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## Who Will Speak For Me?®

Center for Children's Advocacy  
Annual Report 2018



**You made it happen.**

This has been a year of unbelievable challenge. And change.

You changed the lives of immigrant children in Connecticut who lived in fear of deportation. You provided legal support for kids who aged out of state care and had no one to turn to for support.

You reduced racial inequities in Connecticut's largest cities, secured medical access for kids living in deplorable situations, allowed children with disabilities to join classmates on the playground, and children with diabetes to attend summer programs.

You improved the education of students with special needs and helped youth returning to the community get back to school and secure employment. You found safety for kids who were homeless and afraid, and passed legislation that protects more youth than ever before.

**You are our heroes.**

This critical ongoing work could never be done without you. Thank you for being there for the children who need you.

Martha Stone  
Executive Director

**DONATE NOW TO  
CONTINUE YOUR  
SUPPORT**

**If you are neutral in situations of injustice,  
you have chosen the side of the oppressor.**

– Desmond Tutu

# Education and Bullying

Xavier was relentlessly bullied.

His mother met with the teacher. She went to the school counselor. She left many messages for Bridgeport's administration. No one got back to her and nothing was done.

When kids at school pushed Xavier down a flight of stairs, his mom had no choice but to get him out of there.

Through a friend, she heard about the Center for Children's Advocacy.

Xavier's CCA attorney pressured the school to deal with the bullying. It is the law. They held a meeting and CCA won a directive to enroll Xavier in a program that meets his special education needs.

We relieved the family's daily fear about Xavier's physical and emotional safety.

Our legal representation secured a support system that helped Xavier become a happy and confident young man. He likes school.

For the very first time, Xavier has friends. He was even invited to a birthday party.

**What can I say about Xavier's CCA attorney, who has not only made my son so happy, but has given me hope for his future?**

— Xavier's mother



# Racial Justice

Angelyna, an excellent student and athlete, was left to defend herself when Stratford schools brushed off the discrimination and harassment she suffered on her daily bus ride to school.

“Boys on the bus were constantly calling me the N word, and making sexual comments. My family went to the school so many times to tell them what was happening. That made the boys treat me worse.”

Angelyna lashed out one day and struck one of the boys who was threatening her. She was arrested when she got to school.

Her parents called the Center’s Bridgeport office to find out what they could do.

CCA’s attorney held the school responsible for not following the state’s bullying laws. We met with the Superintendent and got action to assure Angelyna’s safety. Our legal mediation resolved the boys’ aggression, and our advocacy got Angelyna’s court case dismissed.

With the Center’s help, Angelyna and her family stood up to bigotry, bullying and harassment. Remarkably strong and resilient, Angelyna finished the school year at the top of her class.

**I’m afraid of what would have happened without CCA’s help.**

– Angelyna’s mother



# Abuse and Neglect

When Isabel's sister left for college, Isabel was left alone with her mother, who suffers from schizophrenia and paranoia. Home was just not safe.

The Department of Children and Families wanted to place Isabel in foster care, but Isabel wanted to stay at home and get help for her mother.

With CCA's legal support, a judge agreed to let Isabel tell the court what she wanted. He listened, but agreed with DCF and, at age 16, Isabel was placed in foster care.

Isabel's CCA attorney continued to support her. There was a constant fight to secure a safe foster placement: in one foster family, the son propositioned her; in another, her belongings were stolen; in a third, Isabel was raped. DCF finally agreed to let Isabel live with aunts who could provide a safe home.

Isabel graduated from high school last year and is attending University of Connecticut. She wants to become a social worker so she can help other youth whose home lives are critically unstable.

The person who was always there for Isabel was her CCA attorney. She was the only person who went to Isabel's high school graduation. Isabel calls her family.

**I can be changed by  
what happens to me but  
I refuse to be reduced by it.**

– Maya Angelou



# Immigration

Matthias is mastering English and doing well in his new school.

His parents work hard to stay involved with Matthias' education. They are learning English too, sometimes with Matthias' help, and want to be sure that their son will succeed.

Parental involvement is a crucial factor in children's academic success. When schools, families, and communities work together, students earn higher grades and stay in school longer.

Federal statutes mandate that public schools provide language access to Limited English Proficient (LEP) parents.

The Center worked with a coalition of parents and community partners to assure that Bridgeport schools would follow the law to keep families informed and engaged in their children's education.

**.. anything is possible when  
the right people support you.**

— Misty Copeland



Fabiana was an infant when her father began to abuse her.

