

# New funds to keep girls on scholarly path

## United Way awards \$10,000 to CCA

By Alexandra Sanders  
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In an effort to help local girls who are at risk for dropping out of school, United Way of Greater New Haven awarded a \$10,000 grant to the Center for Children's Advocacy.

The Center for Children's Advocacy was founded with the purpose of helping children who are dependent upon the state judicial, child welfare, health, mental health, education and juvenile justice systems. The grant will expand upon the current programs at the organization. Bonnie Berk, director of communications at CCA, described the grant as funding something that crosses the lines of many programs.

The newer effort in New Haven is an expansion of CCA's work in Hartford that began about 10 years ago. This is the second year

that the United Way has offered this grant to fund this venture.

"It helps keep them in school and these girls not only have the right to be in school but in the community, we need them to be in school. We are pleased the dollars we invest help change the system and raise awareness," said Amy Casavina Hall, director of community impact at United Way.

The grant enables CCA to work closely with girls who are at risk of truancy. The organization will help guidance counselors and other school officials determine needs of students and help them adjust to school. The effort will specifically focus on issues such as access to options for girls whose parents are incarcerated, school registration and enrollment for girls who are homeless.

"Court-involved girls often have mental health issues, child care issues or issues caused by homelessness, that prevent consistent school attendance," said Martha Stone, executive director of CCA, in a statement. "Working with community service providers and school personnel, the CCA is able to address these issues

on a systemic level, helping to protect the rights of this vulnerable population."

CCA offers training programs to youths that explain their legal rights and

options when they are having difficulty learning or are avoiding school. The goal is to resolve some of the issues that may discourage girls from staying in school and keep them on track to graduate and lead productive lives.

"There are many learning disabilities and emotional disabili-

ties that schools don't recognize," said Lori Nordstrom, director of development at CCA.

Many girls are referred by a social worker or probation officer, but they can seek help for themselves by attending one of the training programs.

"It is hard to say how many children this will help," said Nordstrom. "Individually, it could be only 30, but through systemic advocacy numbers could be in the hundreds."

The effort initially stemmed from CCA work with children involved in the detention system. Children involved in the system may transfer between facilities and records may be lost, making it difficult for students to easily settle back into school. During the process, there is often a lot of time before testing can be done to determine a child's needs.

"What can happen is the process can be so frustrating the kids just give up," said Nordstrom.

Alexandra Sanders is a Register intern.

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Lori Nordstrom  
CCA director of development