

Who Are the Children We Serve?

Miguel was only 12 years old when his mother died. He was suffering from psychiatric disabilities and had no family to help care for him. DCF hospitalized Miguel for several months, and upon his release from the hospital, placed him in an out-of-state residential treatment center where his prognosis steadily improved. After two years in institutional care, clinicians recommended that Miguel be discharged to a less restrictive setting in his own community.

Now 15 years old, Miguel was eager to return to his community. He looked forward to attending church and working outside. The Center worked with DCF social workers and clinicians and participated in collaborative treatment plan meetings, obtaining a written recommendation from Miguel's clinician that emphasized the need for his timely transition to the community.

Miguel remained institutionalized for months. DCF had finalized a referral package for him, but admitted that it failed to find an appropriate home for Miguel because of a "lack of openings."

CCA went to court to ask for an order that Miguel be immediately referred for a therapeutic group home or foster home. CCA argued that state and federal law mandated that he be allowed to live in the community.

Soon after the court hearing, Miguel was approved for placement in a therapeutic group home less than five miles from his extended family. CCA worked with the area school district to develop an educational plan that would provide for his complex, evolving needs.

Miguel now lives in the group home, attends public high school, visits with family members on a regular basis and participates in community activities.



Child Abuse Project Center for Children's Advocacy

The Center for Children's Advocacy is a non-profit organization founded in 1997 and dedicated to the promotion and protection of the legal rights of poor children whose care is dependent on Connecticut's judicial, child welfare, health, mental health, education and juvenile justice systems.

The Center's Child Abuse Project provides individual and systemic legal representation for hundreds of Connecticut children each year. Through outreach and collaborative programs, CCA provides the legal advocacy needed to give these children a chance to lead healthy, productive lives.

Other CCA projects include:

Medical-Legal Partnership Project
TeamChild Juvenile Justice Project
Teen Legal Advocacy Clinic
Truancy Prevention Project

More information about the Center for Children's Advocacy is available on our website at www.kidscounsel.org.



Center for Children's Advocacy
University of Connecticut School of Law
65 Elizabeth Street, Hartford, CT 06105

(860)570-5327
www.kidscounsel.org

Child Abuse Project Center for Children's Advocacy



Child Abuse and Neglect.

Providing legal help to Connecticut's most vulnerable children.

Individual Legal Representation

Listen to the children.

Dedicated, caring attorneys give children a voice.

- We represent many abused and neglected children each year.
- We work closely to build a relationship with each child.
- We listen carefully to the child's voice.
- We work to secure the best possible child welfare, health, mental health, and educational opportunities available for each child's individual situation.

Systemic Advocacy

Change the policy.

A better system helps every child.

- We identify and resolve systemic issues that help abused and neglected children throughout the state.
- We advocate for changes that put the best interests of children at the forefront of the process.
- Our involvement in class action suits, such as the Juan F. Consent Decree, has resulted in improvements in care for all abused and neglected children in Connecticut's child welfare system.
- We meet regularly with officials from the Juvenile Court and the Department of Children and Families to raise systemic issues involving child welfare and the juvenile court.
- We write and sponsor important legislation that affects the lives of Connecticut's children.
- Our legislative advocacy helped establish Connecticut's Child Protection Commission.
- We serve on the committees that initiate change:
 - Commission on Child Protection's Working Groups for Standards of Practice
 - DCF Hartford Regional Advisory Committee

Interdisciplinary Team Focus

Advocate for the whole child.

A comprehensive approach to multiple needs.

- Our Interdisciplinary Teams at the Connecticut Children's Medical Center (CCMC) and University of Connecticut Health Center address issues that concern a child's well-being. Working with health, mental health, education and social work professionals, CCA secures services that resolve the myriad of difficulties that may be faced by one child.
- We participate on the CCMC and Burgdorf Health Clinic Child Protection Teams.

Prevention

Keep children safe and healthy.

Address current issues to avoid future problems.

- Preventive care can eliminate future problems. The Center provides legal representation to children in grades K-2 who have behavioral health issues and are excluded from school.

Youth Empowerment

Hear each voice.

Teach the children to speak up for themselves.

- We empower the children to speak up for themselves. CCA publications and videos provide key information that children in the child welfare system can use to get the services and attention they need.
- CCA has written and produced materials including:
 - Who Will Speak for Me?
 - I Will Speak Up for Myself
 - Legal Rights of Homeless Youth
 - Teen Legal Rights pamphlet series
 - Is It Confidential? Reproductive Health Care
 - Adolescent Health Care: The Legal Rights of Teens



Education and Outreach

Improve legal representation.

KidsCounsel Training Program.

- We provide training to attorneys and child advocates who represent children and parents in abuse and neglect cases throughout the state.
- Our KidsCounsel seminar program presents topics and speakers at the forefront of child welfare issues, covering areas critical to effective legal representation.
- Seminars at various statewide locations help make the program accessible.
- The Judicial Department contracts with CCA each year to provide training for child abuse attorneys who are new to Connecticut's child welfare system.
- CCA's Mentoring Program works with Child Protection attorneys throughout the year.
- Our publications are available to all attorneys and child advocates, and include a quarterly newsletter, legal rights booklets on important topics, and videos and legal rights brochures for children in the system. Go to www.kidscounsel.org for our publications and an order form.
- CCA's website, www.kidscounsel.org, provides up-to-date information on placement and professional resources, trainings, pleadings, case library, and upcoming seminars.
- Our ListServ is an important resource for critical information, connecting attorneys throughout the state.