

Summer 2013

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CAC students give presentation at Penn State on college attendance for foster youth

Clinic students Eric Crockett and Kristina Dahmann gave a presentation titled "Foster Care Youth in Higher Education" to Penn State undergraduate program administrators to address the various hurdles that foster care children face when attending college. The goal of the presentation was to raise the issues that foster youth face to the administrators, and begin efforts at Penn State to help these students with the transition. They were joined by college student Kayla Meier, who is a former foster child. She discussed the challenges she personally faced when enrolling at Penn State.



CAC submits Amici curiae brief to PA Supreme Court

By Tim Smith

I had the opportunity to write an *amici curiae* brief to the Pennsylvania Supreme Court in an appeal of a mother's parental rights. The lower court had not terminated the mother's rights in regards to her five children, due to its reasoning that a bond existed between the mother and the children. The lower court indicated that severing the parent-child bond would not benefit the needs and welfare of the children. The children's Guardian ad Litem (KidsVoice) appealed the lower court's decision based on the position that a bond may have existed but the bond was pathological in nature.

The Clinic wrote a brief in support of the Guardian ad Litem's position. Our position was that if courts refuse to terminate a parent's rights because a pathological bond exists, that policy would not benefit the needs and welfare of children in Pennsylvania. We were joined in our amicus brief by the Support Center for Child Advocates, Pennsylvania CASA Association, CASA of Allegheny County, The Pennsylvania Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers, and the Dependency Division of the Allegheny County Office of Conflict Counsel.

CAC monitoring changes to PA child abuse laws

Since the Sandusky scandal, Pennsylvania's child abuse laws have been under close scrutiny. The Pennsylvania Legislature appointed a task force to recommend changes to the law. The Children's Advocacy Clinic faculty and staff have been actively reviewing and commenting on the proposed changes in the Pennsylvania Child Protective Services Law. Since the report of the Governor's Commission on Child Abuse, Children's Advocacy Clinic law students have been researching current law, attending legislative hearings on the subject, reviewing the recommendations of the Commission and proposed legislation.

Alumni meet at PBI Institute for child advocates

Clinic alumni Tim Smith '12 and Marisa McClellan presented at the 17th Annual "Current Issues for Child Advocates" continuing legal education program in April 2013 at the Pennsylvania Bar Institute. McClellan and Smith presented on the topic of "Resumption of Jurisdiction Under Act 91". Joined in the photo is Nadya Chmil, former clinic student, class of 2011.



Pediatric psychiatry residents bring medical perspective to clinic students

Dr. Ademola Bello visited the CAC recently to share his perspective on medicine and treatment options for clinic clients, all of whom are children in the dependency system or children who are the subject of custody litigation. His visit is part of a recent CAC expansion to include pediatric psychiatry fellows as part of the Clinic, comprised of graduate-level social work students and law students.

[Read More.](#)

Scholar Ben Mathews visits CAC

Ben Mathews visited Penn State Law during his stay at Hershey Medical Center, where he is completing research on training mandated reporters of child abuse. Professor Mathews is an expert on child abuse reporting laws and teaches law at Queensland University in Brisbane, Australia. Prof. Mathews is working on joint project with the Center for Protection of Children at Hershey and the Center on Children and the Law. The project is to complete e-learning programs for those individuals who are mandated to report child abuse.

Conference News

Tim Smith presented at the Penn State Hershey International Conference

In June 2013, Tim Smith presented the Clinic's findings on a research project at the Penn State Hershey International Conference on Pediatric Abusive Head Trauma - Medical, Forensic, & Scientific Advances & Prevention, in Vermont. The presentation focused on the legal concept of reasonable degree of medical certainty and survey responses received on the topic from prosecuting attorneys and common pleas judges.

Penn State sets annual conference on child abuse for September 25

This fall, Penn State will hold its second annual Conference on Child Maltreatment. "Protecting Pennsylvania's Children by Building Multidisciplinary Investigative Teams/Child Advocacy Centers" will bring together Pennsylvania's district attorneys, children and youth service administrators and law enforcement officials, as well as Penn State faculty, to discuss best practices for MDITs and CACs. The event will be held at The Penn Stater Conference Center Hotel.

The conference will feature keynote speaker Teresa Huizar, executive director of the [National Children's Alliance](#) (NCA). "Teresa has dedicated her career to the protection and advocacy for children," said Lucy Johnston-Walsh, director of the [Children's Advocacy Clinic](#) at the Penn State Dickinson School of Law. [Read More.](#)