

**{Program}**  
**CHILDREN'S JUSTICE ACT GRANT PROPOSAL**

**INTRODUCTION**

{Host organization} has operated a {Program} since 1992. Originally the {Program} trained students to represent abused and neglected children, but in the past three years the {Program} has expanded to include students conducting research to improve the way child abuse and neglect cases are handled in Georgia. In March 2000 the {Program} expanded into the {name}, a year-round Program at the {host organization} with a full-time director and a student-staffed {organization}. In addition to the Director, a half-time visiting professor and a full-time senior policy fellow now staff the {organization}. In September 2001 a full-time post-graduate fellow in law will also work in the {organization}.

Since 1993 the Children's Justice Act has provided funding for {host organization} students to work in child advocacy positions during the summer. Until 2001, these positions were generally in the metro-Atlanta area, with an occasional placement elsewhere in Georgia. In grant year 2000 - 2001 the program was expanded to specifically include placements outside Atlanta (Cartersville, LaGrange, Macon, Sandersville, Savannah). The program was also expanded to include students from schools other than {host organization}. Student interest in the 2001 program was especially high. Thirty students attended the informational forum at {host organization} and many more contacted the {Program} for information, in addition to the majority of applicants who contacted the placements directly.

The response of juvenile court judges and child advocacy organizations around the state, as well as the high number of applicants, indicates a need for continuation of the program. Several of the 2001 program applicants from schools other than {host organization} had ties to the geographic location where they will be working. One of the program goals is to train child advocates who will work on behalf of children in their home communities in Georgia. The high number of applicants with ties to Georgia communities and plans to return to those communities indicates that the summer {Program} is achieving this goal.

In this 2001-2002 Children's Justice Act grant application, {host organization} is requesting funding for sixteen students to work in child advocacy positions in Georgia (seven outside Atlanta, nine in metro-Atlanta). {Host organization} will coordinate the recruitment, placement, training, and payment of the sixteen students.

**1. PROBLEM STATEMENT**

There is a strong need for resources in all areas of the child welfare and child protection systems in Georgia. In 1999, more than 19,000 abused and neglected children were served by the Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS) and by the juvenile courts. DFCS workers have average caseloads double those recommended by the Child Welfare League of America and Child Advocate attorneys have caseloads of over 500 children per year. In 1995-96 the Georgia Supreme Court Child Placement Project conducted a statewide study of

how abuse and neglect cases are handled in Georgia's courts. The results indicated that juvenile courts, as well as the professionals and volunteers working with families and children, are sorely lacking in resources and specialized training.

The {Program} has focused primarily on addressing the need for specialized, consistent legal representation of abused and neglected children. This falls under the Children's Justice Act priority areas to 'increase early appointment of legal counsel and volunteers,' and 'increase concerns on the rights of children in the investigative and court process.' Attorneys and judges who have supervised students in the {Program} have been overwhelmingly supportive of the way the {Program} addresses these needs. They indicate that the {Program} provides three primary benefits: the students provide professional-level assistance and multiply the productivity of the office; the students bring in new ideas, resources, and current methods of practice; and more specially-trained professionals enter this field of work. Child advocate attorneys, Court Appointed Special Advocates, and juvenile court judges have indicated that these benefits are especially needed outside the metro-Atlanta area. {Host organization} would like to continue the expanded {Program} to meet some of the needs elsewhere in Georgia.

The {Program} targets additional specific priorities of the Children's Justice Act grant, particularly to 'increase coordination of knowledge and programs addressing the needs of abused and neglected children,' and 'increase multi-disciplinary coordination at the local level.' These priorities are addressed because participating placements in the {Program} become part of a network of advocates that share information and work together on projects to address needs of abused and neglected children. Participating placements in the 2001 program include child advocate attorney offices, the Georgia Child Advocate's Office, the Georgia Center for Children (a child advocacy center), juvenile courts, and a non-profit agency serving a juvenile court. Students working at each of these placements will be trained together and then will be brought together a few times over the summer. Part of the purpose of the summer meetings is to facilitate cross-pollination among the placements; students return to their placements with information about what is happening at other offices. In addition, each fall at the {Program} Forum, a variety of professionals are brought together to hear about initiatives in other child advocacy offices.

## **2. NARRATIVE**

The {Program} is described fully in Section 3 of this proposal. The {Program} places specially trained students in child advocacy positions across Georgia for ten weeks during the summer. The students provide additional staff support to the offices in which they are placed over the summer, allowing special projects to be accomplished and increasing the efficiency of the offices in terms of handling the regular case load of child abuse and neglect cases. The students receive hands on training and are encouraged to continue their work as child advocates when they enter the professional world. The students are predominantly law students with a few undergraduates and a few masters of public health students. In the future the {Program} plans to strengthen its efforts to recruit MSW and medical students to participate.

