“I just want a mom who will hug me every night and believe me sometimes.”

That’s what Lena told us when we met her at 10 years old. She’d been in foster care since she was five.

Her mother struggled with drug addiction and could not safely care for Lena or her brother. The siblings were split up and sent into foster care.

Suddenly, Lena’s whole world was turned upside down. She wanted to be reunited with her family.

“I remember with one foster family, I would run away from the bus stop every time school let out,” Lena said. She bounced from home to home.

The family court judge appointed Children’s Law Center to be Lena’s advocate. We made sure she got regular mental health counseling to help her recover from her trauma. We also made sure she could see her brother regularly – a big relief.

Eventually, her brother’s foster mom decided to have Lena join them. They bonded and we helped her adopt both Lena and her brother.

It was a tough road, but Lena was back with her brother and had a mom to look after her. It was all she had ever wanted.

*Lena’s image has been changed to protect her confidentiality. All other details are true.

**Family**

*Children’s Law Center helps children find permanent, loving families.*

**The Need**

*When children are in a loving, stable family they thrive.*

But there are far too many children in DC who are abused and neglected or threatened by family conflict.

Today, more than 1,000 District children are in foster care because their parents can no longer safely care for them. Thousands more are under the watch of DC’s child welfare agency because of concerns about neglect. And many more children live informally with grandparents, aunts and others due to instability within their families.

Our work has taught us children in foster care need a stable home – but they also need more. By the time they are swept into the system, many have witnessed traumatic events and have unmet educational or mental health needs, requiring a comprehensive response to enable them to have a happier childhood and thrive.

**Our Work**

*Children’s Law Center fights so that all children in DC can grow up in stable, loving homes.*

Our lawyers are appointed by judges to advocate for children’s best interests while they are in foster care – and we fight for the education and health care they need to thrive while we help them find a permanent home.

When children are caught in bitter parental disputes, our lawyers work to shield them from conflict and help families agree on a plan to support their well-being. And when parents can no longer safely care for their children, we help grandparents and other adults who step up to give them a home, whether through adoption, custody or guardianship.

Finally, we’ve learned that sometimes the District’s regulations and child welfare practices create unnecessary hurdles for these vulnerable children. That’s why reform of the child welfare system is also an important focus of our city-wide policy advocacy.

**Learn more**

[www.childrenslawcenter.org](http://www.childrenslawcenter.org)