to complex health issues. We help families secure appropriate care for their children when they are ill or injured. Recent cases ranged from access to health care and appropriate special education services, to Supplemental Security Income appeals, denials of Medicaid, and immigration issues.

We conduct ongoing multidisciplinary training sessions for pediatric providers and child advocates in areas that affect children's health outcomes.

Our systemic and legislative advocacy work to ensure preservation of children's health insurance benefits. In the most recent legislative session, the MLPP was successful in efforts to greatly expand the opportunity for severely disabled children to receive medically necessary physical, occupational, and speech and language therapies outside the home.

The Medical Legal Partnership Project publishes a monthly newsletter that is received by physicians throughout the state.



Krista is a severely impaired eight year old with cerebral palsy, hydrocephalus, hearing impairment, sleep disorder and feeding difficulties.

Her mother, Rita, worked as a job coach with a mid-size employer for over two years. The employer hired Rita with full knowledge of her daughter's disability.

Rita left work early one day to arrange a fitting for Krista's leg brace.

Her supervisor said she was "leaving early too often" and told Rita that she was fired.

Shocked that she was discharged because she had to care for her daughter, Rita submitted a letter of resignation. When she filed to collect unemployment benefits, the Department of Labor (DOL) ruled her ineligible because she had voluntarily quit her job.

Rita appealed to the DOL's Appeals Division and a nurse-practitioner working with Krista referred Rita to CCA's Medical-Legal Partnership Project for immediate intervention.

Working with Krista's clinicians, the Medical-Legal Partnership challenged the DOL's denial at an administrative hearing.

With Rita's testimony and legal documentation secured from Krista's clinicians, the Appeals Division ruled the termination a "discharge" and reversed the denial of benefits.

The Medical-Legal Partnership Project poses **6** critical questions for pediatric medicine providers to review with parents:

Do you have enough food?

Are your housing conditions safe?

Is there enough money to pay for necessities?

Do you have problems getting your health insurance to pay for services or medicine?

Is your child receiving appropriate education?

Are you or family victims of domestic violence?

Teen Legal Advocacy Clinic

The Center's Teen Legal Advocacy Clinic works with students who are overwhelmed by the crises in their lives to help them stay in school.

Hartford has one of the highest drop-out rates in Connecticut.

On site at Hartford Public High School, youth shelters, and local community agencies, the Teen Legal Advocacy Clinic provides legal representation to resolve issues such as homelessness, access to state benefits, mental health services, teen dating violence, or special education.

Abuse and neglect issues require immediate intervention on the teen's behalf.

This year, the Clinic published new teen legal rights materials on issues as diverse as emancipation, financial aid for college, child support, and truancy.

Brochures on teen dating violence and reproductive health care were published for statewide distribution, and included information regarding access to services throughout the state.

In addition to training opportunities held in Hartford throughout the year, the TLAC offered trainings for service providers in New Haven and Bridgeport, and distributed printed legal rights support materials.

We assist individual teens, and work to promote changes to the policies and practices of the schools, school systems, and involved state agencies.

Truancy Court Prevention Project

Truancy often masks long-standing academic difficulties, emotional crises, safety concerns, or low self esteem.

The TCPP offers intense support to help students stay in school through graduation and become productive, self-supporting adults.

Now in its third year at Hartford Public High School and expanding for the first time to Hartford's Quirk Middle School, the TCPP partners CCA with the Capitol Region Education Council, Catholic Family Services, Connecticut Judicial Department, The Hartford Financial Services Group, Hartford Public Schools, Nutmeg Big Brothers Big Sisters, and the Village for Families and Children.

Services include case management, legal and educational advocacy, and weekly monitoring of attendance and academic progress. The TCPP also addresses systemic issues that contribute to high dropout rates and student disengagement from school.



Erica was 16 when she was referred to the Center's Teen Legal Advocacy Clinic.

She had been abandoned by her parents, was in the care of the Department of Children and Families, and had moved through two foster homes before being placed in a youth shelter in Hartford.

Erica had waited months for a new placement, and the Teen Legal Advocacy Clinic was told repeatedly that there was no place for her to go.

In the past year, other youth also talked to the Teen Legal Advocacy Clinic attorneys about their experiences in the shelters.

Although DCF dictates that shelter stays never be longer than 45 days, there were clearly serious violations occurring, and youth were stuck in the shelters for as long as a year.

The Teen Legal Advocacy Clinic outlined the serious behavioral and emotional consequences of these living arrangements to DCF, suggesting remedial measures for this system-wide crisis.

As a result of the Clinic's intervention, DCF implemented immediate measures to review the cases of each youth waiting for placement.

Erica was placed in a Transitional Living Program. She now has her own apartment, a part-time job, and is attending school full time.

Team Child - Juvenile Justice Project

The Center's TeamChild - Juvenile Justice Project is an innovative legal advocacy program that addresses the underlying causes of a child's delinquency.