When she was two, he abandoned the family. Fabiana and her mother landed on the streets in Guatemala City. They were threatened by gangs, with no place to go.

Knowing she couldn't earn enough to keep Fabiana safe, her mother made the heart-breaking decision to leave Fabiana with an aunt and get to the U.S.

Years passed. Fabiana's mother sent money for her care, but a city gang threatened to kill Fabiana if her aunt did not pay them each time money arrived.

Fabiana was terrified. Her mother knew she had to act quickly to get Fabiana out of there.

CCA represented Fabiana when she arrived in Connecticut and helped secure court findings that allowed her to apply for Special Immigrant Juvenile Status.

Children without legal help are often sent back to countries where they live in constant danger.

Fabiana is reunited with her mother, enrolled in school, learning English, and getting medical care. She finally has hope for the future.

## Special Immigrant Juvenile Status

Center for Children's Advocacy clients Deybis and Beberly prepared to provide legislative testimony in support of extending eligibility for Special Immigrant Juvenile Status to age 21.



Deybis and Beberly worked with CCA Board member Marilyn Diaz, who helped with translation and support:

"My name is Deybis Carcamos, I am eighteen years old and attend school in Stamford.

My mother left when I was five years old. I was cared for by my great-grandmother in Honduras until a year and a half ago, when she had a stroke. I had no place to go except my grandmother's house in Connecticut.

I was taken by the U.S. Border Patrol as I tried to enter the United States, then sent to live with my grandmother in Connecticut to face immigration court.

It was very difficult for my grandmother to find help for me. She could not afford a lawyer to help her become my legal guardian. After months of looking, and just before my 18th birthday, the Center for Children's Advocacy took my case. Thanks to my CCA lawyer, my grandmother became my legal guardian and I got the special findings to remain in her care.

I want to finish high school, become a plumber and find work so I can give back to my grandmother and all the good people who have helped me. Without this law, other kids will not have the same opportunity."

Their successful efforts resulted in Public Act 18-02.

# Juvenile Justice

Education is key to success, but for youth discharged from the juvenile justice system, a second chance can be hard to get.

Luke is back in Hartford after a stay at Manson Youth Institution. It has been tough to find housing, get back into school, find a part time job.

He's got a record. Though his crime was not violent and Luke knows he won't make the same mistake a second time, a record is a roadblock.

He had trouble transferring academic credits to the local high school. It was impossible to get a job. Safe housing was a struggle.

The Center has been working with many Hartford youth who face these overwhelming issues. CCA attorneys helped youth apply to have juvenile records erased, assured that earned credits were transferred to the public high school, and helped find housing that is safe and steady.

Everyone deserves a second chance.

**I always believed  
there's another chance.**

– Sugar Ray Leonard



# Youth Homelessness

James had been incarcerated. When he was released at age 18, he slept on friends' couches so could finish high school.

James wanted to attend college. He wanted a job and a safe place to live. He had grown up in Hartford, but his mother lived with a man who would not let James come back.

James needed legal help. He needed his birth certificate so he could get a state ID. He needed a safe place to live so he could get a job and enroll in community college. The Center for Children's Advocacy was there to help James do all of that.

We worked with a housing program to help him secure a safe place to live, advocated with DCF to provide life skills training, and helped James enroll in community college classes. He is working part time as well.

James is safe. He is committed and determined to continue on a path to security and independence.

**Commitment is an act,  
not a word.**

– Jean-Paul Sartre



# Medical-Legal Partnership

Rose took her daughter, Ana, and fled from her violent husband. They lived in a domestic violence shelter for a year while Rose searched for an apartment that was affordable and safe.

Ana has a complex blood disorder and severe asthma. When they were just about to move, Rose got notice that the utility company would not provide electricity because there was an unpaid bill from the house she had fled. Her new landlord would not let her move in without utility service.

Rose did not have the money to pay the entire bill, but electricity was critical for the equipment and refrigerated medication for Rosa's care.

Ana's doctor referred Rose to an attorney from CCA's Medical-Legal Partnership.

The Center represented Rose and advocated for enforcement of Connecticut's utility medical protection laws. The company agreed to provide electricity in the new apartment and established an agreement that allowed Rose to slowly repay her bill.

Rose and Ana are safe, and Ana is getting the medical care she needs.

**Without a struggle,  
there can be no progress.**

– Frederick Douglass



## Focus on Systemic Solutions

### Medical Transportation

Children who live in poverty need access to medical care and reliable transportation to appointments. The Center continued to expose the consistent failings of Veyo, Connecticut's provider of non-emergency transportation for low-income families. Thousands depend on this failed system, while state hearings continue to try and resolve issues like unreliable transportation and stranded patients.

