



Children in court need lawyers of their own.
We're working to make sure they have them.



Why Establish a Statewide Centralized Children's Law Office?

Centralized children's law offices can define roles and expectations, implement uniform hiring and onboarding practices, establish practice standards, set training requirements, provide mentorship and supervision, evaluate performance, support multidisciplinary teams, manage attorney caseloads, offer peer support and case coverage, solicit client feedback, fund information management systems, and facilitate community partnerships.

A **centralized children's law office** is an entity made up of attorneys that specialize in the legal representation of children in child protection court proceedings. Its statewide, consolidated infrastructure and operations promote efficiency and accountability. The attorneys benefit from shared resources. Most importantly, children benefit from higher-quality legal services and the elimination of "justice by geography" because of the increased uniformity of representation throughout the state. Centralized children's law offices may be non-profit organizations, government agencies, civil legal aid offices, or public defense systems.

1 SOUND FINANCIAL INVESTMENT

- Children's law offices efficiently use limited state funds by facilitating the use of shared resources, including office supplies and space, multidisciplinary team members, and support staff.
- Centralized offices allow attorneys to focus on the niche practice of child protection law and specialize in child representation. The cost is offset by the money the jurisdiction saves from high-quality attorney advocacy. This reduces the time a child spends in foster care and lessens its staggering financial impact.
- A centralized children's law office is well-poised to access federal funding streams that can supplement state funds. For example, through the Title IV-E federal funding opportunity, states can claim up to 50% federal reimbursement in eligible cases for children's attorneys and their support staff. Most states with statewide centralized children's law offices have already begun drawing down these funds.

2 BEST PRACTICE FOR HIGH-QUALITY LEGAL SERVICE DELIVERY

- A centralized children's law office is the nationally recognized best practice model to deliver legal services for children. It provides consistent, high-quality legal representation with support for attorneys and oversight.
- At least 22 states currently utilize a centralized children's law office model, and an increasing number of other states are considering establishing one.

3 KEY STRATEGY TO ADDRESS ATTORNEY SHORTAGES AND LEGAL DESERTS

- Children's law offices can deploy staff attorneys to rural jurisdictions where few or no attorneys are available to represent children.
- Centralized children's law offices help develop, support, and sustain the legal workforce. They recruit talented individuals and offer competitive compensation packages, benefits, and organizational cultures that aid in employee retention. They actively develop a workforce pipeline by hosting interns and participating in career fairs to highlight the child welfare practice career pathway.
- Staff attorneys employed by a centralized children's law office can benefit from federal Public Service Loan Forgiveness.

CONTACT

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