

The Children's Law Center  
of Connecticut, Inc.



Report to the Community  
2001

## ***Annual message from the Executive Director***

To our friends,

It is always a welcome and invigorating task to write this letter. It affords me the opportunity to look back over a year of growth to see what we've done and where we're going. It's exciting to report that our programs - Representation, Lawline and Mediation - have all shown an increase in the number of clients served; and our presence in the courts of Tolland, Hartford and Windham counties has improved as well. While we had to say "good bye" to our half time attorney, we were thrilled to hire a full time attorney, Otto Iglesias, to join our team. With our hope to hire a part time social worker, we are planning a move to a larger office in Hartford. Located near the Hartford court and along two bus lines, we will be more easily accessible to our clients and their families.

As executive director, I have the privilege of building and maintaining relationships with other agencies that provide services to the community. Throughout the year, we have worked with bar associations, child advocacy organizations, legal services, mental health providers, and many other agencies to help improve the quality of the lives of the children we serve. I am the grateful recipient of many compliments from the community praising the work of The Children's Law Center.

As we take calls on the Lawline, or receive a referral of a representation case from the court, it becomes more and more apparent that the need for services like ours is greater than ever. As long as there is a family who needs our help or a child who needs a voice, we will keep working diligently to provide it. The knowledge that so many people understand the importance of the work we do and support us in our mission is heartening.

Justine Rakich-Kelly

### **Staff 2001 (as of December 31)**

Justine Rakich-Kelly, Esq. Executive Director  
Rhonda Morra, Esq.  
Judith Hyde, Director of Development  
Karen Renfro, Office Manager  
Randa Hojaiban, Law/Social Work student  
Alan Tracy, Law student

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Children's Law Center  
30 Lafayette Square, Suite 103  
Vernon, CT 06066-4558

### **Our mission. . .**

CLC seeks to protect the interests of poor children in court and to advocate policies which advance their well being and best interests.

### **Our services. . .**

- ◆ Legal representation and advocacy for individual children in family court
- ◆ Information, advice and referrals through the Children's Lawline (1-888-LAW DOOR)
- ◆ Conflict resolution for parents in high conflict family court cases
- ◆ Public speaking to develop community awareness and understanding of children's legal needs.
- ◆ Promotion of changes in legal systems and processes to establish the rights of children.

"Of all the places I've called,  
your lawyer was so nice and seemed  
to know just what to tell me."

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## Court Representation

110 children in 72 cases

Location of Court	Hartford	Rockville	Putnam
Number of cases	60	6	6
Number of children	92	9	9

Representing a child in family court entails making an independent investigation of the case by talking to the parents and other professionals, developing a relationship with the child in order to get his or her view of the situation, and playing an active role at court hearings. The attorney has a key role in fashioning agreements and parenting plans that are designed to prevent future court battles. The child's lawyer steps in at the judge's request at a point in the case where it is clear that the child needs an advocate. Sometimes the lawyer ends up being the child's ally more or less forever.

### CASE EXAMPLE

*Eddie, age 11, wanted to spend more time with his father but his mother got so upset that he learned to keep those feelings to himself. He was becoming more and more withdrawn, with headaches and stomach problems increasing. The court's concern about Eddie led to the appointment of CLC. It became apparent that Eddie's mother was struggling with many emotional problems that distorted her perceptions and led her to tell Eddie damaging and untrue things about his father. Upon the recommendation of our attorney, the court ruled that father should return to the home to be primary caretaker, and the mother live elsewhere, with frequent supervised contact with Eddie. Although not in our usual service menu, CLC also provided the court-ordered supervision at no cost to the family so that Eddie was not cut off suddenly from his mother. CLC is also finding the child a therapist to help him deal with his loyalty conflict and all the other issues that make his life difficult.*

## *Financial Overview*

One mark of a nonprofit organization's success is how well its constituents support it and how much it must spend to generate that support.

### REVENUE

Unrestricted	
Program Grants	113,743
Program revenue	38,941
Contributions	45,990
Corporate & Community	3,638
Interest	<u>2,911</u>
	<b>\$205,223</b>

Temporarily restricted	\$20,000
Nest-egg fund	\$35,000
Grants received for future	

### EXPENSES

Programs	187,160 (85%)
Management	19,817 (9%)
Fundraising	<u>13,211 (6%)</u>
	<b>\$220,188</b>

### BALANCE SHEET

Cash in bank	80,396
Investments	167,965
Fixed Assets	<u>7,560</u>
	<b>\$255,921</b>

*Annual message from the President*

Dear Friend of the Law Center,

Long range planning impresses funders. No doubt it should. But making promises for the future can't compare with keeping the ones you made for today.

The Children's Law Center is keeping its promises. We promised we would represent a growing number of poor children hurt by those who should be helping them, and we're doing it. We promised to advocate for them, and we're doing it. We promised to move closer to them and make our services broader, so we've hired a second, Spanish-speaking attorney and are moving to new offices in June. (The new address is 30 Arbor Street. Come see us after June 30.) We promised to find better, broader ways of listening, and our toll free Law Line (1-888-LAWDOOR) is ringing all the time.

We won't stop doing these things. We trust you will keep helping us.

Sincerely,  
Bruce Clements  
President of the Board

"You are the first friendly ear I've found during this whole ordeal. Thank you very



**The Children's Lawline**

**1709 calls regarding 1972 children**

*Issues*

- Custody (47%)
- Visitation (14%)
- DCF (6%)
- Child Support (6%)
- Education (4%)
- Children's Rights (3%)
- Grandparents' Rights (3%)
- Paternity (2%)
- Emancipation (1%)
- Teen rights (1%)

*Callers*

- Mothers (53%)
- Fathers (17%)
- Grandparents (8%)
- Children (3%)
- Professionals (4%)
- Other (9%)
- Unknown (6%)

*Ethnicity*

Caucasian	809
Black	192
Asian	11
Hispanic	139
Bi-racial	156
Other	10
Unknown	655

*Region*

Northeast	212
Greater Hartford	395
Northwest	208
Southeast	138
Fairfield County &New Haven area	362
Out of State	27
Unknown	367

***What are we finding when we follow up one to three months later?***

Lack of representation is a major problem preventing callers from going forward with a plan that they think will help a child. While some callers had found a way to get an attorney, others had not. Callers who had taken our recommendation to get into counseling reported finding that very helpful.

"You gave me confidence and direction so that I knew what I was

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"Justine spent as long as we needed. She didn't act like she had other things to do. Then she wrote us a nice letter, thanking us for calling.!"



"What a great refuge this place

"You were extremely helpful. Up until I spoke with you, I was stuck and didn't know what to do."

"You helped me understand the process. I've started custody proceedings and things are much better."

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"I want my baby protected and I want to do it correctly."

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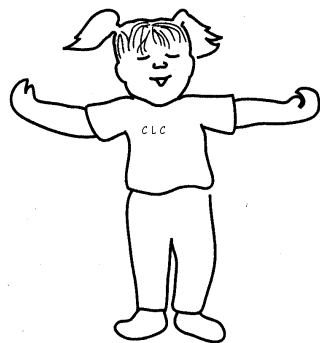
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"Thanks to you, I have worked out an agreement."