

EXTRAORDINARY EFFORT: HOW CLC RESPONDS TO AN ABUSE AND NEGLECT CASE

When a child is removed from his home due to abuse or neglect, the first moments are critical to the child's long-term success and must be met with urgency. At Children's Law Center, our lawyers move quickly to gather as much information as possible to build a strong, thoughtful case. Here's a behind the scenes peek into the first 72 hours after we are appointed to represent a child.

CHILDREN'S LAW CENTER ANSWERS THE CALL

- 3:00 a.m.** DC's Child and Family Services Agency (CFSA) removes a child from his home because of allegations of abuse or neglect.
- Noon** DC Superior Court appoints a CLC attorney to represent the child's best interests and sends a report from CFSA to CLC explaining the reasons for removing the child.

CLC INVESTIGATES THE CHILD'S FAMILY, HEALTH AND EDUCATION STATUS

- 1:00 p.m.** The CLC attorney calls the temporary foster parents and schedules a time to meet the child.
- 2:15 p.m.** The attorney and CLC investigator locate and speak with important people in the child's life.
- 3:30 p.m.** The attorney makes calls to gather school, mental health and medical records.
- 4:15 p.m.** If needed, a CLC social worker helps assess the child's needs and family situation.

IN-PERSON VISITS HELP US REPRESENT THE CHILD'S BEST INTERESTS

- 7:35 p.m.** The attorney and investigator meet with the child face-to-face to begin building a relationship and assess his immediate needs.

- 9:45 a.m.** The attorney participates in a meeting with the child's family and professionals to understand the family's strengths and needed supports.
- Noon** The investigator heads to the child's school to speak with his teachers.
- 3:15 p.m.** The investigator interviews possible relative caregivers, inspects their homes and runs criminal records checks.

THE CLC TEAM LEVERAGES ALL INFORMATION TO PRESENT A STRONG CASE

- 6:30 p.m.** The CLC team meets to consolidate and analyze the gathered information. The attorney then formulates a plan for the hearing.
- 10:00 a.m.** A court holds a hearing to answer the legal question: "Is there probable cause that the child has been abused or neglected and, if so, can the child return home safely or must he stay in foster care?" Based on the results of the team's intensive investigation, the CLC attorney advocates for the child to be placed with either birth, foster or extended family and recommends supports and services (e.g. parent visits, mental health services) for the child and his family. When necessary, the CLC investigator testifies.

This is just the beginning. Children's Law Center continues to represent each child through trial and until the case concludes, whether it takes weeks or years. Throughout the life of the case, a child's CLC team fights to secure the building blocks of future success: a stable family, good health and a quality education.