

# Barton Child Law & Policy Clinic

## About Us

The Barton Child Law & Policy Clinic is a program of Emory Law School dedicated to ensuring safety, well-being and permanency for abused and court-involved children in Georgia. These outcomes are best achieved when systems only intervene in families when absolutely necessary, treat children and families fairly, provide the services and protections they are charged to provide, and are accountable to the public and the children they serve.

## Our Mission

The mission of the clinic is to promote and protect the well-being of neglected, abused and court-involved children in the state of Georgia, to inspire excellence among the adults responsible for protecting and nurturing these children, and to prepare child advocacy professionals.

## Our Mission Requires that We:

- Act as a catalyst for improvements in the juvenile court and child protection systems in Georgia;
- Advocate a long-range systematic approach to public policy designed for the benefit of the children affected;
- Provide research-based information about best practices and whether policies and laws affecting children have their intended effect;
- Promote the practice of children's law as a specialized area requiring specialized knowledge and skills.

## Our Work

- 1) We train the next generation of child advocacy professionals in an interdisciplinary setting.
  - The program operates as a student clinic in which law and other graduate students conduct research; write articles, policy papers, and other informational materials; analyze and draft legislation and policy directives; and participate in reform initiatives.
  - Clinic faculty teach courses at the law school and classes throughout Emory University.
  - The Emory Summer Child Advocacy Program brings students from across the country to engage in child advocacy work throughout Georgia.
  - Faculty, staff and students provide a limited amount of legal representation for child clients who are involved with multiple child-serving systems.
- 2) We serve the community by striving to improve the way Georgia cares for abused and court-involved children and raising awareness about these children.
  - Clinic faculty, staff and students teach at local, state, and national conferences for lawyers, foster parents, judges, social workers, probation officers, community volunteers and others.
  - The Clinic monitors press coverage of children's issues and serves as a resource to the press and public.
  - The Clinic participates in the legislative process, distributes a wide range of publications, testifies at public forums, and advises Georgia's executive, legislative and judicial branches and non-profit organizations on the effects that proposed legislation, policies, or regulations will have on children.
  - The Clinic collaborates with national and local organizations in support of important issues affecting children.

- 3) We use and promote technology to improve the way child-serving systems function and to raise awareness about child abuse, foster care, adoption, and juvenile justice.
- A main facet of the clinic's research-based approach is operating as a statewide resource through its web site, [ChildWelfare.net](http://ChildWelfare.net).
  - Clinic publications and data analysis are made available through our web site.
  - The Clinic encourages public and private organizations to use technology that will lead to better outcomes for children.
- 4) We use research and data analysis to promote accountability in systems that serve children.
- The Clinic, in partnership with other organizations, analyzes data and provides feedback to courts and child-serving agencies about compliance with policy and statutory requirements.
  - The Clinic promotes individual and system compliance with procedural and substantive safeguards that help ensure decisions about children are informed, accurate and appropriate.
  - Clinic faculty, staff and students actively participate in local, state and national work groups, commissions, reform efforts, and other endeavors to ensure that federal and state laws reflect best practices for children.
  - The Clinic uses research, publishing, advocacy, education, litigation and other tools to advance the rights and well-being of court-involved and abused children.

### **Our History**

The Barton Clinic was established in March 2000 to address the need in Georgia for an organization dedicated to effecting systemic policy and process changes for the benefit of the children in Georgia's child welfare system. Since then the Clinic's work has expanded to also include children in the juvenile justice system. The clinic helps Georgia serve neglected, abused and court-involved children by providing multi-disciplinary, child-focused research, training, and support for practitioners and policymakers charged with protecting Georgia's children. Located at Emory Law School, the clinic collaborates with Emory's School of Public Health, School of Medicine and the Center for Violence Studies, as well as other Georgia colleges and universities.

The origins of the Barton Clinic are in the School of Law's Child Advocacy Project, which began in 1992 and provides summer internships in the field. The summer internship program still exists and is now called the Emory Summer Child Advocacy Program. The establishment of the year-round program with a full-time director was made possible by a generous grant from the Barton Fund. The Clinic's activities and priorities are informed by an Advisory Committee to ensure that a broader spectrum of professions and organizations contribute to and are knowledgeable about the work of the Clinic.