



**TeamChild**  
**Juvenile Justice Project**  
**Center for Children's Advocacy**

# TeamChild Juvenile Justice Project

**Providing legal help for children with educational and behavioral health issues that provoke their involvement with the juvenile justice system.**

## **Individual Legal Representation** Create team support. Improve the outcome for each child.

TeamChild is an innovative legal advocacy project that addresses the underlying causes of a child's involvement with the juvenile justice system.

Educational and mental health challenges are often at the forefront of TeamChild cases. CCA attorneys have the extensive experience to advocate effectively for the services these children need to succeed in school and avoid future legal involvement.

An attorney from the Center works directly with the Juvenile Public Defender's Office to create a strong support team. CCA focuses on civil legal issues, and the public defender handles delinquency charges.

We represent many children involved with the juvenile justice system each year.

We listen carefully to build a supportive relationship with each child.

We work to secure the best possible services to help each child with educational and behavioral health challenges.

Our interdisciplinary team includes our TeamChild attorney, and CCA's licensed clinical social worker and educational consultants; professionals from the University of Connecticut Health Center assist our team as needed. This holistic approach addresses the child's needs in a comprehensive way, and helps produce better outcomes for each child.

## **Systemic Advocacy** Change the policy. A better system helps all the children.

Our attorneys identify and resolve systemic issues to help all children who are juvenile justice involved.

CCA's executive director co-chairs the Families with Service Needs (FWSN) Advisory Board, created by the Connecticut Legislature to address issues relating to status offenders and truant.

CCA's Girls' Juvenile Justice Project promotes gender-responsive policies and practices to improve girls' treatment in the juvenile justice system and increase the probability of success for girls leaving the system.

CCA is a founding member of the Connecticut Juvenile Justice Alliance, working on legislation to support the needs of youth involved with the system.

CCA represents the plaintiffs in *Emily J.*, a class action filed on behalf of youth in juvenile detention centers to relieve overcrowding and improve medical and mental health care. We secured a settlement that expands community-based mental health treatment options for these youth.

## **Education and Outreach** Improve legal representation and advocacy. KidsCounsel Training Program.

The Center provides training to attorneys and child advocates who represent children who are involved with the juvenile justice system.

Training allows us to help improve the legal outcomes achieved by attorneys who represent these children.

Our efforts help to increase the number of educational advocates who work on these difficult cases.

## **Prevention** Keep children in school, keep children safe. Address current issues to avoid future problems.

The Center's Truancy Court Prevention Project works to help children stay in school through high school graduation. The project was initiated in 2004, and provides unparalleled support for adolescents whose family, educational and behavioral issues make them likely to become status offenders (youth who run away from home or are truant).

### **Who are the children we help?**



**Antonia**, a ninth grade special education student, participates in the Center's Truancy Court Prevention Project. She was placed in foster care by the Department of Children and Families when she was young, and has suffered from learning and behavioral problems since she was six years old.

Antonia's recent reunification with her mother is very stressful for her, and she has been coping with other sources of anxiety as well: her father is terminally ill, and her handicapped brother presents many challenges to family life.

When Antonia was first referred to the Center for Children's Advocacy, she was struggling both academically and emotionally. Her academic schedule did not reflect the Individualized Education Plan developed to meet Antonia's learning disabilities. Appropriate services are required by federal and state special education law, and CCA requested a Planning and Placement Team meeting to secure an appropriate level of special education.

CCA's legal intervention resulted in Antonia's placement in an appropriate math class. Our educational consultant recommended a neuropsychological exam to address Antonia's long-standing learning difficulties. We secured a complete psychiatric exam for Antonia to address her anxiety and depressive symptoms. These evaluations are helping to secure educational, health, and mental health services that address Antonia's academic and emotional needs.



**Michael** and his mother moved to Connecticut two years ago, when Michael was twelve years old.

His father was in prison in North Carolina; Michael and his mother, who does not speak English, hoped for a better life in Connecticut.

In his old school in North Carolina, Michael was in a small, structured classroom for academically challenged students. In Hartford, school staff met at the beginning of the year to develop a plan for his placement. It was agreed that Michael, who has a very low IQ and cannot read or write, should be in a small, contained classroom with direct supervision.

The new school did not place Michael in the recommended class. On his first day of school, he arrived with the other students and found himself in a regular 6th grade classroom. Michael was picked on by the other students. They teased him because he couldn't read or write. They pushed him and taunted him, and one day he struck out and hit another student.

Michael was sent to juvenile detention for fighting in school, and the Center for Children's Advocacy became involved with his case. Working with the school, the Center reviewed the education plan that had been established at the start of the school year but never implemented; in collaboration with the Public Defender, the Center worked to have Michael released from detention and returned to school to a different and appropriate classroom setting, enforcing his educational rights.



### **Center for Children's Advocacy**

The Center for Children's Advocacy is a non-profit, public interest legal organization dedicated to the promotion and protection of the legal rights of poor children whose care is dependent upon Connecticut's judicial, child welfare, health, mental health, education, and juvenile justice systems.

The Center's projects and programs include:

- Child Abuse Project
- KidsCounsel Training Program
- Medical-Legal Partnership Project
- Teen Legal Advocacy Clinic
- Truancy Court Prevention Project

More information is available on our website at:  
[www.kidscounsel.org](http://www.kidscounsel.org)

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