

The Legal Services Department at Child Advocates is comprised of attorneys with many years of experience in child welfare and in working with youth and families. Our attorneys provide legal assistance in cases involving youth who are victims of abuse and neglect. In Indiana, the children in child welfare cases are assigned a Guardian Ad Litem (GAL) or a CASA to advocate for the child's best interest. The GAL or CASA is party to the child welfare case and is often the party with the most knowledge about the child's situation. When the child's GAL or CASA needs an attorney of their own, our office is able to provide that service with the goal of achieving permanency for the children and protecting the children from future abuse and neglect.

The attorneys at Child Advocates provide a wide variety of legal services to best accommodate the specific needs of our community's most vulnerable children. Aside from representation in specific cases, our attorneys are available for case consultations with Guardians Ad Litem and CASAs and trainings as requested. Our services are grant funded and free of charge to the CASA agencies. For a full list of services available please see the menu below.

Appellate work –

Respond to appeals when appropriate

Examples include situations when the GAL filed a TPR petition which is appealed, or when issues regarding the work or position of the GAL are at issue. In these situations it is essential that Child Advocates be contacted either upon Notice of Appeal being filed or as soon as the GAL issues are raised on appeal.

Motion Practice –

Child Advocates attorneys are available to assist GAL/CASA agencies with filing motions and arguing the same in cases in which the GAL/CASA is a party or wishes to intervene as a party. Examples include, but are not limited to, requests for change of placement, sibling visits, parenting time changes, motions requesting DCS be ordered to take certain action.

Petitions –

Attorneys are available to assist with filing petitions when appropriate. Examples include petitions for guardianship, petitions for third party custody, petitions for no contact orders, name changes and termination of parental rights

Testimony and Trial Assistance –

Attorneys can assist with child witness preparation for Children in Need of Services (CHINS) fact-findings and child hearsay hearings. They can also prepare and present testimony of CASAs/GALs, and other witnesses needed on issues of best interest at trial in CHINS and TPR cases.

If you have any questions, please contact Carey Haley Wong, Esq., Chief Legal Counsel at Carey@childadvocates.net

**Referral forms can be found on our website at www.childadvocates.net/programs/

Trainings –

Child Advocates attorneys are available to help with the legal portion of training for GAL CASA and ongoing training in legal matters such as working with incarcerated parents, guardianships, minor parents, best interest advocacy, immigration, termination and testimony, and any other topics requested.

Legal Consultation –

Attorneys at Child Advocates can arrange weekly “office hours” via zoom to consult with GAL/CASAs

Immigration –

Children in the child welfare system often encounter issues related to their immigration status. Our attorneys are available to consult on these issues and assist with determining legal status, obtaining replacement documentation (green cards and social security cards), obtaining work permits, and assisting youth obtain legal status.

- **For immigration-related questions, please contact DeDe Connor at dede@childadvocates.net.**

CAPTA –

Legal assistance with administrative appeals of substantiations is available. Note: there are strict time limits for CAPTA appeals. If a child is substantiated upon the notice should be sent to the GAL or CASA and the appeal requested within a matter of days.

Direct Representation –

In addition to the legal services detailed above, Child Advocates also has a separate program that provides an attorney and social worker to represent the direct interest of older youth in special cases including issues: of human trafficking, CHINS 6 (allegations the child is a danger to himself or others), placement in a residential facility or prescription of psychotropic medications.

- **For Direct Representation-related questions, please contact Rachel Roman-Lagunas at rachel@childadvocates.net.**

Our mission at Child Advocates is to children and youth statewide who have experienced abuse and neglect. We champion and advocate for justice and racial equity in child welfare in all communities to build a better future for all children. Our commitment is to listen to children and be their voice, standing up for their liberties and working tirelessly to keep them safe and secure with an opportunity to thrive.