Students may seek placement at any child-serving organization (government or non-profit) with a mission that is compatible with the Children's Justice Act Advisory Committee mission. The organizations must demonstrate that the work of the students meets the funding priority areas of the Children's Justice Act grant.

In the 2002 {Program}, seven positions will be in placements outside metro-Atlanta and nine positions will be in placements within the metro-Atlanta area.

### **3. OBJECTIVES**

#### GOALS and OUTCOMES to be measured

- Provide support for child welfare professionals<sup>1</sup> by providing trained summer interns to assist them during the summer months.
- Provide support for child welfare professionals by conducting research and providing information on current issues being addressed in the field.
- Encourage child welfare professionals to follow model practices and use new resources by providing students with the latest information before sending them to their summer placements.
- Promote collaboration and coordination among agencies of different disciplines, all of which are working to improve the handling of child abuse and neglect cases.
- Increase the number of professionals who are specially trained to work in this field by cultivating future child advocates.

#### OBJECTIVES of Summer Program

- Place sixteen trained college or graduate students<sup>2</sup> in summer child advocacy or research positions in Georgia, with at least seven students placed outside the metro-Atlanta area.
- Conduct a one-week training for all summer student interns working in child advocacy positions in the metro-Atlanta area plus the {Program} students working outside Atlanta. The training program will include speakers from a several agencies represented on the Child Abuse Protocol Committee.
- Host an educational forum in September 2002 where students will present a summary of their summer work or research projects. This forum will be open to professionals and volunteers from any discipline working in this area, as well as to students interested in exploring a career in child advocacy.

#### METHODS

##### *Time Frame*

If the full grant is awarded, the following timetable will be followed:

- Fall 2001: The {position} will publicize the program through the methods described below (see “Recruitment of applicants”).
- December 2001: Identify selection committee to review the student proposals.
- February 2002: Deadline for student proposals.

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<sup>1</sup> The term “child welfare professionals” is used to describe people working with abused and neglected children directly or through policy matters.

<sup>2</sup> A majority of the placements require graduate students, particularly law students, but each year one or two outstanding undergraduate students participates in the program.

- February 2002: Selection process and notification to students.
- May-August 2002: Training for students will occur in late May or early June 2002 and students will work for ten weeks through the summer.
- August 2002: Evaluations of the summer field placements will take place.
- September 2002: The {Program} Forum will be held in September 2002.

#### *Recruitment of applicants*

{Host organization} Students: Information about the summer program will be provided to graduate and undergraduate students throughout the {host organization}. The {organization} will provide a list of potential summer field placements and potential research projects with suggested supervisors. The research projects will be recommended by the advisory committee for the {host organization}, whose task is to set priorities for projects the {host organization} will undertake. Students may select from this list or may develop their own proposals. Students will submit a written proposal to the selection committee during the spring semester, 2002.

Students from other schools: The summer Program will be advertised by the following means:

- Job postings to law and other graduate schools;
- Letters to juvenile court judges, child advocate attorneys, and other professionals outside Atlanta, encouraging them to identify local students to apply for these positions;
- Postings on web sites targeted to students planning to work in this field;
- Any other appropriate methods.

#### *Selection of students*

As in past years, a selection committee of professors and professionals working in the field will be established to review the student proposals. Proposals will be evaluated on their relevance to the mission and purpose of the Children's Justice Act; the potential impact the student can have on practice or policy through on his or her work over the summer; and the student's apparent ability (based on qualifications, quality of proposal, recommendations, etc.) to successfully complete the program, provide a benefit to the field placement site or proposed recipient of the research project, and provide meaningful information to others at the conclusion of the program.

Based on feedback received by students and supervisors, the matching of students to placements will be handled differently in summer 2002. The matching process will be similar to the process now used by the Governor's Intern Program where all applications come to a central office and matches are made based on placement criteria and student preferences. The {host organization} will perform the screening and matching functions. There are a few reasons for this change. One is that many of the supervisors outside Atlanta are juvenile court judges who have very busy schedules. During the 2001 application process it was difficult for students to reach the judges and it was difficult for the judges to make time to screen the many applications they received. Some of the judges requested a different matching process in the future. A similar dilemma occurred with other

placements as well. Supervisors at these placements suggested that the 2002 program try the process used in the Governor's Intern program and then evaluate the two selection processes after that. Finally, since many students contact the {organization} as part of the application process already, the new selection process should streamline things.

### *Training*

All students funded through the Children's Justice Act grant (including those working outside Atlanta) will participate in a one-week intensive training prior to commencing their research or field placement. The training will include an overview of juvenile court practice and procedure, including the roles of all participants; sessions on representing parents and children; information on federal and state laws; information on cultural competence; information on the impact of poverty, substance abuse, and family dynamics on child abuse and neglect; and juvenile court observation. This training will also be available to any other students working in child advocacy field placements in the metro-Atlanta area. Their field supervisors and the director of the {host organization} will arrange their participation. By opening the training to any student interns working in child advocacy, {host organization} hopes to increase the pool of future child advocates who are specially trained for this type of work.

