

Benefits of High-Quality Legal Representation

Protects parents' and children's legal rights



Reduces delays in achieving permanency and helps children and families reach better, long-term outcomes



Informs better judicial decision making



Promotes tailored case plans and services



Saves jurisdictions money by reducing time children spend in foster care

Structuring the system

Define

- Clearly define roles and expectations.

Set

- Set reasonable caseloads.

Offer

- Offer fair compensation and benefits.

Follow

- Follow standards of practice.

Provide

- Provide specialized child welfare law training.

Ensure

- Ensure effective supervision.

Seek

- Seek client feedback on representation.

Give

- Give attorneys access to an interdisciplinary model of representation.



Benefits of a Centralized Legal Office

- Ensures consistent representation
- Allows attorneys to focus on legal representation
- Leverages resources and funding to support lawyers' work
- Supports systemic work
- Supports multidisciplinary practice
- Ensures a diverse workforce

Social Workers and Parent Mentors build bridges



Situations where the team is beneficial when the parent:

Example from Legal Aid Services of Oklahoma, Inc., Parent Defense



Engagement: Social Worker and Parent Mentor

Example from Legal Aid Services of Oklahoma, Inc., Parent Defense Team

Social Worker:

Addresses cases from a social systems, social issues, social justice perspective

Parent Mentor:

Lived Expertise expert that has experienced what is considered as a hostile environment. Able to connect with the clients in a way that others cannot.

How do they engage and connect?

Example from Legal Aid Services of Oklahoma, Inc., Parent Defense Team



Meet with
the client



Determine
the client's
strengths
and needs



Explain
child
welfare
case and
court next
steps



Help the client
understand
the agency's
expectations
and assist
them with
managing
their response



Ensure the
client
understands
what the
attorney is
saying to
them



Provide as
much
information to
the client as
possible

Pre-petition Social Work Roles for Family reunification/ preservation

Attend conferences, admin. mtgs

Prepare clients for self advocacy with systems

Trouble shoot(access to services, engagement)

Advocacy to ensure timely reasonable efforts from the dept(referrals, exploring placement resources, transportation, etc)

Expanding referral sources for child welfare involved families

Crisis intervention and safety planning

Focus on relationship building and resiliency

Legal and social work collaboration

Social workers can help child clients by:

- Relieving barriers to reunification,
- Engaging clients in their cases
- Assessing family members and other placement or permanency options
- Ensuring the child's individual needs are met through services or other supports

Social workers can support parent clients by:

- Helping to access housing, mental health, and other stabilizing services
- Helping them to engage in services
- Helping them to strategize regarding permanency plans for their children

Goal-setting examples

Assist with client-attorney
and client-department
communication

Family time / Visitation-
advocating for less
restrictive/face to face

Housing- locating programs
for client to apply / walking
them through it

Incarcerated parent-
encouraging participation
and contact

Advocacy for transportation
to necessary appointments
and visits

Child welfare system
navigation and explaining
the court process

Assist attorneys in
highlighting lack of
reasonable efforts

Substance
Treatment-encourage client
to engage in treatment/
assist in finding alternative
placements

Natural supports-assist
family members in finding
and engaging family, friends,
and community to create a
strong support network

Assist attorneys in assessing
competency/cognitive level
of client, and confidentially
identifying any unaddressed
mental health issues

Short-term interdisciplinary support

See "Building Core Capabilities for Life" article by Harvard's Center on the Developing Child:

<https://developingchild.harvard.edu/resources/building-core-capabilities-for-life/>

Interdisciplinary support on the legal team is designed to be short term, not to increase system dependence but instead to promote client's own system navigation abilities.

Focus is on assisting clients with discrete goals, teaching self-advocacy skills, modeling effective communication, and coaching them in their practice of those skills.

Triaging immediate needs may involve reducing certain stressors in client's life to increase their capacity to manage their case. We do warm hand-off referrals.

We are looking for natural supports, community-based providers, family finding, and encouraging the growth and strengthening of the family's circles of support.

Parent Mentor

- Difference between a parent ally and social worker
- Benefits of a Parent mentor or ally on your team
 - Confidentiality
 - Testifying in court
- What do you need to support a parent ally
 - healing and trauma supports
 - onsite assistance for secondary trauma
 - payment and caseload

Parent Partners (Advocates)

Jeremy Loudenback, (January 7, 2021)The Imprint, *Why These Parents Returned to a System That Took Their Kids Away.*

“We’re also the living example to these parents that the dependency system — which appears to tower over them, that is so overwhelming, that is so often fear-based — can be overcome.” Pari Lucero.

Parent partners working with the Los Angeles Dependency Lawyers assist the court-appointed attorneys by helping their clients complete court-ordered classes, connect to social services and feel supported during the process.



Iesha - LSNJ Parent Ally

<https://www.lsnj.org/PovertyInFocus.aspx?v=iesha>