

NEWS FROM OUR HOUSE

SPRING 2021

The Children's LAW Center of Connecticut • Protecting Children & Strengthening Families



The Children's
LAW
Center

30 ARBOR STREET
HARTFORD, CT 06106

P: (860) 232-9993
<http://www.clcct.org>

SUPPORT OUR WORK
www.clcct.org/support

Providing Legal Representation During Covid-19: It Isn't All Bad!

It goes without saying that this past year has been tough. Like most businesses, The Children's Law Center has had to change the way that we provide services to our clients in all of our programs, most prominently our Legal Representation program. Yet, while the pandemic has posed significant challenges, it has also provided opportunities to positively reshape how we represent children in high-conflict family court cases.

For over a year now, the courts have been shut down in varying degrees, and regular in-person court appearances are relatively non-existent. When the court implemented a system to schedule court dates virtually over video, the floodgates opened and, with very little notice, the CLC staff attorneys were up and running with more-than-full caseloads and a calendar full of "remote" court dates. The virtual arena naturally extended to our case work, meeting parents and children virtually. The result at CLC is clear: in most instances, it is possible to work remotely and do so in a way that does not compromise our ability to provide child focused recommendations to the court.

CLC's Attorney, David Coughlin, finds that talking to children has been easier compared to meeting children in person. Because travel-time is eliminated, there is increased availability for the attorneys as

well as the clients which allows for more frequent contact. Children have been attending school virtually so, for them, now it was natural to be speaking with their GAL virtually.

David also observed that a child who is at home is in comfortable surroundings and not facing a total stranger in person or being asked to speak to a total stranger in an unusual location such as the CLC offices. Even when David meets a child in-person outdoors it can be awkward: Now the child is being asked to talk to a stranger in a mask!

Many of the same tools used to engage children in person can be used when meeting a child virtually. For instance, David has stuffed animals in the room and this prompts many younger clients to show him their stuffed animals, starting a natural conversation. When on camera, some clients have even walked around and given a tour of their room and their house with their phone.

As has been true with virtual court appearances, people tend to view the virtual format as more casual. David pointed out that meeting a child virtually has allowed him to see homes in their normal state and not as prepared for a stranger to visit. He often hears how a parent and other members of the household interact in the background, which can be very telling. There is a valid concern that children may be influenced by the parent in the home. When David notices a child speaking in a whisper or glancing back, he knows that the child is concerned someone is listening. All of this informs the investigation.

CLC's staff social worker, Nicole Silva, agrees that accessibility is the greatest benefit that has come from transitioning to a virtual format. Nicole must be in touch with multiple providers for each child and, because most providers have also had to make the shift to virtual, Nicole has been able to schedule "team meetings" when she would traditionally have had to meet with each separately. Meetings involving multiple providers simultaneously allows for more in-depth collaboration and a more focused plan for a child.

Even when in-person meetings are no longer a thing of the past, we will continue to use this format as long as it provides a positive tool for facilitating better outcomes for our clients. CLC's commitment to helping at risk children live in safer, more stable homes is as strong as ever. We are pleased that we've adapted our operations to covid-restrictions and are continuing to lead with excellence through a challenging year.



The Importance of a Loving Home: Dan A. Brody

As a new associate at the Hartford law firm of Robinson+Cole, Dan Brody was familiar with R+C's commitment to volunteerism, as well as its practice of providing pro-bono legal services. When a colleague connected Dan to The Children's Law Center to meet with Executive Director, Justine Rakich-Kelly and then Board President Bob Madden, Dan knew immediately that CLC was the non-profit he wanted to be involved with as a volunteer. In July, 2017, Dan joined CLC's Board of Directors.

Dan's passion for CLC's work stems, in part, from his childhood. Born in Korea, Dan was adopted when he was just a few months old. His background and identity influence Dan's appreciation of what some are fortunate enough to take for granted, the importance of parents who love and care for you and being raised in a loving home. Dan believes that one of the greatest gifts anyone can ever give another person is being a loving parent or caregiver. He understands that being a biological parent means little, if not accompanied by love. Finding and creating a safe and stable home environment for children is very personal to him.

Dan has integrated the value of giving into his life by dedicating his legal skills to numerous areas of community service. In addition to serving on the Board of The Children's Law Center, Dan maintains a significant pro bono practice. In particular, he participates in Robinson+Cole's Domestic Violence Restraining Order program, where he provides free representation to victims of domestic violence who are seeking restraining orders. Dan's work with Connecticut Coalition Against Domestic Violence aligns with the work of CLC. When children are exposed to domestic violence they can experience emotional, mental, and social damage that can affect their developmental growth.

