

CHILD PROTECTION & JUVENILE JUSTICE

We provide legal help to the majority of children in Erie County who are abused, neglected, in foster care, or involved in the juvenile justice system. Established concurrently with the NYS Family Court Act in 1962, the Attorneys for Children Unit of the Legal Aid Bureau of Buffalo celebrated 50 years of service to children in Erie County in 2012. We continue to be dedicated to providing effective legal counsel and advocacy, and improving the lives of the children whose circumstances have brought their families into Family Court.

LEGAL AID BUREAU OF BUFFALO

Established in 1912 and serving more than 20,000 individuals annually, the Legal Aid Bureau of Buffalo is the largest and oldest provider of indigent legal services in Western New York. Our agency provides legal help in both civil and criminal law. We provide a range of holistic services to help domestic violence victims, abused and neglected children, children facing challenges in obtaining equal access to education, tenants, veterans, formerly incarcerated individuals, victims of workplace abuse, immigrants and refugees, persons with disabilities, homeowners facing foreclosures, and other vulnerable Western New Yorkers. Our staff, volunteers, funders, and donors have been making a difference for over 100 years.

OUR MISSION

Our mission is to provide access to justice and due process to the most vulnerable individuals, children, and families through quality legal representation and assistance.

HOW TO HELP

Help us empower individuals, children and families by making a secure, tax-deductible online donation at legalaiddbuffalo.org/donate.



290 Main Street, Suite 450,
Buffalo, NY 14202

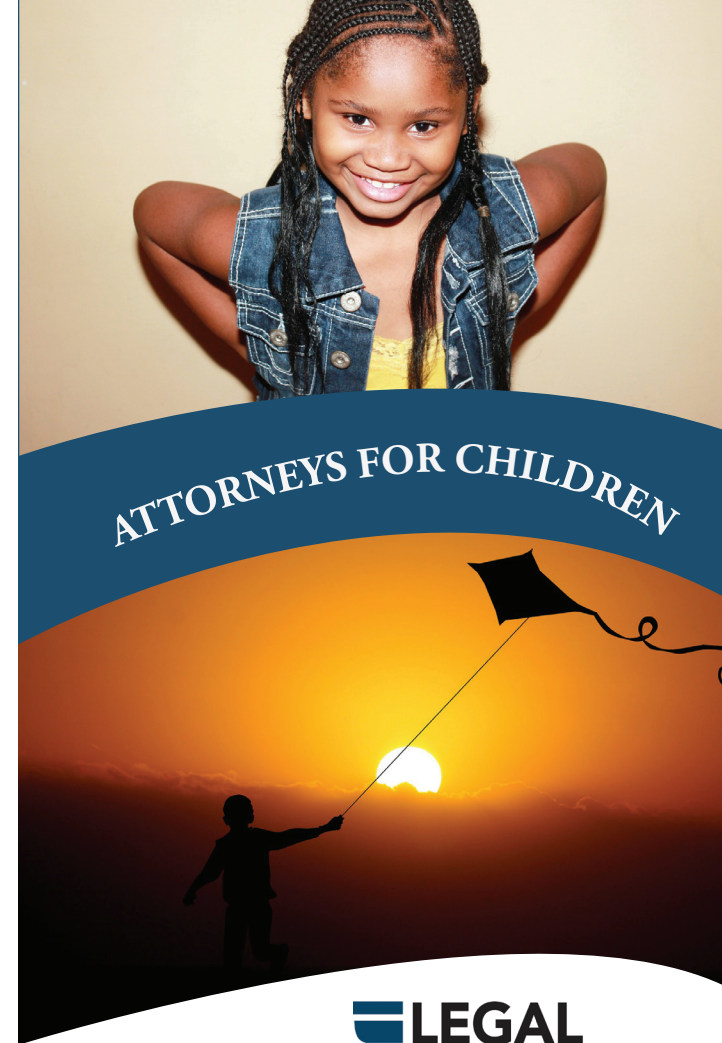
Service is available
Monday to Friday
from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

716-853-9555
legalaiddbuffalo.org



Equal Access to Justice for
Everyone We Serve

Proud to Serve Western
New York Since 1912



Children in Foster Care

Persons in Need of Supervision/JD Cases

Ending Abuse/Neglect

Termination of Parental Rights Cases

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ATTORNEYS FOR CHILDREN

The Attorneys for Children (AFC) Unit of the Legal Aid Bureau provides legal representation and counsel to the majority of children in Erie County who are abused, neglected, in foster care, or involved in the juvenile justice system as Juvenile Delinquents (JD's) or Persons in Need of Supervision (PINS). Representing clients ranging in age from newborns to age 21 in Erie County Family Court, we are dedicated to excellence in child-centered legal representation and social advocacy. We help more than 6,500 children annually.

Using a holistic approach, a social worker and/or a specialized child advocate will be assigned to collaborate with the attorney, who usually remains the child's counsel throughout the case. We emphasize frequent contact with our clients, knowing that before we can speak for a child, we must listen to the child. The team works to develop a comprehensive plan for advocating for each client's wishes, rights and interests.



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ABUSE AND NEGLECT, FOSTER CARE, TERMINATION OF PARENTAL RIGHTS

Abuse, neglect, and Termination of Parental Rights (TPR) cases may or may not involve the child's temporary or permanent removal from the home. Foster care is the temporary care of children by substitute parents. It is used to protect children from unhealthy or unsafe home situations. A termination of parental rights petition is brought to permanently end the legal rights of the natural parents of a child, thereby "freeing" the child for adoption.

Our role is to explain the proceedings and possible outcomes to the child, to listen to the child's wishes regarding such issues as placement and visitation, and to advocate in Family Court for those wishes.

We always advise children to let us know if they would like to see their siblings so that visits can be arranged. We also advise children that when they are old enough to do so and if they choose to, they can resume their relationship with their biological parents.

PINS/JD CASES

In a Persons In Need of Supervision (PINS) case, someone (e.g., a parent, teacher, social worker) has filed a petition against a child asking the court to intervene and assist in the child's conduct.

In a Juvenile Delinquency case, as in cases involving adult criminal defendants, the lawyer for the child assures that all constitutional and legal protections are afforded to youth under the age of 17 charged with Juvenile Delinquency by the police. These cases are heard in Family Court instead of Criminal Court because of the child's status as a minor.

EDUCATIONAL ADVOCACY

Poverty, trauma, and school suspensions mean many Buffalo students end up in foster care or the juvenile justice system without meaningful access to education. Providing educational advocacy for these children is a natural extension of the work we already do. Although there are several service providers that provide information and support for parents, they cannot provide legal advice and representation when needed. Providing competent and timely legal information and advocacy is critical to achieve appropriate education for students with special needs.

We assist students in Erie and Niagara Counties in need of special education representation or suspension defense.



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