



American Bar Association
Center on Children and the Law

Highlights of Thirty Years of Work

- **1978** – Center is established through a federal grant from the National Center on Child Abuse and Neglect. ABA Young Lawyers Division is designated Center’s “home” because Division affiliate (Philadelphia Bar) has sponsored model child representation program that – like the Center – has had major growth over the years: *The Support Center for Child Advocates*. Thus, the YLD became the ideal ABA entity to help nurture the Center’s growth and help it promote child-related public interest law and practice reform.
- **1979** – Center holds its first national conference (200+ attendees), *Advocating for Children in the Courts* (continuing every 2-3 years, the Center’s 13th National Conference on Children and the Law was held in May 2009 in Washington, D.C.). Center awards the first of over fifty “mini-grants” to promote state/local bar child-related activities, helping expand lawyer involvement in the representation of abused and neglected children.
- **1980** – Center convenes the country’s first invitational conference on the use of guardians ad litem for children in abuse and neglect proceedings, and produces the first *Child Advocacy Bar Activation Guide*. Center staff help author first of several U.S. Supreme Court amicus briefs in child protection related cases.
- **1981** – Center creates the first national **litigation manual for judges** on handling abuse and neglect cases, published by U.S. Government Printing Office, and produces first books on child sexual abuse legal reform.
- **1982** – Center produces first of many books on interstate and international parental kidnapping, including *Obstacles to the Recovery and Return of Parentally Abducted Children, The Criminal Justice System’s Response to Parental Abduction, and Issues in Resolving Cases of International Child Abduction*.
- **1983** – Center develops nation’s first major foster care legal reform book, *Foster Children in the Courts*.
- **1984** – Center produces first commercially published legal treatise on *The Legal Rights of Children*.
- **1985** – Center writes first of many publications on, and holds first of four ABA conferences on improvement of **child support enforcement**.
- **1986** – Center begins publishing *ABA Juvenile and Child Welfare Law Reporter* (later renamed *ABA Child Law Practice*) and launches a major new initiative to provide national leadership and technical assistance on child welfare legal and court reform issues.
- **1987** – Center begins its state-focused **Permanency Project** to speed permanency for foster children in New York State. That project, conducted since in many other states, has since helped free thousands of children for adoption and saved states millions of dollars in foster care costs.
- **1988** – Center produces first of its **state child welfare legal manuals** (for New York) to aid attorneys and social workers to more effectively work within the courts (followed by Iowa, Colorado, Wyoming, and Maryland manuals several years later).

- **1989** – Center director appointed to (and later chairs) the U.S. Advisory Board on Child Abuse and Neglect. Center produces a **law school curriculum** on child abuse and neglect litigation, later adapted into a commercially published law school casebook.
- **1990** – Center begins pioneering grant work on improving public policy response to child abuse or neglect related deaths (child fatality review). Also produces nation’s first book on the U.N, Convention on the Rights of the Child (*Children’s Rights in America*).
- **1993** – Center proposes that ABA leadership develop a report on legal action for children, spearheaded by an ABA presidentially-appointed group. This leads to *America’s Children at Risk* report and formation of *Steering Committee on the Unmet Legal Needs of Children*. Center also helps draft and get enacted the first federal law providing grants to state courts for improving judicial responses to child abuse/neglect cases.
- **1994** – Center produces a report for the ABA President, *The Impact of Domestic Violence on Children*, helping lead to creation of an ABA Commission on Domestic Violence. It publishes the first edition of its all-time best-selling book, *Handbook on Questioning Children: A Linguistic Perspective*, which becomes an essential guide on child victim interviewing.
- **1995** – Center awarded its first grant from U.S. Children’s Bureau to operate a *National Child Welfare Resource Center on Legal and Judicial Issues*. This continues to be the Center’s largest single project.
- **1996** – U.S. Maternal and Child Health Bureau begins support of an on-going major Center adolescent health law initiative, part of a interdisciplinary grant program called *Partners in Program Planning for Adolescent Health* to which is later added a project addressing infant-toddler issues.
- **1998** – President Clinton announces in his weekly radio address the release of new Justice Department **guidelines on screening of adults** working with children, a publication developed by the Center.
- **1999** – Center produces two publications on **child sexual exploitation** for the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (of which the Center director is one of the founding Board members).
- **2001** – Center helps plan **child protection legal/judicial reform conference in Tanzania** in collaboration with ABA Africa. Also co-produces, with ABA Commission on Law and Aging, a juvenile judges’ curriculum and “best practices” pamphlet on appropriate use of the **Social Security representative payee system for children** involved with the courts (one of many Center collaborative projects with other ABA entities that address child and family issues).
- **2002-2009** – Continuing its ever-expanding technical assistance and consulting work with state child welfare agencies and courts, *CLP Online* provides a new website resource for subscribers of the Center’s monthly *ABA Child Law Practice*. Center wins federal Adoption Excellence Award in 2005 for its state Permanency Project work. **New Center projects** begin on a wide array of topics, including:
 - Parental substance abuse and ASFA/Curriculum for lawyer/judges
 - Foster parent legal training manual
 - Parental involvement practices in juvenile court
 - Permanency for adolescents in foster care
 - Dependency court caseload/workload measurement
 - Legal needs of LGBTQ foster youth
 - Juvenile status offense reform and advocacy
 - Children exposed to domestic violence
 - Education advocacy for children in foster care
 - Grandparent/kinship care legal information website
 - Improving involvement of non-custodial fathers in the child welfare system
 - Promoting community child protection innovations
 - Parent representation improvement
 - Enhancing court involvement for youth transitioning from foster care/enhancing foster youth representation
 - Providing financial and technical support to communities for use of closed-circuit and video recording technology in child victim cases
 - Disaster planning child welfare law-related issues
 - Support of new ABA Commission on Youth at Risk