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Children's Law Center of Minnesota

Children's Law Center of Minnesota

2023 Community Report

www.clcmn.org



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Mission Statement

Children's Law Center of Minnesota promotes the legal rights and well-being of children and youth. CLC's staff and volunteers provide direct representation of children and youth, primarily in the child welfare system, and advocate for changes in the systems that affect their lives.

Children's Law Center

History and Impact



CLC was founded in 1995 with the mission to promote the legal rights and well-being of children and youth. Operating primarily in Hennepin and Ramsey County, CLC focuses on supporting vulnerable foster care youth through direct legal representation, systemic advocacy, educational initiatives, and outreach programs. The organization prioritizes upholding the rights of young individuals, ensuring their voices are heard and respected within the intricate child welfare legal framework. By empowering youth in child protection cases, CLC aims to provide them with a platform to voice their desires and improve opportunities and outcomes.

Both pro bono and in-house attorneys at CLC consistently champion children's rights. These rights encompass remaining in their local school, receiving legal representation from the age of 10 and over, maintaining connections with siblings and family members, ensuring that county child protection agencies make reasonable efforts to keep siblings united, identifying family and kinship placement options through reasonable efforts, and establishing independent living plans from the age of 14.

CLC's services for Minnesota's foster care youth encompass direct legal representation, systemic advocacy, educational initiatives, and outreach endeavors.

Direct Representation – Through CLC's legal advocacy, clients receive comprehensive support to uphold their legal rights, incorporate their preferences, ensure equitable treatment, uphold due process, secure appropriate placements, and access all necessary resources to address their trauma.

Systemic Reform – CLC actively engages in local collaborations and programs to advocate for systemic enhancements and reforms that better serve at-risk and foster care youth.

Education – CLC develops and disseminates educational materials tailored to help foster care youth comprehend their rights concerning housing, employment, healthcare, voting, financial matters, and consumer rights.

Over the years, CLC has trained more than 1,000 volunteer attorneys, represented over 3,600 abused and neglected children, and played a pivotal role in advocating for systemic reforms to safeguard vulnerable children statewide. As CLC commemorates its 29th anniversary in 2024, it continues its unwavering commitment to championing the rights of children and adolescents.



Letter From Susan Dioury CLC Executive Director



**CHILDREN'S LAW CENTER
OF MINNESOTA**

Dear Supporters,

2023 was a year of transition for the Children's Law Center of Minnesota (CLC). Through all the changes during its 28th year, CLC maintained unwavering support from volunteer attorneys, Board and Committee members, staff, and donors ensuring we continued our mission to promote and protect the legal rights and well-being of children and youth through legal advocacy, educational outreach, and policy reform.

In my short tenure here at CLC, I am amazed and inspired by the passion and commitment demonstrated by our community of supporters. In 2023, 200+ volunteer attorneys from our legal community provided legal representation and ongoing support to more than 500 youth in Hennepin and Ramsey counties. Your efforts played a vital role in CLC's ability to stabilize the lives and future well-being of these children and youth. We are proud to report that CLC successfully saw 158 active cases to completion in 2023, meaning our clients were either reunited with family, adopted, or aged-out of the foster care program. Additionally, seventy percent (70%) of CLC graduation-eligible clients graduated from high school. Our resolute staff worked tirelessly to maintain the expected level of service, support, and legal expertise to the foster children and youth who need to be heard in midst of the complex foster care process. CLC staff also continued serving on relevant child welfare committees throughout the year contributing their decades of knowledge and wisdom on juvenile law to provide direction and assistance towards meaningful changes to the child welfare system.

The strong financial support of our supporters has kept CLC in the forefront of giving Minnesota foster care children and youth the legal support and access to resources they need to succeed. This important work could not be done without your financial support and we are truly grateful for your commitment to CLC. Foster children's need for legal advocacy will continue in the years to come. CLC is poised to continue providing well-trained, volunteer and staff attorneys to assist these children and youth through the most challenging time of their lives. As we move further into the new year, we hope to harness the advocacy skills and resources we have built to ensure children in the foster care system can thrive. Thank you for your continued support of the Children's Law Center of Minnesota.

