



advokids

Annual Impact Report 2017 - 2018

Dear Friends,

Please take a minute and imagine a world where every time a child is abused or neglected and enters foster care, a team gathers, no matter the hour of the day or night. The county social worker, a child mental health specialist, and a pediatrician, along with friends and family members, share all of the information they have about the child—his/her current medical and emotional needs, history of adversity, fears, vulnerabilities, behaviors, and a list of who the child looks to for safety and support. This team comes together and makes a plan to ensure what the Center For Disease Control calls “The Essentials of Childhood”:

- + **Safety:** The extent to which a child is free from fear and secure from physical or psychological harm
- + **Stability:** The degree of predictability and consistency in a child’s social, emotional, and physical environment
- + **Nurturing:** The extent to which a parent or caregiver is available and able to sensitively and consistently respond to, and meet the needs of the child.

The team stays on board and hovers to ensure that the child continues to heal and thrive. For the majority of foster children in California, this “dream team” doesn’t exist. We know from the 1,022 children’s stories we heard on Advokids’ Free Telephone Hotline over the last 12 months, that when a young child’s essentials are threatened and a child is exhibiting signs of stress and trauma, their

caregivers, relatives, treating pediatricians, and therapists who call us often have no idea what to do or who to call about their concerns for the child.

Our legal and social work staff work everyday to create, inform and support “dream teams” for foster children and to help them bring valuable and expert information about the child’s stress indicators, risks, and needs to the attention of the juvenile court. Advokids’ Hotline provides a rapid response because we know that when one of a child’s “essential” needs are not being met, children experience stress that can permanently affect their emotional health and developing brains.

Our hotline is an essential child advocacy service in California, helping to ensure that every child in foster care is safe, free from fear, and has a stable and nurturing home. We are immensely grateful to you for your loyal, generous, and continuing support that allows us to ensure the “essentials of childhood” for children in foster care or at risk of entering care.

Margaret Coyne
Executive Director

Jan Sherwood
Deputy Director



**1,037 STATEWIDE
HOTLINE CASES**



**21% INCREASE IN NEW
HOTLINE CASES**



**1,022
CHILDREN SERVED**
(53% UNDER THE AGE OF 3)

THE COMPOUNDING TRAUMA WE MITIGATE



TEMPORARY
PLACEMENTS



LOSS OF
RELATIONSHIPS



NO MENTAL
HEALTH SPECIALIST



IN FOSTER CARE
TOO LONG

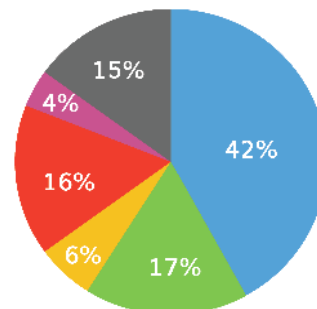


UNNECESSARY
MOVES



NO PRIMARY CARE
PHYSICIAN

WHO CALLED ADVOKIDS IN 2017?



- FOSTER PARENT/RELATIVE CAREGIVER
- RELATIVE
- NON-RELATED EXTENDED FAMILY MEMBER
- ATTORNEY
- GUARDIAN/ADOPTIVE PARENT
- OTHER*

*SIBLINGS, THERAPISTS, CASAS, LEGAL GUARDIANS, FOSTER YOUTH

ADVOKIDS' HOTLINE DATA EXPOSES SYSTEM FAILURES

PROBLEM

21,000 FOSTER CHILDREN IN LOS ANGELES COUNTY ARE LIVING IN OUT OF HOME CARE WITH RELATIVE OR FOSTER CAREGIVERS, 50% ARE BETWEEN THE AGES OF 0 AND 5.

RELATIVE CAREGIVERS AND FOSTER PARENTS IN L.A.:

- Not consistently receiving notices of court hearings for the children in their care
- Not given the opportunity to report to the court about their concerns for the child

CHILDREN UNNECESSARILY REMOVED FROM SECURE AND STABLE PLACEMENTS:

- No requisite 7 day written notice to caregivers
- Caregivers not given requisite opportunity to object

ACTION

ADVOKIDS SUED LOS ANGELES DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES. IN OCTOBER 2017, WE REACHED A LANDMARK SETTLEMENT THAT IMPROVED "NOTICE" PRACTICES IN LOS ANGELES.

IMPACT

- More relative & foster caregivers will attend court hearings and be a voice for the children in their care.
- Caregiver Information Forms will be read and considered by the judge allowing them to make more informed decisions about what is best for a child.
- Fewer children will face precipitous and unnecessary placement disruptions when caregivers are given notice of placement change and the opportunity to object.



