



CHILDREN'S LAW
CENTER OF MINNESOTA

Annual Report





www.clcmn.org

2025

Table of Contents

01 Mission Statement

02 History & Impact

03 Letter from the Executive Director

05 2025 Demographics

06 2025 Demographics (cont.)

07 Community Advocacy

08 Financial Statement

09 Impact Story

10 Celebrations

11 Board of Directors

12 Sponsors

CHILDREN'S LAW CENTER
OF MINNESOTA

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.



History & Impact

Founded in 1995, Children's Law Center of Minnesota (CLC) is dedicated to ensuring that children and youth in foster care have a strong, independent legal voice. While CLC has represented children and youth in 17 counties across Minnesota over the past 30 years, the organization currently provides direct legal representation primarily in Hennepin and Ramsey Counties. Through a combination of staff and volunteer attorneys, CLC offers legal representation, education, and systemic advocacy to promote safety, stability, and well-being—working to ensure young people remain connected to family and siblings, stay in their local schools, receive legal representation beginning at age 10, and are meaningfully involved in decisions that shape their lives.

CLC's work extends beyond individual cases to strengthen the child welfare system as a whole. Attorneys collaborate with courts, agencies, and community partners to advance systemic reforms, while educational efforts empower foster care youth with knowledge of their rights related to housing, healthcare, employment, education, and independent living. CLC also provides comprehensive training and continuing legal education to its volunteer attorneys, ensuring clients receive high-quality, trauma-informed representation.

Since its founding, CLC has represented more than 4,300 children and youth with the support of hundreds of volunteer attorneys and has submitted 24 amicus briefs and petitions in courts across Minnesota. As CLC approaches its 31st anniversary, the organization is focused on expanding access to quality legal representation statewide, maintaining thought leadership in the foster care community, and ensuring long-term financial sustainability—building on decades of impact to amplify young voices and create brighter futures.



Letter from CLC's Executive Director

Dear Friends and Supporters,

As we reflect on our 30th year of success at Children's Law Center of MN, we are filled with gratitude for the community that stands beside us. Because of your support, CLC continued to advance our mission of ensuring access to justice for foster youth who might otherwise go unheard.

For thirty years, our mission has been clear: to stand beside children who need it most by preventing child abuse and giving children fair treatment. With every case, we are reminded that these children deserve legal representation and their voices to be raised and heard. For three decades, our staff and volunteers have walked with the thousands of young people through some of their hardest moments, always holding fast to the belief that their future matters and what we do makes a positive difference in their lives. In 2025 alone, the CLC team, along with our almost 200 dedicated volunteer attorneys, represented more than 400 children and youth, providing critical legal advocacy at moments of profound vulnerability. Whether helping families remain safely together, supporting youth navigating complex legal systems, or advocating for systemic change, our work was grounded in dignity, fairness, and compassion.

At CLC, we use the legal team's 80+ years of combined experience in juvenile law and foster care knowledge to help our clients and others in the foster care system help foster children and youth. In maintaining thought leadership in 2025, CLC implemented a new website that contains updated resource materials for youth in foster care including Knowing Your Rights publication, FAQs, and other important community resources. Additionally, our new website contains a Legal Library for volunteer attorneys and other child welfare professionals to access continuing legal education, Practice Points, and other valuable resources.

In our efforts to support as many foster children as possible, in February 2025, CLC began accepting representation for Ramsey County youth 10 and older who remain in-home on CHIPS petitions. This is in addition to our representation of all Ramsey county youth in out-of-home placement

We are deeply thankful for our donors, volunteers, board members, staff, and community partners. Your generosity of time, expertise, and resources made these outcomes possible. We take our responsibility as stewards of your trust seriously, and we continue our commitment to using every dollar wisely and transparently to maximize impact.

(continued on next page)

Letter from CLC's Executive Director (continued)

This year was not without challenges. Foundation grants continue to decrease, federal and state funding programs remain in flux, evolving legal landscapes in child protection, and limited resources required adaptability and resilience. These challenges also strengthened our resolve and sharpened our focus on collaboration, innovation, and sustainability.