Special collaboration with the Hartford Juvenile Public Defender's Office allows a TeamChild attorney to handle the civil legal issues which are often at the root of a delinquency problem. These issues frequently include special education, abuse and neglect, or access to mental health treatment.

CCA's interdisciplinary approach provides each child with access to critical educational assessments. The TeamChild program has contributed to increased rates of successful school re-entry and a greater number of community-based outcomes for the children involved.

Girls' Juvenile Justice Project

The Girls' Juvenile Justice Project project promotes gender-responsive policies and practices to ensure that girls in the juvenile justice system receive treatment that is appropriate to their needs.

The Project works to stimulate broad reform in the way girls are treated by the juvenile justice system.

Goals of the project include improved conditions of confinement for girls in detention centers and increased alternatives to confinement, both of which will contribute to a higher probability of success for girls leaving the juvenile justice system.

Juvenile Justice Alliance

The Center is a founding partner in the Connecticut Juvenile Justice Alliance, an advocacy collaboration that addresses the needs of children in Connecticut's Juvenile Justice System.

In the past year, the Alliance led the drive to pass legislation that would raise the age of adulthood from 16 to 18 years. Research has shown that children under 18 do not have the same mental or decision-making abilities as adults, yet, in Connecticut, they are confined in adult prisons if arrested. Although the legislation did not pass last year, renewed efforts have begun to maintain awareness and encourage passage of the legislation in this year's session.



Louis is a 15 year old who was attending the Hartford Transitional Learning Academy. One day during the late spring, Louis arrived at school and none of his regular teachers were there.

Someone who was not aware of Louis' mental health problems (which included touch aversion) took him by the arm to guide him to a classroom.

Louis says he does not remember what happened next. He was restrained, and some adults received minor injuries from the incident that occurred.

The police officer assigned to the school arrested Louis; he was held in jail until his mother could make bail.

The Learning Academy was not an appropriate program for Louis and he no longer felt safe there. In addition to an inappropriate response to Louis' loss of control, the educational program did not offer the necessary vocational component.

When the school refused to place Louis in a private program, the Center's TeamChild attorney advocated on his behalf.

Louis and his family accepted an opportunity for Louis to attend a program that meets his psychiatric and vocational needs.

CCA was successful in having criminal charges dropped, based on Louis' psychiatric history.

"Please don't send me away. They're gonna pick on me because I can't read or write."

CCA attorneys help children's voices be heard.

Interdisciplinary Partnership

The Center's Interdisciplinary Partnership focuses the perspectives of various disciplines to identify solutions for a child who has complex needs.

CCA's Intersdisciplinary Partnership with University of Connecticut graduate schools of Law, Medicine, and Social Work convenes teams of professionals from each discipline to work collaboratively on specific cases.

Partnership teams are comprised of pediatricians, psychiatrists, lawyers, social workers, residents and students from each field.

Two teams—one at Connecticut Children's Medical Center and one at University of Connecticut Health Center—convene each month to discuss individual cases, review current literature, and suggest interventions from appropriate community resources.

Consultation continues outside team meetings, enhancing relationships among professionals and building students' skills for working collaboratively across disciplines.



Maria is eight years old. Her local school system placed her at a transitional program for young children, based on overly aggressive behavior toward her peers.

Maria suffers from an expressive language disorder. She has been diagnosed with ADHD, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, and Oppositional Defiant Disorder.

Maria's aggressive behavior mandated psychiatric hospitalization. Upon discharge, Maria received comprehensive outpatient therapy for nine months.

Maria was not making progress in school. She was tested and found to have a full scale IQ of 58. She was unable to read. Her behavioral outbursts were controlled with medication.

The Center for Children's Advocacy's Interdisciplinary Team was asked to provide guidance on the evaluations to be requested at Maria's upcoming review by the school district. They also provided consultation on the origins of her diagnoses.

The Interdisciplinary Team recommended specific testing that could determine the extent of a receptive/expressive disorder that might be precluding Maria from appropriate learning in her present environment. They also suggested further evaluation regarding administration of Maria's daily medications.

The Team continues to follow Maria's situation to ensure that she will receive the educational, medical and mental health services that best suit her needs.

"I want just one relative to come to my birthday party."

CCA attorneys help children's voices be heard.

Systemic Advocacy

The Center's systemic advocacy improves conditions for children involved in many state systems.

Legislative Advocacy

The Center's legislative activity includes identification of needs throughout all state systems that serve children; authorship of new legislation to support changes where needed; advocacy within the legislature to encourage hearings on proposed legislation; testimony in support of passage; and, meetings and communication with legislators to educate on issues and assure critical support.

Last year, the Center was successful in securing passage of two bills:

Public Act 06-188 (HB480) mandates that the Department of Social Services provide reimbursement under HUSKY for medically necessary therapeutic services for children.

Public Act 06-192 (HB5758) mandates that schools send the records of transfer students under the care of the Department of Children and Families to the student's new school; and that credit be given, within thirty days of the transfer, for all prior instruction received.



