

The ABA Center on Children and the Law—Our Accomplishments

Because, an estimated 517,000-plus abused, neglected, and abandoned children were in foster care, based on the most recent statistics...

- We've operated, for over two decades, a federal grant supported National Resource Center providing training and technical assistance to improve law-related work of state & county child welfare agencies and juvenile courts addressing safety, legal permanency, and well-being of children at-risk of entering -- or already in -- those systems. This activity has also produced many important books for legal professionals, most recently *Legal Ethics in Child Welfare Cases* and *Education Advocacy for Children in Foster Care*.
- For 17 years we've facilitated, under contracts with selected states, legal permanency for children in foster care using specially-developed tools and networking approaches helping over 30 small, medium, and large population areas cut by significant amounts time children spend in foster care. Our New York State work, for example, saw average reductions of 16 months in children's legal permanency, also saving the state over \$13 million in foster care costs. This continued and expanded work, in Pennsylvania, received the 2005 Adoption Excellence Project Award from the U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services.
- We've always conducted special projects to help juvenile courts and lawyers handling child abuse and neglect cases. We report on judicial system improvements affecting foster children, maintaining an on-line catalog of reforms and conducting special activities to improve how courts use data to track their case handling and children's case outcomes. We publish a subscription journal, the *ABA Child Law Practice*, to share important information, and a free periodical, *ABA Child CourtWorks*, to highlight reforms. And we often focus work on special issues or populations, such as achieving uninterrupted school access for foster children and improving approaches to working with gay, lesbian, and transgender foster youth.

Because 32% of foster kids are youth ages 13-17, 41% are 5 or under, and federal audits of child welfare agencies find health care needs of children and youth in foster care inadequately addressed...

- We have two Center projects on health and well-being issues related to children, the Center's participation in "Partners in Program Planning for Adolescent Health" and an "Improving Understanding of Maternal and Child Health and Health Care Issues," grant addressing legal and judicial awareness of the health needs of infants, toddlers, preschoolers, and teenagers. The book "Health for Teens in Foster Care" has been written and a Center partnership with the pediatric policy group Zero to Three is giving legal decision-makers updated information on how research findings can improve practice in young children's cases.
- We have also produced two publications focusing on achieving permanency for teens in, or exiting, foster care: *Improving Outcomes for Older Youth* and *Achieving Permanency for Adolescents in Foster Care*.

Because substance abuse is considered a factor in child maltreatment -- in up to 80% of cases...

- We have conducted a foundation-funded national study exploring how child abuse and neglect courts are making decisions required under the 1997 Adoption and Safe Families Act for children of parental substance abusers. We are also expanding an on-line national curriculum to specifically address judge, child welfare agency, and parent and child attorney roles and responsibilities in these cases.

Because there are estimated 84,000-plus annual victims of child sexual abuse according to child protective services data & 1 in 4 girls and 1 in 6 boys are believed childhood victims of sexual abuse...

- The Center, for 13 years with U.S. Justice Department support, has studied and aided local use across the country technological resources to reduce trauma to child victims providing evidence and testimony, such as videotaped interviews and depositions and use of closed-circuit televised testimony.

Because there are an estimated 165,000 youth annually who appear in court as juvenile "status offenders" -- charged with behaviors such as running away, truancy, and incorrigibility -- acts that would not be actionable in court if they were adults...

- The Center's "Youth Who Fall Between the Cracks" project is completing a book on state and local policy and program reforms that help teens and their families get the services they need while avoiding unnecessary court involvement, *Reforming Juvenile Status Offense Laws: Preventing Delinquency By Better Aiding Youth and Families In Crisis*