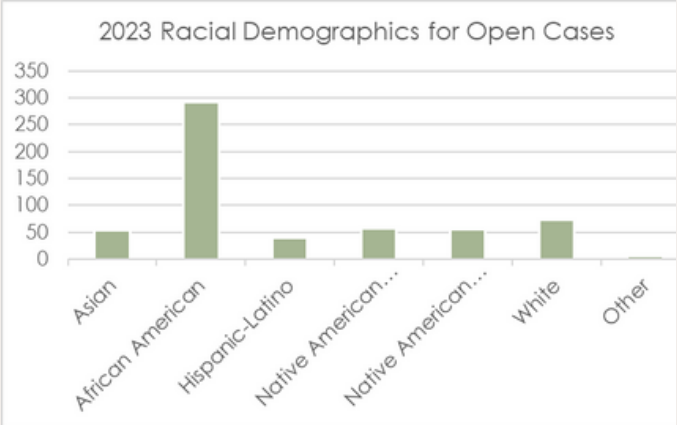
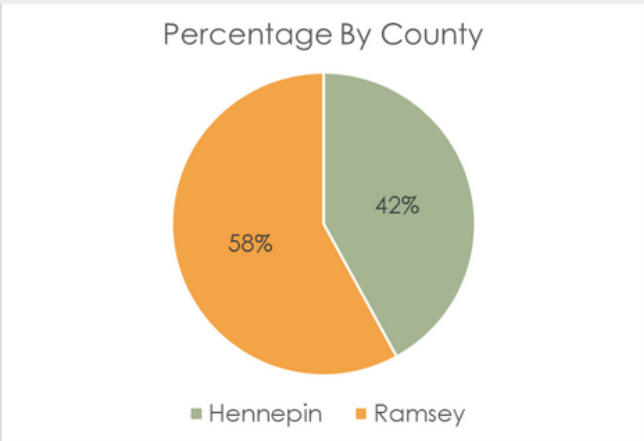
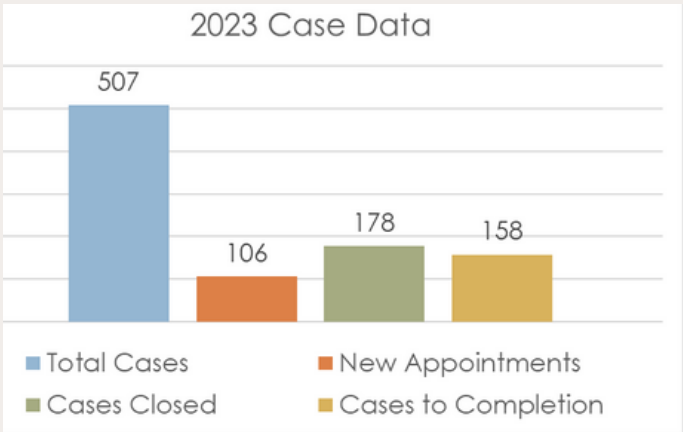
With gratitude,
Susan Dioury, Attorney
Executive Director

2023 Demographics

According to the most recent Minnesota Out-of-Home report, over 12,000 children experienced out-of-home placement in 2021. This report noted that, “in the last five years, Minnesota has seen a shift from neglect to caretaker drug abuse as the most common primary reason for removal for children across the age span; this remained true in 2021.” Of all new cases, nearly one-third were due to exposure to drug use; others were due to physical and sexual abuse or neglect by their guardians. The system also disproportionately removes children from Native and African American families, and these youth tend to spend more time in child protection than their white peers. The youth we work with know all too well the racial disparity that exists in our community and in the foster care system.

Children in foster care need strong advocates to ensure they are getting the services they need and are entitled to, but may not be aware of, as well as support that can help them move forward. CLC has fulfilled this indispensable role for 28 years.

Of the 507 youth served in 2023, CLC saw 158 cases to completion. Meaning, our clients were either reunited with family, adopted (30% of cases), or aged-out of the foster care program.



Community Advocacy

CLC stands as a prominent figure within the child advocacy sphere, collaborating with community partners to enhance outcomes for foster youth. By harnessing the collective wisdom and proficiency of its volunteer attorneys, CLC plays a pivotal role in guiding professionals working with foster care youth, offering insights to shape and refine policies and practices for the betterment of these youth. Central to CLC's mission is the pursuit of equity while actively engaging with the community to dismantle structures that perpetuate racial discrimination.

