



COUNSEL FOR KIDS SERVICE OPPORTUNITY ANNOUNCEMENT

What is the National Association of Counsel for Children?

The [National Association of Counsel for Children](#) (NACC) is a nonprofit advocacy and membership association that supports and trains attorneys who represent children, parents, and social service agencies in child welfare cases. NACC advances children's and parents' rights by supporting a diverse, inclusive community of child welfare lawyers to provide zealous legal representation and by advocating for equitable, anti-racist solutions co-designed by people with lived experience.

NACC works to #PromoteExcellence #BuildCommunity and #AdvanceJustice.

What is Counsel for Kids?

There is no federally-recognized right to legal counsel for youth in foster care -- no U.S. Supreme Court decision, no federal law. [Thirteen states](#) have not guaranteed legal counsel for all youth in child protection proceedings. [Counsel for Kids](#) is a [policy advocacy campaign](#) dedicated to changing that. We work to ensure youth in foster care have attorneys of their own so that their voices are heard and respected. The campaign provides [technical assistance \(TA\)](#) to support state advocate's policy reform efforts. This TA may include ongoing assistance with research, action planning, building partnerships, messaging, campaign strategy, and more.

What have Lived Experience Experts Said About This Issue?

Lived experience experts advise that lawyers make a positive difference for youth experiencing foster care and must be universally guaranteed by state law. "It is imperative for youth to be appointed direct legal representation to reach timely permanency" [wrote a member](#) of the National Advisory Council on Children's Legal Representation. The National [Foster Care Youth and Alumni Policy Council](#) identifies increasing access to high quality legal representation as a top policy priority. To better support youth experiencing foster care, members of the [Congressional Coalition on Adoption Institute Foster Youth Internship](#) recommend that all youth be appointed an attorney that represents their wishes and actively engages them in decision-making processes.

Value of Service Opportunity to Systems Change

The expertise of individuals with lived experience in the nation's child protection systems is vital to developing sound public policy. Lived experience experts enhance policy making by focusing discussions on what is most needed and pointing out blind spots, inefficiencies, and other pitfalls that only they can identify from their unique vantage point. When policy development efforts are led, co-led, or informed by individuals with personal experience navigating a system, policies are more likely to be targeted and responsive to the needs of youth and their families. Lived experience experts also increase the credibility of proposed legislation when they participate in its development and support its implementation.

Description of Service Opportunity

This service opportunity will center the voice of lived experience experts in state-level Counsel for Kids policy development and campaigning efforts. It will connect lived experience experts with state advocates meant to influence policymakers. Service opportunities may include:

- brainstorming policy strategy,
- helping develop legislation,
- identifying legislative sponsors or policy champions,
- meeting with legislators or legislative staff,
- being interviewed by reporters,
- speaking on podcasts,
- writing op-eds or articles for various publications,
- speaking to state child welfare stakeholders,
- developing social media content,
- developing and presenting talks on the importance of youth legal representation.

Engaging in this service opportunity does **not** require lived experience experts to share personal stories and life experiences.

In exchange for youth service to campaign initiatives, NACC will provide:

- Compensation: competitive hourly rate for training, policy advocacy work and special projects supporting Counsel for Kids policy reform. The current rate is \$50/hour. On average, 5-10 hours of work is expected each month.
- Training on effective policy advocacy and persuasive communication and messaging
- An opportunity to network with lived experience experts, NACC staff, and other professionals working at the state or federal level.
- If appropriate, recommendation letters for other educational or professional development opportunities.

NACC cannot provide compensation for:

- Lobbying (Influencing legislators to take certain action)
 - Lobbying is governed by state law and may include: oral, written or electronic communications with legislators, sending unsolicited letters to legislators, contacting legislators to propose, support, or oppose legislation or budget, urging the public to contact legislators to support or oppose legislation, calls to action, and efforts in support of contact with legislators (preparing, planning, research, for use in lobbying or coordinating such contacts with others).
- Legislative Testimony

Eligible Applicants must:

- ⊄ Be at least 18-30 years of age at the start of their service.
- ⊄ Have lived experience in the foster care system (including all out-of-home placements, facilities, kinship placements, shelters, etc.) in one of [13 target states](#).
 - Definition: “Lived experience” refers to the personal knowledge and exposure to specific circumstances and events, such as the involvement with the child welfare system and/or placement in foster care. Specifically, individuals who were in foster care may be able to use their voice and share their unique experience to inform policy decisions for the benefit of children and families.
- ⊄ Demonstrate the capacity to participate in advocacy or leadership involving child welfare policy, for example through recent or current volunteer positions, related employment, and/or by pursuing education in the legal, child welfare or social work fields.
- ⊄ Demonstrate responsibility, self-drive and require minimal supervision.

Next Steps:

- Participate in an **interest meeting** via zoom to learn more and ask questions about the opportunity.
 - If unable to participate, a recording of the meeting can be provided to you.
- Submit completed application materials to Natalece.Washington@NACCchildlaw.org
 - To apply, applicant must submit a cover letter describing their interest in the opportunity and relevant skills and expertise, resumé, and one letter of recommendation. This letter can be written by a supervisor of a paid or volunteer position or by a teacher.
- If you have any questions, please contact: Natalece.Washington@NACCchildlaw.org