Looking ahead, we are preparing for another year of meaningful work. Our priorities include ensuring all MN foster children and youth ten and older are receiving the quality legal representation they deserve , maintaining thought leadership in the community, continuing to advocate for policies that promote equity and justice, and ensuring CLC stays financially viable by diversifying our funding sources. With your continued partnership, we are confident we can meet the needs of the vulnerable clients we serve.

Thank you for believing in our mission and for standing with us. We invite you to remain engaged—by staying informed, sharing our work, volunteering, or making a gift—so that together we can continue building a more just and compassionate community for our most vulnerable children and youth.

With gratitude,

Susan Dioury
Executive Director
Children's Law Center of Minnesota

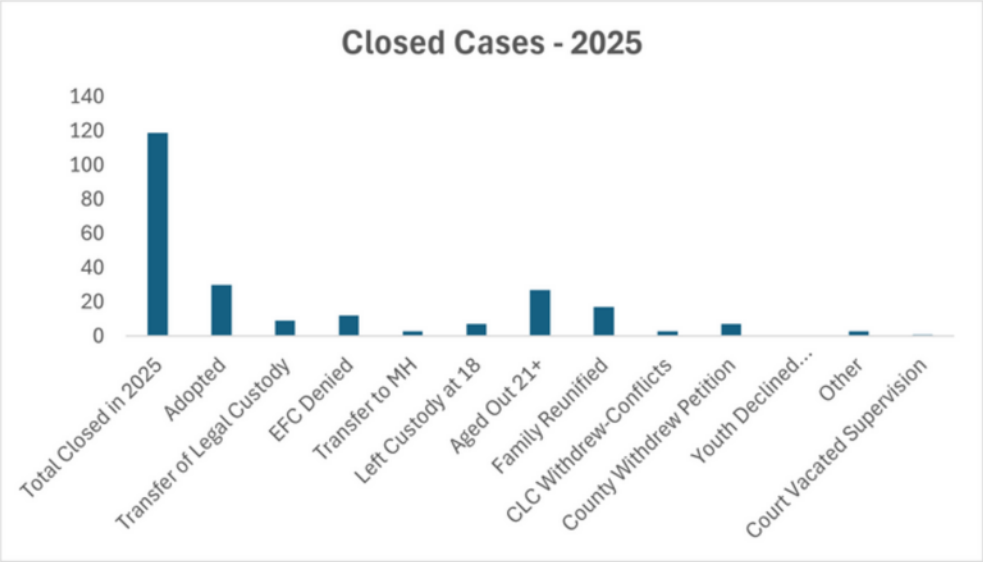
"When we listen to children, we change the world they grow up in."
~ Ralph Nader

2025 Demographics

In 2023, approximately 10,475 children and youth experienced out-of-home care in Minnesota, with more than 4,200 children entering foster care during the year, according to data from the Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS). Children enter out-of-home placement for a variety of reasons, and DHS reports that caretaker substance use has continued to surpass neglect as the most common primary reason for removal across age groups. These figures illustrate the significant scope of Minnesota's child welfare system and provide important context for the population served by Children's Law Center of Minnesota.

Racial disparities remain pronounced within the foster care system. Minnesota DHS data show that American Indian children were approximately 16 times more likely than white children to experience out-of-home placement. African American children and children identifying as Hispanic (of any race) were about twice as likely as white children to enter care, while children identifying as two or more races were approximately eight times more likely. These disparities underscore the ongoing disproportionate impact of the child welfare system on children of color and reinforce the need for continued advocacy and systemic reform.

