

IMPROVE THE LIFE OF AN ABUSED CHILD



Volunteer to be an Education Advocate for a child in foster care – and help ensure his or her academic success and the best opportunity for a productive future.

The Education Advocate Project is a pilot project in which the Dallas Association of Young Lawyers (DAYL) is partnering with Texas Lawyers for Children (TLC) to recruit volunteer attorneys to serve as Education Advocates for children in foster care. The Education Advocate's role is to serve as co-counsel to the child's court-appointed attorney and take action to ensure the child has the best opportunity to succeed in school, such as ensuring the child receives the following: appropriate evaluations to identify any learning or psychological issues; services and accommodations for any identified issues; adequate support from school personnel and foster parents; access to programs, resources, and services necessary to help the child succeed both academically and socially; and support and resources necessary to adequately prepare the child for graduation and acceptance to a college or vocational school.

Why Education Advocates are needed:

Recent studies show that children growing up in foster care face more struggles academically than their peers:

- 20% of children remain in permanent foster care until they reach adulthood.
- About 1500 Texas children "age out" of foster care each year.
- More than 37% of former foster children dropped out of school and never received a diploma or GED.
- Less than 2% of former foster children received a bachelor level degree.
- About 60% of former foster youth have a history of unemployment and financial instability, mostly due to lack of job skills.
- More than 54% of former foster youth have one or more mental health issues.
- About 65% of former foster youth experienced seven or more school changes.

Children in permanent foster care are more likely to drop out of school than their peers. Some of the difficulties they often face include:

- struggling academically in silence without support from foster parents or school personnel;
- emotional trauma from abuse and neglect, untreated physical and mental health problems;
- changing residences from 4 to 11 times or more (sometimes every few months);
- failing to graduate because of lost credit hours due to multiple moves;
- having learning differences and/or learning disabilities that are never acknowledged and addressed by the schools;
- lacking access to extracurricular activities and sports programs that can enhance their lives and well-being and ensure their success in school;
- lacking information about resources available to them that will help improve academic performance;
- lacking information about state resources available to them that will pay for college or other technical/vocational schools; and
- feeling hopeless and lacking motivation, guidance, and support to set and reach goals.

Who Can Become an Education Advocate?

- Any licensed attorney in good standing with the Texas State Bar is eligible to volunteer to be an education advocate. **(Note that to receive legal malpractice coverage as a pro bono attorney through the State Bar, you must be a "young lawyer" member of TYLA (age 36 or younger or practicing 5 years or less).**
- Qualified attorneys must first complete specified training requirements for this project made available through the Texas Lawyers for Children Online Center and TYLA website prior to appointment as an Education Advocate.

If you are interested in becoming an Education Advocate please do the following:

1. Email your name, State Bar No., address, and phone number to Shawna Dalrymple at sdsmurow@aol.com.
2. Please register for the Pro Bono Network on this web page.

If you would like more information about the Education Advocate Project, please contact Patricia Hogue, TLC Special Projects Attorney at patricia.hogue@texaslawyersforchildren.org.