In addition to the initial one-week training, there will be required meetings throughout the summer. Some of these will be visits to agencies working with abused and neglected children. Provisions will be made for students working outside Atlanta to visit agencies in their jurisdictions and to participate in some discussions over the Internet.

### *Student Obligations*

Students funded through the Children's Justice Act will be required to do the following:

- work ten 40-hour weeks, including the one-week training (this applies to students conducting research as well as students in field placements);
- participate in the initial training and in scheduled meetings throughout the summer (to the extent that geography allows participation);
- maintain and turn in a narrative of their work along with time sheets documenting hours worked;
- complete all program evaluations and exit interviews;
- make a presentation at the September 2002 {Program} Forum.
- Students may be required to provide some type of training to professionals or volunteers working in the field.

### *Child Advocacy Forum*

In September 2002 {host organization} will host an educational forum where the student participants in the program will provide brief summaries of their summer experiences. Students who completed research projects over the summer will make longer presentations and their papers will be available to forum attendees. In the past the

forum has been open to professionals working in this field, with special invitations given to Children's Justice Act Committee members, field placement supervisors, and local juvenile court judges, attorneys, and DFCS workers.

#### **4. ORGANIZATION DESCRIPTION**

The {host organization} 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. The {host organization} helps Georgia serve neglected and abused children by providing multi-disciplinary, child-focused research, training, and support for practitioners and policymakers charged with protecting Georgia's children. The {host organization} collaborates with {partners omitted}, as well as other Georgia colleges and universities.

The origins of the {host organization} are in the {program}, which began in 1992 and provides summer internships in the field. The establishment of the year-round legal {organization} with a full-time director was made possible by a generous grant from the Barton Foundation. The {organization's} activities and priorities are directed by a Steering Committee that includes {names omitted}. The {organization} also has a larger Advisory Board to ensure that a broader spectrum of professions and organizations contribute to and are informed about the work of the {organization}.

The mission of the {organization} is to promote and protect the well-being of neglected and abused children in the state of Georgia and to inspire excellence among the adults responsible for protecting and nurturing these children.

The {organization} operates as a student legal {organization}, accepting students from Georgia law schools and other graduate programs in fields related to child advocacy. Students in the {organization} do not provide direct representation of children, but instead focus on research and advocacy projects that affect how Georgia courts and agencies handle child welfare cases. A main facet of the {organization's} research-based approach is operating as a statewide resource on child abuse and neglect issues through its web site, {omitted}. The site contains diverse information including items on Georgia's Office of Child Fatality Review, Georgia's DHR Policies and Procedures manual, the child advocacy work being completed by the {organization}, and how to subscribe to electronic mailing lists that discuss Child Protection and Juvenile Justice issues. Students further their clinical education in a required partner course, Advocacy for Children in the 21st Century: An Interdisciplinary Approach to Policy Development.

The {organization} has an Advisory Board to assist with the work of the {organization}. The steering committee of the Board provides guidance regarding where and how the {organization} can be most effective and sets priorities regarding what projects the {organization} will undertake. The Advisory Board includes representatives of most agencies and professions working in this field, including juvenile court judges, social workers, prosecutors, and physicians.

The work of the {organization} covers a broad range of activities, including providing research-based information about best practices and technological advances in children's law and research-based feedback on whether policies and laws affecting children have their intended effect. Other planned activities for the {organization} include:

- ongoing workshops for practitioners;

- student internships that focus on research, evaluation, drafting and tracking legislation and working on public policy in the area of child deprivation;
- a web site to serve as a statewide resource on child abuse and neglect issues; and
- one-year post-graduate fellowships that focus on specific issues in child welfare.

## **5. STAFF**

{omitted}

## **6. FINANCIAL**

{omitted}

## **7. EVALUATION**

Evaluation of the {Program} will be ongoing. The tools used to evaluate the Program include the following:

- Student journals: each week the students will be required to turn in a time log detailing how they spent their week, any interesting observations they have made, any successes or difficulties they have encountered and how any problems were resolved.
- Field placement supervisor evaluations of students: at the end of the summer supervisors will be asked to complete an evaluation of the student's performance.
- Student evaluations of field placements: at the end of the summer students will complete an evaluation of their summer experience.
- Exit interviews with students: at the end of the summer the {organization} director will conduct a structured interview with each student.
- Research supervisor review of research projects: professors who supervise a student research project will be asked to provide a written evaluation of the student's work.
- Advisory committee review of research projects: the {organization} advisory committee will also review the completed research projects.
- Annual follow-up survey to students who have participated in the program in the past to find out what, if any, impact their participation in the Program has had on their current work.

In addition to the tools described above, which will be used specifically to evaluate the summer {Program}, each year there will be an annual review of the work of the {organization} by the Advisory Board and the Barton Foundation, which provides funding for the {organization}.

## **8. ADVISORY BOARD**

{omitted}