KAI'S STORY

Robert and Sarah called Advokids' Hotline for help after 9 agonizing months of waiting to have their 3-year-old grandson Kai placed in their care. They had been an important part of Kai's life since his birth and when he was abruptly removed from his mother's care and placed in foster care, they rushed to claim him. They were stymied by the county child welfare agency's continual delays in placing Kai with them and were allowed limited visitation with Kai. Advokids' legal and social work staff helped Robert and Sarah intervene and access the juvenile court to let the judge know that Kai was suffering from his separation from them, his grandparents, who he loved and trusted.



The judge ordered more frequent visitation between Kai and his grandparents which quickly increased to overnight visits. Soon after overnight visits began, Kai's foster parents, grandparents, and county social worker coordinated efforts to "transition" Kai to the home of Robert and Sarah. Advokids continued to support Robert and Sarah until a permanent guardianship was established to secure Kai's future in their care.

PROGRAM GROWTH: PRO BONO ATTORNEY PROGRAM



Pro bono attorney Whitney Carlson of Murphy Pearson Bradley & Feeney

Many children come to the attention of the Advokids' Hotline with urgent and immediate needs that require a local, dedicated and skilled attorney to jump in and advocate on their behalf. **Advokids' Pro Bono Attorney Program** provides the "boots on the ground." This powerful network, 150 strong, increased by 20% in 2017 and includes eight newly recruited San Francisco attorneys from the influential law firm of **Murphy Pearson Bradley & Feeney**.

We are so grateful to our pro bono attorneys, from 24 counties throughout the state who have joined us in our fight to protect every foster child's right to safety, security, and a nurturing home. Read about 1-year-old Eli and how pro bono attorney **Tom Paoli of Paoli & Geerhart LLP** helped to secure his future.



Pro bono attorney Laura Grealish of Murphy Pearson Bradley & Feeney

ELI'S STORY

Rebecca and John received baby Eli into their foster home when he was 3 months old. He was born drug and alcohol exposed and was far behind healthy infant developmental milestones. Over the next twelve months his foster parents, a team of specialized health professionals, and occupational therapists worked tirelessly to give Eli the care and support he needed to overcome his deficits and grow into a thriving healthy baby.

After thirteen consecutive months with his foster family, when it was time to move forward with the permanent plan of adoption, Eli's social worker proposed a plan to move him to an out-of-state relative. Eli had met this relative only once, during a brief visit. Rebecca and John called Advokids to ask how they could advocate for Eli. They understood that Eli's emotional growth and development were dependent on a stable, predictable, and nurturing caregiving relationship. They were concerned that Eli would suffer a traumatic loss if abruptly moved out of state. Advokids' Hotline staff explained how they could bring their concerns to the juvenile court judge who ultimately should decide what plan was in Eli's best interest. Advokids' enlisted the help of Tom Paoli, an attorney on our pro bono roster, and Wendy von Wiederhold, Ph.D, a pro bono child development expert. **Together with Eli's pediatrician and caregivers, over the course of several months, this "dream team" demonstrated to the court that considering the adversities he had already faced in his short life, his close bond with his caregivers, and the critical stage of his development at one year of age, an unnecessary move would not be best for Eli.** After 21 months, Eli is on track to be adopted and become a permanent member of Rebecca and John's family.

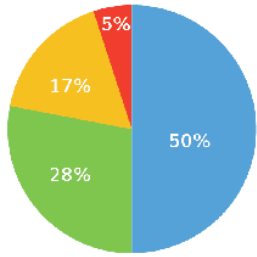


Any intervention that separates a child from the primary caregiver who provides psychological support should be treated as a matter of urgency and profound importance. Any potential move raises numerous concerns. Separations from loving parental figures are typically associated with numerous disruptions in attachment relationships. These losses and lack of permanence undermine a child's attempt to form a secure attachment. The more changes in caregivers young children in foster care experience the more likely they are to exhibit oppositional behavior, crying, clinging, depression, and anxiety.

– WENDY VON WIEDERHOLD, PH.D

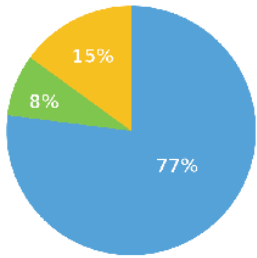
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- TRAINING FEES



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- PROGRAM
- FUNDRAISING
- ADMINISTRATION

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THANK YOU.

Because of you more children are safe, secure, and in stable, permanent homes.