



1978-2003 -- Highlights of ABA Center on Children and the Law During its 1st 25 Years

1978 – Center is established through a federal “Resource Center” grant from the National Center on Child Abuse and Neglect. The ABA Young Lawyers Division is designated the Center’s “home” -- since a Division affiliate (the Philadelphia Bar Young Lawyers) sponsors a model child representation program that – like the Center – has had major growth over the years: *The Support Center for Child Advocates*. Thus, the YLD was considered the ideal ABA entity to help the Center promote child-related public interest law and practice reform.

1979 – Center holds 1st national conference (200+ attendees), *Advocating for Children in the Courts* (a 10th National Conference on Children and the Law was held in 2002). Center awards 1st of over 50 “mini-grants” to promote child-related bar activities.

1980 – Center convenes the nation’s 1st invitational conference on the use of guardians ad litem for children in abuse and neglect proceedings, and it produces the nation’s 1st *Child Advocacy Bar Activation Guide*.

1981 – Center creates the 1st national litigation manual for judges on the handling of child abuse and neglect cases, published by the U.S. Government Printing Office. It begins producing the country’s 1st publications on contemporary child sexual abuse legal reform.

1982 – Center produces the 1st of many books on interstate and international parental kidnapping, which have included *Obstacles to the Recovery and Return of Parentally Abducted Children*, *The Criminal Justice System’s Response to Parental Abduction*, *Issues in Resolving Cases of International Child Abduction*, and a *Parental Kidnapping Law Reform Package*.

1983 – Center develops the 1st major U.S. foster care system legal reform book, *Foster Children in the Courts*.

1984 – Center produces the 1st commercially published legal treatise on *The Legal Rights of Children*.

1985 – Center writes 1st of many publications – and holds 1st of 4 ABA conferences – on improving child support enforcement.

1986 – Center begins publishing the *ABA Juvenile and Child Welfare Law Reporter* (later renamed *ABA Child Law Practice*) and launches a new initiative to provide national leadership and technical assistance on child welfare legal and court reform issues.

1987 – Center begins a project to ensure permanency for foster children in New York. That project, as of 2003, in 17 of the State’s counties has freed thousands of children for adoption and saved the State \$16 million in foster care costs.

1988 – Center produces the 1st of its *state child welfare legal manuals* (for New York) to aid attorneys and social workers in more effectively working within the courts (followed by Iowa, Colorado, Wyoming, and Maryland manuals several years later).

1989 – Center director is appointed to (and later chairs) the U.S. Advisory Board on Child Abuse and Neglect. Center produces a law school curriculum on child abuse and neglect litigation, later adapted into a commercially published (West) law school casebook.

1990 – Center begins pioneering grant work on improving the public policy response to child abuse or neglect related deaths. It also produces the nation's first book on the U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child (*Children's Rights in America*).

1993 – Center proposes that ABA leadership develop a report on legal action for children, spearheaded by an ABA presidentially appointed group. This leads to the *America's Children at Risk* report and later formation of the ABA Steering Committee on the Unmet Legal Needs of Children. The Center also helps draft and get enacted the 1st federal law providing grants to state courts for improving judicial responses to child abuse/neglect cases. Center begins special research/evaluation work related to use of closed-circuit televised testimony of child sexual abuse victims and other technological reforms in recording child victim statements

1994 – Center produces a report for the ABA President, *The Impact of Domestic Violence on Children*, helping lead to the creation of an ABA Commission on Domestic Violence. Center publishes the first edition of its now best-selling book, *Handbook on Questioning Children: A Linguistic Perspective*, which has become an essential guide on child victim interviewing.

1995 – Center is awarded its first grant from the U.S. Children's Bureau to operate what is formally called the *National Child Welfare Resource Center on Legal and Judicial Issues*. This continues to be the Center's largest multi-year grant project.

1996 – U.S. Maternal and Child Health Bureau begins support of an on-going major Center adolescent health law initiative, as part of a interdisciplinary grant program called *Partners in Program Planning for Adolescent Health*.

1998 – President Clinton announces in his weekly radio address the release of new Justice Department guidelines on screening of adults working with children, a publication that was developed by the Center.

2001 – Center helps plan, and director participates in, child protection legal/judicial reform conference in Tanzania in collaboration with ABA Africa. Center also co-produces, with ABA Commission on Law and Aging, juvenile judges' curriculum and "best practices" pamphlet on appropriate use of the Social Security *representative payee system* for children involved with the courts (this is one of many Center collaborative projects with other ABA entities that address child and family issues).

2002-2003 – Continuing its ever-expanding technical assistance and consulting work with state child welfare agencies and courts, over one six-month period Center staff delivers over 100 days of training in 20 states. Pennsylvania contracts with the Center for a permanency planning reform project that will work in 21 of the state's counties. *CLP Online* is created to provide a new website resource for subscribers of the Center's monthly *ABA Child Law Practice*. New Center projects begin on substance abuse, foster parent training, permanency for adolescents in foster care, and caseload and workload measurement in child welfare court proceedings.