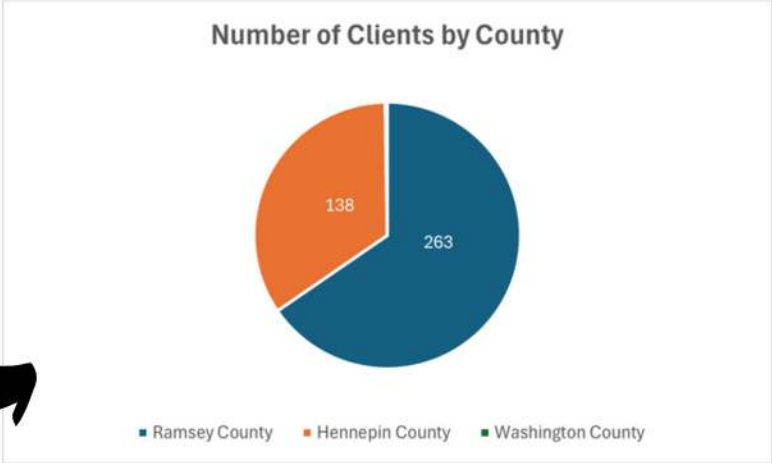
CLC's Youth Resource Team provides culturally responsive support to help address the complex needs of children and youth in foster care. This includes connecting young people to culturally specific resources such as African American therapists, Indigenous services, and other supports that promote cultural identity, belonging, and well-being. CLC also works closely with youth to identify and advocate for placements that reflect their cultural background and personal preferences—an approach that helps reduce placement disruptions and the risk of homelessness.



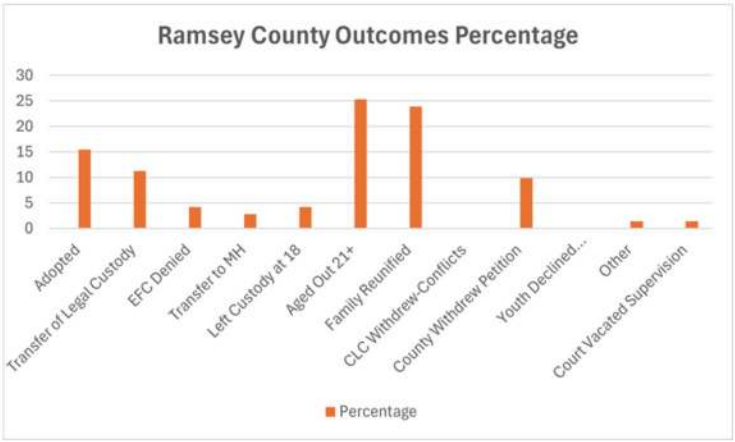
Children in foster care often need informed advocates to help them access critical services and supports. For three decades, Children's Law Center of Minnesota has been a trusted resource, helping youth navigate a complex system and move toward stability.

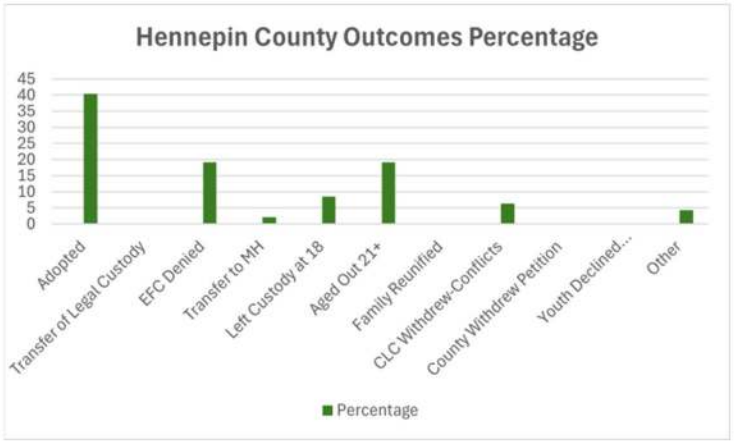
In 2025, CLC served 402 children and youth and brought 119 cases to completion through reunification, adoption, or youth successfully aging out of foster care—demonstrating the impact of sustained legal advocacy and support across Minnesota.