Furthermore, CLC actively engages in various local and youth-oriented coalitions, including the Minnesota Supreme Court Juvenile Protection Rules Committee, Minnesota's Children's Justice Initiative Advisory Committee, Minnesota's Children's Justice Initiative Advisory Subcommittee on Children's Mental Health, Minnesota's State Coordinator for National Association of Counsel for Children (NACC) and as a member of the National Coalition for a Civil Right to Counsel. CLC staff presented at a two-day Judicial Academy Addressing Reasonable Effort Findings in Child Protection Cases on May 18 and 19, 2023. CLC readily shares its expertise and resources with its volunteer attorneys during the volunteers' case representation.

Volunteers Make a Difference

We could not represent the number of clients we do without the invaluable contributions of our volunteers, whose expertise and unwavering commitment are instrumental in delivering optimal representation. Moreover, their diverse skill sets bolster our capacity to advocate for the whole child.

In 2023 CLC trained 12 new volunteer attorneys through On-Demand Training.

The training program prepares attorneys to represent youth in foster care. As a lawyer for a child in foster care, you represent your client in juvenile court, identify and obtain appropriate services, and negotiate settlements. When you do pro bono work for CLC, CLC staff attorneys and the youth resource manager will strategize with you, provide information about resources for your client, and help you assess your client's development and education needs.

In 2023 CLC provided the following CLE Trainings for volunteer attorneys:

- Legal Representation and Advocacy for Youth in Extended Foster Care
- Permanency in Practice for Child Attorneys
- Addressing Sibling Relationships in Child Protection Matters
- Special Issues for Older Foster Care Youth

[Volunteer Attorney List 2023](#)

Financial Statement

Income

State/County	272,131
Foundations	482,750
Corporations	258,520
Law/Firms & Bar Foundations	129,215
Individuals	139,141
Other	5,257

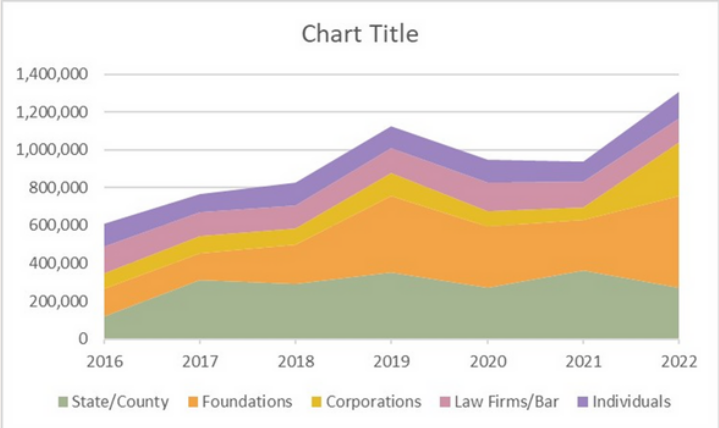
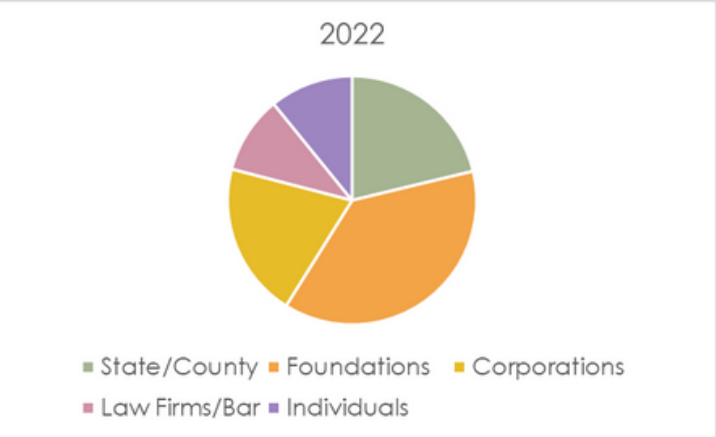
Total Revenue

1,287,014

Salary & Benefits	861,358
Insurance & Fees	25,264
Rent & Utilities	50,057
Fundraising	39,779
Other Equipment & Supplies	73,103

Total Expenses

1,049,560



[Link to CLC's 990](#)

Celebrations

CLC 28th Celebration of Champions Annual Benefit and Awards



Congratulations, Honorable Gail Chang Bohr (ret.), on receiving the 2023 Rosalie E. Wahl Justice for Children Award!



Congratulations Hoang Murphy, on receiving the 2023 Heroes for Children Award!



Congratulations, Fredrikson & Byron, P.A, on receiving the 2023 Distinguished Service Award!