### Access for Children with Disabilities

The Center worked with the U.S. Attorney's Office to file a Complaint against KinderCare, a national provider of day-care services with 1800 U.S. locations, to assure access for children with Type 1 diabetes. KinderCare was found to be in violation of the Americans with Disabilities Act, and the settlement agreement requires all KinderCare locations to provide accommodations.

### Youth Returning to the Community

Youth released from detention facilities often have great difficulty re-enrolling in school, finding safe housing, employment, access to healthcare and mental health care. The Center promoted systemic reform in New Haven, Hartford and Bridgeport to provide guidance that helps youth pursue successful community reintegration and future self-sufficiency.

### Sheff v. O'Neill

CCA continues to fight for the State of Connecticut to uphold the constitutional rights of children in Hartford to an equal educational opportunity. In the past year, CCA's leadership of this landmark civil rights lawsuit ensured the sustainability of 41 magnet schools.

### Education for Expelled Students

Substandard alternative education offered to expelled students disproportionately affects children of color and violates equal protection guarantees of the state and U.S. constitutions. Center for Children's Advocacy, National Center for Youth Law, and K&L Gates filed the Alicia B. expulsion complaint in 2015. The complaint has fully settled, resulting in enormous improvements for the education of expelled students in Connecticut.

### English Language Learners

CCA partnered with Disabilities Rights Advocates, a national organization, to enter into negotiations with Bridgeport Public Schools to require interpreters in the special education process for children and families who are not English speakers. Under state and federal law, Bridgeport must assure that discussions, recommendations and placements are understood and agreed upon by the students' families.

## 2018 Legislative Achievements

The Center's 2018 legislative advocacy improved state policy and procedures for Connecticut's most vulnerable children and youth.

### Immigration

Public Act 18-92, Special Immigrant Juvenile Status, puts Connecticut in step with Federal law and permits youth under age 21 to apply for findings that allow them to apply for legal status.

### Child Welfare

Public Act 18-186, Timely Notice of Child Placement Information, requires the Department of Children and Families to provide timely information to an attorney or guardian ad litem who represents the child in a child protection matter.

### Juvenile Justice

Special Act 18-28, Search and Seizure of Students' Personal Electronic Devices, establishes a workgroup to create guidelines for school employees taking or searching a student's cell phone.

Public Act 18-31, Recommendations of the Juvenile Justice Policy Oversight Committee (JJPOC), includes diversion from contact with the juvenile justice system, removing barriers to education, opening access to technical schools, and improvements in the education of children who are in custody. The Center for Children's Advocacy is a formal member of the State's JJPOC.

### Education

CCA was instrumental in preventing an override of the Governor's veto of Public Act 18-89, Concerning Classroom Safety and Disruptive Behavior. Although well-intentioned, this legislation would have had a negative impact on Connecticut's most vulnerable children, specifically children with disabilities and children of color, and would have violated children's legal rights under federal disability and privacy laws.

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Advocacy Project

## Audited Financial Information

July 1, 2017 - June 30, 2018

92% of every dollar raised goes directly to services for the poorest and most vulnerable children and youth.

### Income

Grants/Contributions	1,665,779
Fees/Contracts	475,374
Other	29,747

Total 2,170,900



### Expense

Programs/Services	1,919,177
Office/Administrative	166,464

Total 2,085,641



# Fundraisers & Celebrations

## Spring for Kids - Champion of Children Awards



CCA presented 2018 Champion of Children awards to Fran Rabinowitz, executive director of the Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents, and Abdul-Rahmaan Muhammad, founder and executive director of My People Clinical Services. Shown with CCA executive director Martha Stone.



CCA attorney Leon Smith with his client, Angelyna, who offered a courageous and moving presentation; and Angelyna's mother.



Xavier was a passionate and inspiring speaker. Shown here with his CCA attorney, Kathryn Meyer; and mother, Sonia Serrano.

## Play for Kids at Chelsea Piers



Event volunteers made the evening's competition run smoothly. From left: Jillian Blanchard, Kate Dougherty, Jordan Fieldstein, Libby DeFeo, Kellsey Sullivan, Claire Stevens



Datto teams had a blast. Look how many players they entered!

