



Invitation to Congressional Staff Briefing on Foster Care Issues

Date: June 3, 2004
Time: 4:00 pm
Location: HC - 7, U.S. Capitol Building

The Children's Law Center of Los Angeles (CLC), a partner in the Pew Charitable Trust's national Fostering Results project, invites you to join us at an important briefing on the issues and challenges impacting our child welfare system and the many abused and neglected youth in foster care.

Each year, close to three quarters of a million of California's children come into contact with our child welfare system. More than half are age five or under. Los Angeles is home to the country's largest child welfare system, accounting for an astounding one in ten foster children nationally. As a community, we "parent" 30,000 abused and neglected children and spend over \$4.5 billion annually to assist families and children.

Too often our financial investment in children and families doesn't do enough to change for the better the young lives we are trying to protect and nurture. Life for too many youth in foster care is characterized by movement from placement to placement, disruption of schooling, and the severing of ties with all that is familiar to the child. It is thus not surprising that foster youth find it difficult to keep up -- 75% of children in foster care are working below grade level in school, almost half do not complete high school, and as few as 15% attend college. Nor is it surprising that these troubled youth become troubled adults; within two to four years after young people emancipate from foster care, 51% are unemployed, 40% are on public assistance, 25% become homeless, and one in five are incarcerated.

Children's Law Center of Los Angeles ("CLC") is a nonprofit, public interest law corporation created over a decade ago and funded by the California State Court to serve as appointed counsel for LA's abused and neglected youth. We serve as the "voice" in the foster care system for the vast majority of the 30,000 children under the jurisdiction of the LA dependency court. Given CLC's status as the largest representative of foster youth in California, if not the nation, we are uniquely positioned to identify and promote systemic reforms.

At this briefing, CLC will report on recent efforts to improve the plight of children in foster care, initiatives aimed at enhancing public awareness of the foster care system, and also nationwide recommendations from the Pew Commission on Children in Foster Care, released to Congress on May 18th, 2004.

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Children's Law Center of Los Angeles is a Fostering Results partner. Fostering Results is an education and outreach campaign, housed at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and supported by the Pew Charitable Trusts, highlighting the need to address federal financing incentives that favor foster care over other options for children and families and to improve court oversight of child welfare cases.