In 2025, CLC represented 402 clients. 62% (263) of cases were in Ramsey County and 34% (138) were in Hennepin County, 0.25% (1) were in Washington County.



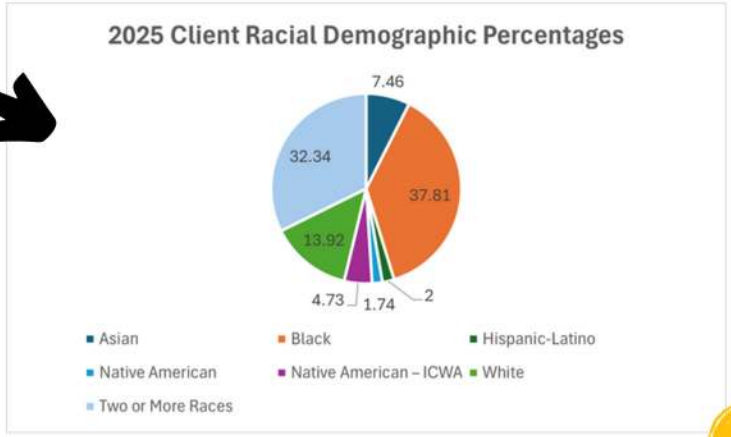
In Ramsey County, notable outcomes included 25% of youth aging out of care at age 21 or older, reflecting successful access to Extended Foster Care for eligible youth. Nearly one-quarter (24%) were reunified with their families, while 15% were adopted and 11% experienced a transfer of legal custody, supporting permanency through multiple pathways. Smaller percentages of youth left care at age 18 (4%), were denied Extended Foster Care (4%), or transferred to mental health services (3%). In some cases, the county withdrew its petition (10%), while other outcomes—such as court-vacated supervision or removal from a petition—were rare. No cases involved CLC withdrawing due to conflicts or youth declining representation.





In Hennepin County, adoption was the most common outcome, accounting for 40% of cases, followed by aging out of care at age 21 or older (19%) and denial of Extended Foster Care (19%). Smaller percentages of youth left custody at age 18 (9%) or transferred to mental health services (2%). In a limited number of cases, CLC withdrew due to conflicts (6%) or outcomes were categorized as other administrative resolutions (4%). Unlike Ramsey County, no youth in Hennepin County were reunified with family, transferred legal custody, or declined representation in 2025.

Of the 402 open cases in 2025, 346 cases (86%) involved clients who identified as BIPOC.



Community Advocacy

Children's Law Center of Minnesota is a recognized leader in child advocacy, partnering with communities to advance better outcomes for youth in foster care. Supported by almost 200 committed volunteer attorneys, CLC brings deep expertise to the field, helping inform professional practice while shaping policies that impact children and families across the system. Equity is central to this work, with CLC actively collaborating with community partners to confront and dismantle structures that contribute to racial disparities in child welfare.

CLC also plays an active role in influential local and national coalitions dedicated to improving youth welfare. These include the Minnesota Supreme Court Juvenile Protection Rules Committee, the Children's Justice Initiative Advisory Committee and Subcommittee on Children's Mental Health, and the National Coalition for a Civil Right to Counsel.

Volunteers & Training



CLC's work is made possible by the extraordinary commitment of its volunteer attorneys, whose expertise, dedication, and varied professional backgrounds are essential to delivering high-quality legal representation and advocating for the whole child.

In 2025, CLC continued to strengthen its volunteer attorney program through its On-Demand Training model, welcoming and preparing 17 new volunteer attorneys to serve youth in foster care. This comprehensive training equips attorneys with the knowledge and tools needed to navigate juvenile court proceedings, advocate for appropriate services, and support permanency outcomes. Volunteer attorneys are further supported by CLC's staff attorneys and Youth Resource Manager, who provide ongoing guidance, resource coordination, and expertise in addressing the developmental, educational, and social-emotional needs of each client.