2024 Nominations

Do you know of a Hero for Children? Nominate them for Children's Law Center of Minnesota's "Heroes for Children" 2024 Award! Awardee will be recognized at the September 19, 2024, Celebration of Champions at Nicollet Island Pavilion.

This award recognizes an individual who has made significant contributions to the well-being of Minnesota's children in either a career or volunteer position. Nominees may work with children in any area—such as teaching, health care, legislation, advocacy, or mentoring—affecting physical, spiritual, social, or emotional well-being.

Nominations should include contact information for the nominee and nominator(s) and a one-to-three-page narrative describing how the nominee has made a significant difference to children in Minnesota. Please give specific examples if possible.

Nominations will be accepted through August 31, 2024. Please email nominations to info@clcmn.org

Press Release

Children’s Law Center of Minnesota Achieves Victory for Youth in Foster Care at the Minnesota Court of Appeals

Children’s Law Center of Minnesota (CLC), a nonprofit organization that provides free legal services to youth in foster care, secured an important decision for Minnesota youth in foster care in the case, *In the Matter of the Welfare of the Child of: K. O. and D. W.*, Commissioner of Human Services. With the help of dedicated volunteer attorneys, CLC successfully won a precedential case at the Minnesota Court of Appeals prohibiting counties from detaining non-delinquent foster care youth in locked detention facilities.

In 2023, six of CLC’s clients were detained in a juvenile detention center even though they were non-delinquent youth. For days and months at a time, the county responsible for their custody and care opted to detain them in locked confinements despite their status as non-delinquent youth and against the repeated pleas from CLC attorneys that these holds were unlawful.

Following a CLC client’s second unlawful incarceration at a juvenile detention center, CLC staff attorney Katie Mathurin and volunteer attorney Chad Snyder filed a motion for the immediate release of the youth. After the district court ruled to continue to detain the youth, a team of volunteer attorneys from the Fredrikson law firm, Rick Snyder, Shantal Pai, Thomas Wheeler and Megan Helstrom, appealed the decision to the Court of Appeals. On behalf of CLC’s client, the team argued that the statutory authority (Minn. Stat. § 260C.181) clearly limited a county’s ability to hold a youth in a secure detention facility for only 24 hours, and after that, must be released to a relative or shelter care facility. The appellate court agreed.

“This decision sets a precedent that will protect youth from being locked up simply because they are in the child protection system and that system failed to provide them with the home and services they need,” CLC staff attorney Katie Mathurin says.

“Our clients are removed from their parents for their own safety, and they are to receive protection and services to help them and their families,” CLC managing attorney Anne Tyler Gueinzus says. “They are not to be placed in foster care to punish them for the harm they have received.”

CLC extends its gratitude to the zealous volunteer attorneys who contributed to this landmark decision. CLC and its volunteers will continue to fight to protect the rights of youth in foster care.

Board of Directors

We want to extend our gratitude to our Board of Directors who have been instrumental to our success. CLC’s board members volunteer with our clients, advocate for our mission in the legal community, and generously share their talents and expertise with CLC. They are dedicated, strategic, and philanthropic.

2024 BOARD MEMBERS

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(former client)

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CHILDREN'S LAW CENTER OF MINNESOTA

28 years of empowering youth in foster care

Thank you to our in-kind and financial donors for making this work possible.

CHAMPION \$15,000+

ASSOCIATION OF CORPORATE COUNSEL ● FREDRIKSON & BYRON, P.A. ● ROBINS KAPLAN L.L.P.
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FRIEND \$500+

DADY & GARDNER P.A. ● ARTHUR CHAPMAN KETTERING SMETAK & PIKALA, PA

Dates to Remember



Save the Date

29th Annual Children's Law
Center of Minnesota
Celebration of champions
Benefit & Awards
September 19, 2024
5:30pm to 8:30pm
Nicollet Island Pavilion

2024 TRAINING SESSIONS:

- Tuesday April 23, 2024, Lunch-hour CLE training "Basics of CHIPS Representation" with Debra Kovats and Katie Mathurin. Registration information is coming soon.
- Wednesday June 12, 2024, Lunch-hour CLE training "Ethical Concerns When Representing Foster Care Youth" with Anne Gueinzus and Katie Mathurin. Registration information is coming soon.
- Wednesday September 11, 2024, Lunch-hour CLE training: "Reasonable/Active Efforts in Child Protection Matters " with Anne Gueinzus and Debra Kovats. Registration information is coming soon.