

CFCR's Mission Moments Newsletter



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Date 2022-09-15 08:15



Welcome to the Council for Children's Rights premier [Mission Moments Newsletter](#) where we will share impactful stories, update you on our work, spotlight our staff, and more. As students go back to school, we wanted to highlight our Education Law Program and the unique services we provide to students and their families in our community. We hope you will share this newsletter with your friends and family to help us spread the word about our work.

Thank you for your support!

A Big Win for Kids



There's a good chance that sometime in the past two years you've been stuck in a virtual meeting that was hard to focus in. You're bored, maybe thinking about lunch, but definitely not engaged in the material.

Now imagine you're a student in fourth grade who's having trouble learning and requires specially designed instruction. **While the state is legally required to provide you an Individualized Education Program and a special education teacher, it's the beginning of the school year and there is no teacher to help you and no plan.** You're stuck behind a computer screen and put in a virtual classroom with 80 other students—hoping you might learn something and not fall further behind your peers.

If you're a parent in this situation, what do you do? Who do you call? The school isn't responding to your concerns, and you've considered paying for expensive additional tutoring.

That is where the Council comes in. Students in our community were put into a similar situation last school year. **Our team filed a complaint with the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (DPI) against a local school district on behalf of two students enrolled in a virtual academy who were being denied their special education services.** We also asked the state to investigate whether this was occurring for other students as well—unfortunately, it was.

DPI found in our favor and required the school district to provide compensatory education services to our two clients as well as all other students similarly impacted. **Our work on behalf of two students has now benefited so many more at no cost to them or their families.**

Without the Council, there are extremely limited options for students and their families in similar situations. **There are less than 25 attorneys in the state representing children in special education cases.** Hiring one of those attorneys can cost between \$5,000-\$10,000—an exorbitant cost for families. Even fewer offer free or pro bono services—and we are proud to say that **5 of them work at the Council.**

That is just one example of how the Council serves children in our community. **Over the past year, our team of 17 passionate attorneys and social workers served over 1900 children in 3800 cases.**

Start the school year right with a donation to the Council to help Charlotte's kids.

Donate Today

Please contact our Advancement Director Amy Vavra at amyv@cfcrights.org for more information on ways to donate and to get involved.

Council Changemakers

This month we're celebrating Stephanie Klitsch and her 10 years serving children at the Council for Children's Rights!

STEPHANIE KLITSCH

Assistant Director,
Education Law Program



What led you to the Council and how long have you been here?

As of August 27, 2022, I have been at the Council for 10 years! Before law school, I moved to Charlotte from upstate New York as a teacher with Teach for America. I wanted to return to Charlotte after law school to advocate for the educational needs of students in the same community where I taught. I was a legal intern at the Council during law school, and then initially came to the Council as a Stanford Law School post-graduate public interest fellow. The work I have the privilege of doing at the Council is exactly what I hoped I would be able to do when I first dreamed of going to law school.

Tell us about your role here

I am the Assistant Director of the Education Law Program. I currently focus on our team's systemic priorities, working on specific projects that are intended to have a positive impact on a larger number of students.

What do you enjoy most about working at the Council?

Every day, I get to wake up and know that I am part of a bigger movement aimed at supporting our community's children. Nothing about this work is stagnant. The Education Law Program continually evaluates our programming to ensure that we are providing the services that best meet our clients' needs and can have the biggest impact on the community.

What inspires you about the Council?

I am continually inspired by the people who touch the Council. The staff are passionate and zealous advocates, and they draw their strength and courage from their child clients. The resilience of the young people in our community fuels the work the Council does every day.

Outside of work, how do you like to spend your time?

My partner and I love spending time outside with our two young sons (ages 6 and 3). We are looking forward to cooler weather this fall so we can spend our weekends taking family bike rides.

What book or podcast would you recommend to a friend?

I'm a big fan of podcasts. A few of my current favorites include Raising Good Humans with Dr. Aliza, Nutrition Facts with Dr. Greger, and Science of Reading: The Podcast.

Thank you, Stephanie! Cheers to 10 years!

Education Law Program



The COVID-19 pandemic intensified pre-existing inequities in the public school system and created new concerns for students with disabilities. It has also drastically increased the need for our services— **we've served 70% more children in the past year than we did the year before the pandemic.**

In response to these new needs and challenges, the Council created the **Education Law Program (ELP)** which expanded our services and opened the door to even more students.

The ELP team provides four critical services:

- **Education Navigation:** We support students who are involved in the juvenile delinquency or child welfare systems facing educational challenges by equipping them and their families with the **resources and advice they need to advocate for their right to a proper education.**
- **Education Advocacy for Individual Families:** Any parent or legal guardian of students with education needs, such as special education, Section 504, school discipline, bullying, or enrollment can contact our team for referrals, resources, advice, and legal representation. **Our small team of six fielded several hundred calls in the last year alone.**
- **Community Trainings:** **We offer free trainings to community partners and parent groups** covering a wide range of topics related to education advocacy. We're also creating an online library of these trainings so that we can reach even more people in our community.
- **Systemic Education Advocacy:** As a small team, we cannot individually assist every family that needs support with education advocacy. Our team's **systems advocacy work gets to the root of the issues affecting our most vulnerable students**— like the story above— so that our work can have a greater community impact.

There is often no alternative service to what the Council provides our students, their families, and the community— and **no student or family will ever have to pay for the Council's education advocacy services.**

If you'd like to learn more, or know someone who needs help, [visit our website for more information.](#)

How You Can Help

The Council receives no money from the county or city for the services we provide to Charlotte's children. We rely on generous individual donors, corporate sponsors, and foundations to fund our work. You can support us by making a donation, volunteering with our teams, and helping us spread the word by telling your friends and family about us.

Give: You can [donate online](#) or by sending a check to: ATTN: Council for Children's Rights, 601 East 5th Street, Suite 510, Charlotte, NC 28202. Email advancement@cfcrights.org with any questions and to learn more.

Give to the Council

Volunteer: We have [multiple opportunities to volunteer](#), most notably with our Custody Advocacy Program (CAP). We are also looking for community members and philanthropists to help accelerate our fundraising efforts. If you're interested in learning how you can get involved, email advancement@cfcrights.org.

Spread the Word: We need your help to grow our network and let more people in Charlotte know about us and our work. You can support us by forwarding this email to your friends and family who may not have heard about us yet!



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