Additionally, CLC offered the following Continuing Legal Education (CLE) trainings in 2025 to enhance the skills and knowledge of our volunteer attorneys:

- *Out of Home Placements in MN Foster Care System (March 25)*
- *Legal Representation and Advocacy for Youth in Extended Foster Care (June 17)*
- *Legislative Update (August 19)*
- *Permanency Options (September 23)*
- *Active/Reasonable Efforts (November 20)*
- *Neurodiversity for Legal Professionals (November 12)*

These training opportunities ensure our volunteers are equipped to provide exceptional advocacy and support for youth in foster care.

Financial Statement

Children's Law Center of Minnesota (CLC) is committed to transparency, accountability, and responsible stewardship of the resources entrusted to us by our donors, supporters, and grant partners. The financial information presented below summarizes CLC's income and expenses for the 2025 fiscal year and reflects our careful management of funds in support of our mission to advocate for and empower children and youth in foster care. These figures demonstrate our ongoing focus on directing resources where they have the greatest impact. A complete audited financial statement is available upon request and provides additional detail regarding CLC's financial health and stewardship practices.

2025 Income & Expenses

Income

State/County:	$398,993
Foundations:	$294,750
Corporations:	$67,281
Law Firms & Bar Foundations:	$168,625
Individuals:	$138,281
Other:	$48,019
Total Revenue:	$1,012,899

Expenses

Salary & Benefits:	$908,880
Insurance & Fees:	$37,236
Rent & Utilities:	$71,575
Fundraising:	$30,534
Other Equipment & Supplies:	$3,197
Total Expenses:	$1,051,423
Net Income:	($38,524)

Links To Financial Documents:

CLC 990 Form

2025 Organizational Budget

CLC IRS Determination Letter



Sophie's Story

Sophie entered foster care to escape a home marked by unimaginable abuse. From early childhood, she endured years of trauma, and in her early teens she was facing motherhood herself. Determined to protect her baby, Sophie arranged an open adoption, knowing it was the best way to give her daughter the life she deserved. Her first long-term placement provided the healing and stability she had never known, and by 18 she was living with the family she now calls her "adoptive" parents.

When Sophie met Anne, her attorney from the Children's Law Center of Minnesota, she was skeptical that anyone would truly fight for her. That changed quickly. Anne became a fierce advocate, working tirelessly to terminate her mother's parental rights so Sophie could finally be free from her past. She stood by Sophie in court, listened to her wishes, and gave her the confidence of knowing someone was truly on her side.

Today, Sophie is building her future, pursuing her education in veterinary technology and law enforcement. She credits her CLC attorney's unwavering support with giving her the freedom and stability she needed to thrive, and continues to inspire others with her resilience, compassion, and hope.



Anne Lockner
CLC Attorney

Celebrations

At the 30th Annual Celebration of Champions Benefit & Awards, held on September 18, 2025, at Nicollet Island Pavilion, Children's Law Center of Minnesota proudly marked three decades of advancing justice for children and youth in foster care. Surrounded by supporters, volunteers, and community leaders, the evening honored individuals and organizations whose advocacy, leadership, and compassion have strengthened our mission and amplified the voices of vulnerable youth for 30 years.



Heroes for Children Award: Kate Rickord

In recognition of more than two decades of service, Kate Rickord has been a driving force in strengthening foster care and mental health systems across Minnesota. Her leadership has advanced trauma-informed, evidence-based practices that center the voices and well-being of children, families, and caregivers.



Rosalie E. Wahl Justice for Children Award: Lisa McNaughton

Lisa McNaughton, CLC's 2025 Rosalie E. Wahl Justice for Children Award recipient, has dedicated her career to advocating for children and families in the justice system. As Managing Attorney with the Hennepin County Public Defender's Office, her leadership, scholarship, and service have shaped juvenile defense and child welfare practice across Minnesota.



