

**AMERICAN BAR ASSOCIATION  
CHILD CUSTODY AND ADOPTION PRO BONO PROJECT  
ANNOUNCES 2007 GRANTS**

The Child Custody and Adoption Pro Bono Project (the "Project") is pleased to announce the award of \$50,000 to programs and projects working to develop partnerships between pro bono attorneys and law students in the representation of children in private custody cases.

Four programs from around the country will share the awards as follows:

**AdvoCourt for Kids, Houston, Texas - \$15,000:**

The primary mission of AdvoCourt for Kids is serving indigent children in custody and parentage cases for the Family Courts in Harris County, Texas. Their goal is to "protect the legal rights of disenfranchised children who would not otherwise be afforded the protections granted by our judicial system." AdvoCourt for Kids was created so the Family Court Judges of Harris County would have a steady source of volunteers to appoint as amicus attorneys for indigent children in private custody cases.

AdvoCourt for Kids will use the grant to fund an assistant clinical professorship at the University of Houston Law Center Civil Clinic supervising law students representing children in divorce, custody and parentage cases. Additionally, the grant will fund a free training for law students and private attorneys on issues which arise in these cases. After completing the training, the law students will be paired with experienced volunteer attorneys who will supervise the student in a pending case, giving the student the opportunity for hands-on experience.

**Atlanta Volunteer Lawyers Foundation - \$15,000:**

Atlanta Volunteer Lawyers Foundation (AVLF) coordinates the provision of free legal services by private lawyers for the nearly 150,000 Fulton County, Georgia residents who live in poverty. Fifteen years ago, Deborah Ebel (the 2005 recipient of the Ann Liechty Child Custody Pro Bono Award) helped create the GAL Project for AVLF. The GAL Project assists the Fulton County Superior Court Family Division in contested custody matters. Since its inception, AVLF has served as GAL in over 1,500 contested custody cases. The GAL Project is a national model for programs advocating for children in private custody cases. AVLF also has several other successful programs, including the One Child, One Lawyer program which provides pro bono representation to children in the custody of the Fulton County Department of Family and Children Services.

AVLF will use the grant to expand its One Child, One Lawyer program to private guardianship cases. The grant will allow one staff person and law students on field placement from some or all of the three Atlanta law schools to review actions filed in Fulton County Juvenile Court by private parties. The staff attorney and law students will conduct preliminary investigations of these cases with a focus on the best interest of the

child who is the subject of the action. If the case is not resolved at the first hearing, AVLJ will refer the case to a volunteer attorney who will partner with the law student to investigate the case and advocate on behalf of the child until the case is resolved.

**ChildLaw Services, Inc., Princeton, West Virginia - \$7,950:**

ChildLaw Services, Inc. (CLS) is West Virginia's only children's legal services program. In the last six years, CLS has served over 2,500 children involved in the court system. CLS's mission is "to provide a stronger voice for children."

CLS will use the grant to implement a two-pronged project which partners attorneys with students from the Appalachian School of Law [ASL]. Third-year ASL students will perform 15-week clinics with CLS, learning to represent children in private custody and adoption cases. Additionally, CLS staff attorneys, law students, and local volunteer attorneys will implement free one-day clinics on a monthly basis across southern West Virginia to assist young people in obtaining guardianships and other legal and social services. CLS will also partner with the 12<sup>th</sup> Circuit Family Court to train and support the interns and volunteer attorneys regarding the ABA Standards, West Virginia law, procedures and court rules.

**Children's Law Center, Covington, Kentucky - \$12,000:**

The Children's Law Center seeks to protect and enhance the rights of children through quality legal representation, research and policy work, including training and education of attorneys and others regarding the rights of children.

The Center is planning to implement a program with law students from the NKU Chase College of Law who will receive pro bono hours for participation in this program. These students will work with pro bono attorneys on private custody cases. The grant will be used to hire a part-time coordinator who will serve as a liaison among the pro bono attorneys, courts, Center, and the Chase College of Law. The objectives of the project are to 1) provide legal representation to children in divorce, parentage, adoption and domestic violence cases; 2) sponsor a continuing legal education program for the pro bono attorneys, law students, and family court judges, utilizing the ABA Standards for Child Custody Representation; and 3) provide a written assessment and report from information obtained by circuit and family court judges in Kentucky to encourage implementation of pro bono child custody representation in their court.

**General Information:**

All four grants are for the period May 2007 through May 2008. Since a major goal of the Child Custody and Adoption Pro Bono Project is to identify successful projects that can be replicated by other groups, all grant recipients will provide the Project with an extensive report and relevant materials at the end of the grant period.

This is the fifth year of grants by the Child Custody and Adoption Pro Bono Project. The Project is jointly sponsored by the ABA Standing Committee on Pro Bono and Public Service and the ABA Family Law Section, and administered by and housed at the ABA Center for Pro Bono. It was established in February 2001 through a grant from Bill and Melita Grunow, in memory of their niece, Ann Liechty, a dedicated child law advocate. The mission of the Project is to design and implement programs and policies that foster children's well-being, development, and safety during custody matters, including in divorce, guardianship, adoption, parentage, and civil protective order cases.

The funds for these grants were made possible through the ABA Child Custody Grant Advocate Program. The Project is actively seeking additional contributions to make future grants possible.

For more information about the current grants, the Child Custody and Adoption Pro Bono Project, or to make a donation to the mini-grants fund, contact Project Director Genie Miller Gillespie, [gillespg@staff.abanet.org](mailto:gillespg@staff.abanet.org), or 312-988-5805. For further information about ABA Child Custody and Adoption Pro Bono Project, visit our website at [www.abachildcustodyproject.org](http://www.abachildcustodyproject.org).