## Arnold Rutkin Scholar's Fund Celebration



Attorney Catherine Whelan, trustee of the Ruth and Hal Launders Charitable Trust, created the Arnold Rutkin Scholar's Fund to honor Arnold Rutkin, a long-time friend and colleague, and member of the Center's Board of Directors. The Fund supports intensive legal advocacy to provide safety and educational direction for youth aging out of state care.

## Adoptions of Children Represented by CCA



## Graduations of Youth Represented by CCA



## We could not do this without your generous support.

Provided guidance and **legal representation for 1,002 children and youth.**

Served children in all eight Connecticut counties, from **75 Connecticut towns.**

Helped 75 children **resolve immigration issues.**

Worked with almost 350 children to get the **educational support needed to succeed.**

Helped 95% of our Bridgeport school-age clients **resolve legal issues and stay in school.**

Provided more than **250 consultations** to health-care, education and social service providers.

Presented **trainings for over 1000** attendees to improve child advocacy and representation.

Helped establish an **anti-poverty tax preparation** program for patients at Yale New Haven Hospital, securing \$135,000 in tax credits.

CCA utility clinics **kept heat and electricity on** for over 120 children in low-income households.

Worked with **youth aging out of state care** to help them finish school and find housing and employment.

Provided restorative justice training for youth and staff at Connecticut Juvenile Training School, **reducing arrests by 47%.**

**Won national settlement on behalf of children** attending KinderCare programs. In violation of the Americans with Disabilities Act, childcare was not accessible to children with diabetes. The settlement affects children at 1,800 national facilities.

Steadily **decreased racial disparities in referrals to juvenile court** over the past 5 years. For Black youth, Bridgeport referrals decreased 28%, Hartford by 23%, New Haven by 39%, Waterbury by 47%.

Wrote and advocated for **major pieces of new legislation** that improves the lives of countless Connecticut children.

Prevented a veto override of legislation that would have violated **children's legal rights under federal disability and privacy laws** and had a negative impact on children with disabilities and children of color.

Secured Supplemental Security Income for families with **babies in neonatal intensive care**, allowing the families to focus on the babies' health.

Settled Alicia B. to ensure that **expelled students receive education in accordance with state standards.** The complaint was filed by CCA, National Center for Youth Law, and K&L Gates. Resolution included guidance to school districts, resources on **reducing expulsions, and monitoring racial disparities** in cases of expulsion.

More than 350 children with medical and legal issues received **consultation and representation to improve health care** and education access issues.

Conducted **SpeakUp workshops** in major cities to educate teens on their legal rights.

Resolved **issues of substandard housing** for families in New Haven and Hartford.

Provided over 50 trainings for attorneys, advocates, social workers, educators, medical and mental health providers, youth and families, on topics of **critical importance to the education, health and safety of the most vulnerable children and youth.**

Conducted many on-site hospital trainings to create an **army of justice-focused pediatricians** intent on resolving medical issues related to poverty.

Addressed legal barriers faced by **youth who are homeless** to help them find safety.

Helped **youth leaving the justice system** get back into school, get their birth certificates, find employment and housing.

Secured **Special Immigrant Juvenile Status** findings for every youth we represented, allowing them to proceed with immigration claims.

Continued the fight in Sheff v. O'Neill to uphold the constitutional rights of children in Hartford to an **equal educational opportunity.**



**Added staff to help more** children and youth:

Patricia Marealle is the Center's new Immigrant Children's Justice Project attorney.

Adam Yagaloff provides legal representation and advocacy to resolve issues of youth homelessness.

Stacy Schleif represents children who have been abused or neglected, and helps train the state's child welfare attorneys.

Stacey Violante Cote was appointed Director of Operations, overseeing the Center's growth and assuring operational efficiencies.

Fernie Cosgrove and Brian De La Cruz are case managers for the Center's Mobile Legal Office.

Maria Illescas provides paralegal support for the Center's Immigrant Children's Justice Project.

**DONATE NOW TO  
CONTINUE YOUR SUPPORT**

**Thank you for making this possible.**

**Offices**

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211 State Street, Bridgeport  
CCA at Yale New Haven Hospital, New Haven  
CCA at Connecticut Children's Medical Center, Hartford  
CCA at Burgdorf Bank of America Health Center  
Teen Legal Clinic at Harding High School, Bridgeport  
Immigration Clinic at Norwalk High School, Norwalk  
Mobile Legal Office

**Mailing Address**

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

Center for Children's Advocacy is the largest children's legal rights organization in New England.

[cca-ct.org](http://cca-ct.org) and [speakupteens.org](http://speakupteens.org)