Class Action Cases

The Center continues involvement with major class action cases:

Emily J.

Filed on behalf of children in state juvenile detention centers, *Emily J.* focuses on timely, appropriate response to this population's mental health needs. CCA is charged with enforcing a settlement secured to expand community-based mental health treatment.

Sheff

Sheff continues to seek an end to the racial and ethnic isolation of Hartford's school children. CCA is one of the lead advocacy groups to represent the interests of the 25,000 children included. The lawsuit recently noted its ten year anniversary.

Emily J. On June 5, 2005, CCA reached a ground-breaking Settlement Agreement in *Emily J. v. Rell*, providing children with mental health needs access to \$8.5 million of new services aimed at diverting them from placement in overcrowded detention cells.

Emily J., originally brought in 1993, challenged conditions of confinement in Hartford, New Haven and Bridgeport Juvenile Detention Centers.

Children with severe mental health needs were often untreated; statistics show that almost 60% of children in detention have mental health problems.

Although a Consent Decree was signed in 1997, detention centers continued to be overcrowded, children waited too long for mental health evaluations, and delays in placement were prevalent. Plaintiffs filed a motion to modify the Decree, resulting in a June 2002 Court Order that required development of a comprehensive system of screening, assessment, planning and services.

Recently, Plaintiffs negotiated regarding delivery of mental health services, which resulted in a second court-ordered

Agreement (in effect until October 2007) which generates \$8.5 million in new services that divert children with mental health needs from unnecessary confinement in detention.

New services include:

Planning: special pre-adjudication case review to develop treatment plans and identify options to reduce the number of days children spend in detention.

Community-based services: wrap-around home-based services to provide behavioral health treatment including assessment, clinical support, mobile crisis, case management, and trauma-specific counseling for victims of sexual abuse.

Residential options for children who can't return home: foster care as an alternative to residential placements, including a clinically staffed group home.

Training: DCF workers, parole officers and probation officers receive training in care coordination.

Court-appointed Monitor: to oversee the efficacy of services provided.

KidsCounsel Training Program

The Center's KidsCounsel Training Program works to assure that Connecticut children receive legal representation that is consistently of the highest quality.

The KidsCounsel Training Program allows the Center to impact representation of children beyond the capacity of its small staff.

Training Seminars present expert speakers on a broad range of important topics.

The Fall 2006 seminar, developed to educate attorneys on changes that affect their representation of Connecticut's children, included presentations by Honorable Barbara Quinn, Chief Administrative Judge of the Superior Court for Juvenile Matters; Darlene Dunbar, Commissioner of the Department of Children and Families; Carolyn Signorelli, Chief Child Protection Attorney for the newly-formed Child Protection Commission; and, William Carbone, Director of the Judicial Department's Court Support Services Division.

Past seminars have included informative sessions on teen legal rights; bullying in schools; medical issues in abuse and neglect cases; and, "how-to" training sessions on specifics of representation.

State Trainings for Connecticut Contract Attorneys

The Center recently contracted with the Connecticut Judicial Department to provide a training program for the state's newly-appointed contract attorneys. These trainings feature experts in the field who share critical information in each important session. The program also includes a mentoring project that matches each new contract attorney with a practicing attorney to provide guidance and support.

www.kidscounsel.org

The KidsCounsel website provides updates on law and legislation, a library of placement and professional resources, news of upcoming seminars, links to important sites, summaries of relevant cases, and CCA publications and presentations.

KidsCounsel Newsletter

Published three times each year, the KidsCounsel newsletter highlights breaking cases, recent legislative activity, and news from the Center's programs and seminars. The newsletter is mailed to over a thousand attorneys and advocates throughout Connecticut.

Resource Center

CCA's Resource Center includes books, videos and reference files available to all child advocates.

ListServ

CCA's ListServ allows subscribers to discuss important legal issues facing children, and is a resource for immediate information from other members. Statewide participation in the Center's ListServ provides information on issues ranging from school suspensions, to placement services, to recent case updates and seminar information.

Publications

CCA publications include booklets and brochures on important topics such as Adolescent Health Care, Teen Legal Rights, Legal Rights in Foster Care, and, a newly-developed package of materials on the legal rights of homeless youth.

The Medical Legal Partnership Project publishes a monthly newsletter that is received by physicians throughout the state.

Legal rights packages include question & answer books and videos, developed to empower youth who are in the care of the state. These include:

- Who Will Speak for Me?

- I Will Speak Up for Myself: legal rights of children in foster care

- I Will Speak Up for Myself: legal rights of youth in shelters, group homes, or residential treatment



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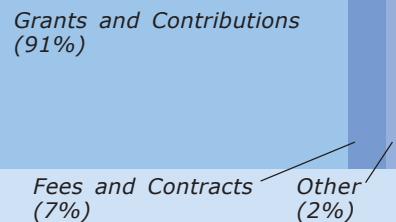
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Other	15,281
Total Income	845,864



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Total Expense	844,727

