

# Children's Law Center of Minnesota

## 2017 Community Report



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St. Paul, MN 55104  
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[www.clcmn.org](http://www.clcmn.org)

# 2017 Board of Directors



Thank you for sharing our passion and investing in the Children's Law Center of Minnesota. Your support continues to propel us forward to ensure that we have the resources to represent Minnesota's abused and neglected children and to provide them with a voice in the courtroom.

This past year proved to be a year of growth and big wins for CLC. As you will read in this report, the small voice of McKenna Arenholz resonated loudly with the legislature. As a result, in August McKenna's Law was signed into law by the Governor, ensuring that children are informed of their right to have an attorney while navigating the child protection system. As CLC leads the charge for systemic changes in child protection, the greater our success, the greater the demand for our services. There are, of course, capacity challenges that come with this rapid growth, and we continue to seek and secure new sources of funding to support our operations.

With the commitment of 335 volunteer attorneys, and our talented and dedicated CLC staff, last year we represented 840 children, representing 16% growth compared to 2016. Foster children represented by CLC attorneys are more likely to graduate high school and hold a job, better preparing them to contribute to their community and to lead productive, happy lives. Our work impacts the stability and future of our clients. Your partnership and dedication similarly impacts the future of these children.

On behalf of the Board, thank you. We couldn't do this important work without you.

Denise Rahne, Esq.  
2017 CLC Board President

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# FROM THE DIRECTOR



CLC is pleased to report on program activities, highlights, and results over another successful year delivering well-informed, professional representation and advocacy for vulnerable youth within the child protection system.

In 2017, CLC continued to experience an influx in cases due to changes in the law and an increased number of children entering foster care. With CLC staff support, our volunteer attorneys continued to receive the resources and training to empower our clients to voice their opinions as they navigate the child protection system. The extraordinary commitment of our volunteer attorneys makes it possible for each of our clients to have at least one consistent and supportive adult in his or her life. In total, volunteer attorneys provided more than \$3 million in pro bono legal services last year to CLC child clients.

In addition to legal representation of children and youth in foster care, CLC continued to actively participate in local coalitions and initiatives to advocate for systemic changes and improvements that better serve at-risk and foster care youth. CLC contributed to several “amicus curiae” briefs to address decisions affecting foster care and disconnected children. CLC also designed and presented many training sessions for attorneys, judges, guardians ad litem and other individuals working with youth. Overall in 2017, CLC reached more than 1,700 attorneys, teachers, law students, legislators, social workers and others through outreach and training sessions on topics including the importance of legal representation of foster care youth, laws regarding children aging out of foster care, breaking the cycle of poverty, school-to-prison pipeline, and the collateral consequences of charging youth with criminal offenses.

We are so grateful for your support enabling us to meet this increased demand and to continue to provide these vital, high quality services for vulnerable youth—I offer my personal thanks especially to our dedicated team of pro bono attorneys, donors, board members, staff, and a host of other volunteers and interns who support our mission in so many ways. Many thanks to you all!

Sincerely,

Lilia Panteleeva, Esq.

Executive Director

## Congratulations CLC Staff

- In September 2017, CLC associate attorney Eikoku Ikeno was recognized as Minnesota Lawyer’s 2017 Up & Coming by Minnesota Lawyer.
- In October 2017, CLC social worker Weida Allen was commended by AARP Minnesota and Pollen as a “50 Over 50” honoree in the “Disruptors” category.



## 2017 Client Information

**Total Clients: 840**

198 Closed Cases

288 Newly Opened Cases

637 Remained Open/Active

**74 %**

**Graduation Rate**

Of 54 clients scheduled to graduate high school, 40 graduated. That rate is more than double the national graduation average for foster children (31%).

Client Ethnicity	Percentage
American Indian	11%
Asian/Pacific	7%
Black	52%
Hispanic	7%
White	19%
Other	2%

Client Age	Number
Under 10	12
10-13	318
14-18	402
19-21	108

Client Gender	Number
Male	410
Female	430



# 2017 Highlight: McKenna's Law

"A person is a person, no matter how small" - *Dr. Seuss*



Thanks to the tenacity of 12-year-old McKenna Ahrenholz, and the leadership of CLC, McKenna's Law unanimously passed the Minnesota Senate and House and was signed into law by the Governor in 2017. The law now states that when a 10+ year-old child is removed from home and placed in foster care, the county social services shall inform the child of the child's right to be represented by a lawyer and of the child's right to personally attend court hearings. The law also provides that only the child can waive their right to be represented by a lawyer, and only after an opportunity to talk to a lawyer first.

McKenna and her siblings spent much of their lives in the system, a system that kept sending them back to an abusive father time and time again. Records indicated there were many pleas from the children to stay with their grandparents rather than bounce between foster homes or return to the parent who didn't feed them, who verbally and physically abused them, and who once punched McKenna in the face. They weren't heard. They weren't told they had input in the decisions that affected their lives. They had no idea they were entitled to have an attorney. What child would? It took 11 months for the courts to appoint them an attorney, and that appointment changed everything for them.



With an attorney to represent them, they were able to have custody transferred to their grandparents where all five siblings now live, happily together. McKenna wanted to make sure that other kids in her situation could get the help of an attorney. She testified in front of legislators asking them to protect children when they are most vulnerable.



Thank You Association of Corporate Counsel (ACC) - Minnesota Chapter, for organizing and hosting the fantastic Casino Royale Gala to benefit CLC.

**Join us for the 2018 Casino Royale  
Tickets Are Now Available**

**Saturday April 14th 6-11PM**

**Radisson Blu—Mall of America**

**Tickets: [mn-ed@accglobal.com](mailto:mn-ed@accglobal.com)**



# 2017 Events



**Mark Your Calendar:**

**2018 Annual Benefit & Celebration  
Thursday, October 11th 5pm-8:30pm**

*Windows on Minnesota  
Marquette Hotel/IDS Center*

## CLC Annual Benefit & Celebration

Thank you to our sponsors, attendees, and staff for another successful year of fundraising at the 2017 CLC Annual Benefit and Celebration .







## Thank You Volunteer Attorneys

In 2017, 335 volunteer attorneys represented 470 CLC clients, resulting in over 3 million dollars in pro-bono legal services provided to our clients. Because of your commitment, passion, and generosity, our clients have a voice in the courtroom. Thank you for giving us the gift of your time and talents. You are making a difference and changing lives.

At the end of the day, it's not about what you have or even what you have accomplished...it's about who you've lifted up, who you've made better. It's about what you've given back.

*-Denzel Washington*

## Thank You To Our Generous 2017 Donors

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- Association of Corporate Counsel - MN Chapter

### \$15,000+

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