Dan takes a lot of pride in what CLC does. "Being a trusted and effective advocate for a child is incredibly valuable. You cannot underestimate the impact that has on a young life, to know someone is there for you and only for you. In addition, helping children and families effectively mitigate serious issues and, more importantly, avoid potentially destructive ones and situations is something that will impact a child's life and development forever. Every case is a life, or lives, that we change". We at CLC appreciate Dan's dedication to our mission and for the guidance he provides to help improve the lives of Connecticut's most vulnerable children. Thank you, Dan!



Welcome Carolyn Fink and Margaret Boissoneau to the Board of Directors!



Carolyn Fink is a public school teacher in Farmington, CT. A mother of two daughters, she has spent over 20 years serving the children and families of Farmington. She holds a bachelor's degree in Psychology and Education and advanced degrees in Curriculum and Instruction and Educational Leadership. She is passionate about supporting children and families both in and out of school, and believes that stable families support social emotional wellbeing and academic growth. She is proud to support the mission and the vision of the Children's Law Center.

Margaret Boissoneau (Peggy) is a leader at Raytheon Technologies and has extensive finance and technical experience. She is currently responsible for world-wide integration, monitoring and controls including risk management. This includes Cybersecurity and transformation planning (including operational impacts of COVID-19). Peggy has volunteered for the Finance, Community Relations and Strategic Planning committees of the Town and County Club in Hartford and served on The American Heart Association Mission and Governance Board Committees, the Board of the Lupus Foundation, Casey Foundation, Children's Law Center Board and UCONN Foundation. Her hobbies include Travel, Ballooning, Golf and Skiing.



Your Donation Today Earns CLC a 15% Bonus!

Birdies for Charity -- Now through June 27th

The Children's Law Center is excited to announce our fundraising partnership with the 2021 Travelers Championship Birdies for Charity program!

As always, the Travelers Championship will donate 100% of your gift to our organization, PLUS an additional 15% bonus match on every dollar raised!

The children we serve live in unstable home environments and are likely to be in greater jeopardy due to the impact of COVID-19. Your donation will help The Children's Law Center continue to operate, now and for the foreseeable future, as we focus on changing the way we interact with the people we serve, the public and each other.

We appreciate your support, as it is crucial to our success. Thank you.



How to Donate Through Birdies for Charity

- Text BFC to 44321.
- Visit our website at www.clcct.org and click on the Birdies for Charity slider on the home page.
- Look for our mailing next month containing the Donation Form for sending a gift directly to Travelers Championship in the mail.

Board of Directors

Tim Buckley, President
Laura Post, Vice President
Jonathan Fink, Treasurer
Pamela Magnano, Secretary

Melissa Arkus	Cara Hardacker
Peggy Boissoneau	Patricia Pheanious
Dan A. Brody	Patrick Proctor
Scott Esposito	James Russell
Carolyn Fink	Elizabeth Thayer

CLC Staff

Justine Rakich-Kelly, Executive Director
Randa Hojaiban, Deputy Director
Deb Shulansky, Development Director

Margaret Bozek, Staff Attorney & Program Liaison
David Coughlin, Staff Attorney
Brendan Holt, Staff Attorney
Aisha Roche, Staff Attorney
Monique Ryan, Staff Attorney
Nicole Silva, Staff Social Worker

SAVE-the-DATE: OCTOBER 7, 2021

The Children's Law Center is thrilled to gather once again, in-person, for our Annual Fundraising Gala. Our venue will provide outdoor and indoor spaces to gather.

Look for more information to follow on our website: www.clcct.org or follow us on Facebook and Instagram!

Stay Tuned!





The Children's
LAW
Center

30 ARBOR STREET
HARTFORD, CT 06106

P: (860) 232-9993
<http://www.clcct.org>

 /ChildrensLawCenterofCT

 @ChildrensLawCT

 @Children'sLawCT

Non-Profit Org
US Postage
PAID
HARTFORD, CT
PERMIT #3418

Ways to Support CLC

Birdies for Charity

Text BFC to 44321 to earn CLC a 15% bonus for your donation!

Amazon Smile

Simply select CLC as your nonprofit of choice and shop www.smile.amazon.com.

Become a Sponsor

Visit our website to find out about more ways to get involved!

Matching Gifts

Many employers encourage giving by offering matching gift options. Ask your employer about this easy way to grow your donation.

Bequests

Consider a legacy gift. For information, contact Deb at Deb@clcct.org.