

# Barton Child Law & Policy Clinic

## About Us

The Barton Child Law & Policy Clinic is a program of Emory Law School dedicated to ensuring safety, well-being and permanency for abused and court-involved children in Georgia. These outcomes are best achieved when systems only intervene in families when absolutely necessary, treat children and families fairly, provide the services and protections they are charged to provide, and are accountable to the public and the children they serve.

## Our Mission

The mission of the clinic is to promote and protect the well-being of neglected, abused and court-involved children in the state of Georgia, to inspire excellence among the adults responsible for protecting and nurturing these children, and to prepare child advocacy professionals.

## Our Mission Requires that We:

- Act as a catalyst for improvements in juvenile court, child protection, and juvenile justice systems in Georgia;
- Advocate a long-range systematic approach to public policy designed for the benefit of the children affected;
- Provide research-based information about best practices and whether policies and laws affecting children have their intended effect;
- Represent children and youth in juvenile court proceedings and related administrative proceedings;
- Promote the practice of children's law as a specialized area requiring specialized knowledge and skills.

## Educational goals and methods:

**Goal:** Train the next generation of child advocacy professionals in an interdisciplinary setting.

### Methods:

During the academic year Emory students can choose among three clinic offerings: public policy clinic (fall semester), legislative clinic (spring semester), juvenile defender clinic (both semesters, 3L students only)

Clinic participants include graduate students in law, public health, social work and theology.

Class participants include graduate students in law, medicine, public health, and theology.

The Emory Summer Child Advocacy Program brings 15-20 law, social work, psychology and other graduate students from across the country to engage in paid child advocacy work throughout Georgia. The summer program begins with a one-week intensive training program and includes meetings and field trips during the summer.

During the summer, selected students from Emory and other schools work together in the public policy or juvenile defender clinics.

**Goal:** Ground students in substantive law and develop their ability to analyze the substantive law and apply it to practical experiences.

**Methods:**

A two-credit academic class, “Kids in Conflict with the Law,” is a prerequisite or co-requisite for the juvenile defender clinic.

Juvenile defender student attorneys provide holistic legal representation for young people in delinquency and status offense proceedings, including legal advocacy in the areas of school discipline, special education, mental health and public benefits, when such advocacy is derivative of a client’s juvenile

Legal Professions and Evidence are prerequisites or co-requisites for the juvenile defender clinic.

A two-credit academic class, “Child Advocacy: The Law, the Policy, and the Players,” is a prerequisite or co-requisite for the public policy and legislative clinics.

All three clinical offerings include a weekly two hour clinic meeting at which students report on their work, the group assists student teams with problem solving, skills training is provided, and current events, ethics, and professionalism are discussed.

**Goal:** Expose students to the reality of developing public policy and enacting legislation and teach them the skill sets to be successful in these areas.

**Methods:**

The Clinic participates in the legislative process, distributes a wide range of publications, testifies at legislative hearings and public forums, and advises Georgia’s executive, legislative and judicial branches and non-profit organizations on the effects that proposed legislation, policies, or regulations will have on children.

The Clinic, in partnership with other organizations, analyzes data and provides feedback to courts, elected officials, and child-serving agencies about compliance with policy and statutory requirements.

Clinic faculty and students actively participate in local, state and national work groups, commissions, reform efforts, and other endeavors to ensure that federal and state laws and policies reflect best practices for children.

The Clinic uses research, publishing, advocacy, direct representation and other forms of litigation, education, and other tools to advance the rights and well-being of court-involved and abused children.

**Goal:** Provide students with practical skills such as project design and management, multidisciplinary teamwork, and oral and written communication.

**Methods:**

Students in all three clinical offerings work in teams and are responsible for designing and implementing their work plans and litigation strategies.

Students set their own project or litigation deadlines (with faculty approval) and then are expected to meet those deadlines.

Students must develop successful methods of communication within and without their teams.

Clinic faculty and students teach at local, state, and national conferences or events for lawyers, foster parents, judges, social workers, probation officers, community volunteers and others.

Clinic students maintain weekly time sheets, turn in weekly field notes, turn in a portfolio at the end of the semester, and participate in interactive mid-semester and end-of-semester reviews.

**Goal:** Students will become fluent in the tools of technology.

**Methods:**

Students working in the Clinic use technology as a primary form of communication internally and with external partners. Most work products are submitted and responded to electronically, email is a prevalent form of communication, and most files are kept in an electronic format.

A main facet of the clinic's research-based approach is operating as a statewide resource through its web site, [ChildWelfare.net](http://ChildWelfare.net). Clinic publications, legislative information, and data analysis are made available through our web site.

**Goal:** Teach law students how to think independently, synthesize facts and legal principles, and plan litigation strategies.

**Methods:**

Juvenile defender student attorneys provide holistic legal representation for young people in delinquency and status offense proceedings, including legal advocacy in the areas of school discipline, special education, mental health and public benefits, when such advocacy is derivative of a client's juvenile court case.

Juvenile defender students are responsible for handling all aspects of client representation. As such, students establish an attorney-client relationship with their client, direct case strategy determinations, investigate allegations, interview witnesses, negotiate dispositions, prepare and litigate motions, and try cases.

Public policy students have participated in strategy sessions related to ongoing class action litigation in Georgia, monitor the implementation of consent decrees and reform efforts, and evaluate what methods of social change are most effective in different contexts.

**Goal:** Increase the number of specially trained, highly motivated child advocacy professionals engaging in children's law, child welfare, and juvenile justice.

**Methods:**

The Clinic offers a two-year post-graduate fellowship in law which provides recent graduates an opportunity to develop their legal, public policy and clinical teaching skills and to prepare for a career in child advocacy.

When funding allows, the Clinic offers a post-graduate fellowship in public health to provide a richer multi-disciplinary environment for students and to encourage public health professionals to work in the child advocacy field.

Clinic students are encouraged to participate in events and meetings in which they meet and work with child advocacy professionals outside the law school.

Clinic faculty provide career advice, mentoring, counseling, and other supportive services to students in the clinic and throughout the law school.