

CHILDREN'S LAW CENTER'S Systemic Advocacy

Every day, our eight-person policy and communications team draws on the organization's 21 years of experience to improve DC laws, policies and practice. Our advocacy delivers real results that positively impact all DC children.



CLC attorneys Aubrey Edwards-Luce and Damon King at a meeting with advocates.

Work in Progress

In 2014, as a result of Children's Law Center's (CLC) advocacy, the DC Council unanimously passed special education reform legislation. Unfortunately, some critical reforms remained unfunded and unimplemented—impacting more than 20,000 students in the past three years. In 2017, together with our special education coalition partners, we made significant strides toward securing funding for the reforms and won a commitment from the District to expand early intervention services to infants and toddlers. In 2018, we will work to ensure all the reforms are properly funded and implemented.

Every day we advocate for kids who are disproportionately harmed by school suspensions and expulsions—children of color, children with disabilities and children in foster care. In 2017, we fought to eliminate bias in school discipline and ensure all students have access to the supports they need—work we are continuing in 2018.

In 2016, Child and Family Services Agency (CFSA), the government agency responsible for protecting abused and neglected children, announced the restructuring of its foster care program, reducing the number of private agencies that support foster families and children from seven to one. CLC has first-hand experience with the devastating impact a reorganization can have. Just a few years ago, the closure of a few private agencies led to children being moved from stable foster families and even to kids spending the night in CFSA's offices. That's why we are working closely with the government to minimize the number of children whose lives are disrupted and ensure that children's well-being takes priority over bureaucratic convenience.

2017 Policy Victories

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) provides children with stability and the necessities most take for granted—such as diapers and medicine for a fever. Through our work with the *TANF is a Lifeline* coalition and generous support from the Bainum Family Foundation, we ensured DC children would not lose this critical resource. Successful TANF reform has already protected more than 10,000 children.

Until last year, child survivors of domestic sex trafficking could only get support if they were charged with a juvenile offense or put into foster care. Because of our advocacy, the law now requires the government to provide services to all children who have been trafficked.

“Children's Law Center is a lead advocate for children living in poverty who are disproportionately impacted by suspensions and expulsions every day—a shared priority of ours to ensure all students have access to the supports they need to stay engaged and learn in the classroom.”

Councilmember David Grosso
Chairperson of the Committee on Education,
Council of the District of Columbia



Councilmember David Grosso, Children's Law Center staff and other child advocates during the Student Fair Access to School Act of 2017 press conference.