Distinguished Service Award: Stinson LLP

Stinson LLP, CLC's 2025 Distinguished Service Award recipient, exemplifies the highest standards of pro bono service and partnership. Through decades of volunteer legal representation, board leadership, and strategic support, Stinson has played a vital role in advancing justice for children and youth served by CLC.

Board of Directors

We are deeply grateful to our Board of Directors for their invaluable contributions to CLC's success. Our board members go above and beyond by volunteering with clients, championing our mission within the legal community, and generously sharing their expertise and talents. Their dedication, strategic vision, and philanthropic spirit are instrumental to our work.

2025 CLC Board of Directors

Susan Dioury, Esq. .....**Executive Director**
Children's Law Center of Minnesota

Holley Horrell, Esq. .....**Chair**
Green Espel PLLP

Bill Hefner, Esq. .....**Vice Chair**
Fredrikson & Byron P.A.

Lauren Pockl, Esq. .....**Treasurer**

Rachel Barrett, Esq. .....**Immediate Past Chair**
Ciresi Conlin LLP

Andrew (Drew) Baese, Esq.
Taft Stettinius & Hollister LLP

Lisa Bayley, Esq.
Hennepin County

Joe Cassioppi, Esq.
Fredrikson & Byron P.A.

Eric Chad, Esq.
Merchant & Gould P.C.

Amy Conway, Esq.
Stinson LLP

Mike DeBois, Esq.
U.S. Bank

Jennifer Dukart, Esq.
UnitedHealthcare

Michael Ewald, Esq.
Lathrop GPM

Jack Graves, Esq.
Jones Day

Andrew Jackson, Esq.
Faegre Drinker Biddle Reath LLP

Christine Johnson
St. Louis Park Police

Bethany Kinsella
Thomson Reuters

Leah Kippola-Friske
Maslon LLP

Jamie Kurtz, Esq.
Robins Kaplan LLP

Desiree McDowell, Esq.
Stinson LLP

Caroline Moos, Esq.
Nelson Mullins Riley & Scarborough

Joshua Natzel, Esq.
Ballard Spahr LLP

Nicole Narotzky, Esq.
Greenberg Traurig

Melissa Raphan, Esq.
Dorsey & Whitney LLP

Dustin Schmieg
(former client)

Mark Schneebeck, Esq.
Fox Rothschild LLP

De'Andra Walker
(former client)

Cathy Wassberg, Esq.
Hamline University

Wendy Watson
Retired from ARC Minnesota

2025 Sponsors

We extend our sincere appreciation for the generous support of our sponsors, whose partnership fuels our mission to advocate for and empower children in foster care. Their commitment makes it possible for Children's Law Center of Minnesota to provide essential legal representation, critical resources, and meaningful opportunities for the youth we serve. Our 30th Annual Benefit reflected the powerful impact of this collective support, and we are honored to stand alongside such dedicated and compassionate partners.

Together, our sponsors, supporters, and volunteers form a community committed to ensuring every child's voice is heard and respected. Your investment strengthens our ability to respond to the evolving needs of children and youth in foster care, today and for years to come.

Champion ($15,000)
Fredrikson & Byron
ACC Minnesota
Dorsey & Whitney
UnitedHealth Group
Gibson Dunn
Crowell

Justice ($10,000)
Jones Day
Greenberg Traurig
Stinson
Neal Gerber Eisenberg

Humanitarian ($7,500)
Taft Stettinus & Hollister LLP
Troutman pepper Locke

Advocate ($5,500)
Ballard Spahr LLP
Green Espel. PLLP
Fox Rothschild
Merchant & Gould P.C.

Benefactor ($2,500)
Maslon LLP
Ellingson & Ellingson
Faegre Drinker
Lathrop GPM
Moss & Barnett
U.S. Bank
Veritext
3M

Guardian ($1,500)
Stradley Ronon
Nelson Mullins
Klitzer Rochel, PLLP
Schumaker
Shipoman & Goodwin LLP

Friend (Under $1,200)
Beacon Hill Legal