



THE CHILDREN'S LAW CENTER: WHO WE SERVE, HOW AND WHY

Twelve years ago, The Children's Law Center opened its doors with one unpaid lawyer whose vision was to give DC's children the chance to live healthy, productive lives built on the foundation of a loving family and the support of a caring community. Today, we are the largest civil legal services provider in the District and the only organization that provides comprehensive free legal representation specifically to children. Through our holistic approach, we address the needs of abused and neglected children and low-income children with special education and health needs. We have also become a leader in the fight to reform laws, programs and policies that affect children's lives.

Over the past twelve years our work has literally transformed the lives of thousands of children. In 2007 alone our dedicated team of lawyers helped more than *1,000 children*, their families and foster and kinship caregivers. Not only do we represent individual children, but in order to maximize the positive impact of our efforts, CLC lawyers use the expertise gained from their direct work with children to shape and improve policies that affect children.

Learning to read at grade level, moving from a group home to live with a grandmother, avoiding hospitalization or being reunited with a loving parent—these are the tangible outcomes that we achieve for our child clients every day. Drafting and passing legislation to provide financial support to grandparents raising their grandchildren and providing a blueprint to Congress for spending an additional \$14 million on DC foster children — these are CLC policy successes which have had tangible results for DC children.

Family Permanency Project (FPP) — CLC provides free high quality legal assistance to foster parents, grandparents, and other relatives who wish to adopt or to obtain legal custody or guardianship of children trapped in (or at risk of entering) the DC child welfare system. We also represent children in complex custody cases which often involve allegations of domestic violence or abuse. CLC recruits, trains, and mentors volunteer attorneys from prominent local law firms who enable us to serve hundreds more children than our full-time staff could directly represent. Our impact is exponentially larger than if our staff were working alone, thanks to more than 200 lawyers from 50 law firms who donate millions of dollars worth of legal services each year. The cumulative result is safe, permanent homes — a fundamental building block for successful childhood development — for hundreds of children.

Health Access Project (HAP) — In collaboration with Children's National Medical Center, the Health Access Project (HAP) helps poor children and their families overcome legal barriers that negatively impact their children's health. By holding government agencies, landlords, and schools accountable on behalf of families, HAP ensures that the services provided by medical staff are not undermined by such systemic issues as inappropriate school programs or illegal, unhealthy environments.

Guardian ad Litem (GAL) Program — CLC attorneys are the voice for DC's abused and neglected children, fighting to find safe homes and to ensure that children receive the services they need to overcome the trauma that first brought them into the child welfare system.

Systemic Advocacy, Training and Technical Assistance — CLC has become a leader in systemic advocacy on behalf of children. CLC frequently works with the courts, DC Council, the Mayor's Office, Congress and other organizations working to improve the lives of DC children. CLC staff work tirelessly to change the law and administrative and judicial policies that stand in the way of the health and well-being of children. Each year, CLC also trains hundreds of lawyers, pediatricians, social workers, judges, foster parents and other community members on a variety of issues affecting children. Through training and systemic advocacy, we make DC a better place for thousands of children.

