

# REPORT OF THE WORKING GROUP ON REPRESENTING CHILDREN AS MEMBERS OF COMMUNITIES\*

## I. INTRODUCTION

The Working Group on Representing Children as Members of Communities was given the task of exploring the challenges of practicing in an environment that in many ways is hostile to children. The Group first discussed the validity of the assumption that society is hostile to children and agreed that in critical sectors of our society there is an open antagonism demonstrated towards children. The sources of that hostility are arguably the most powerful and influential pillars of our society: the media, the political and legal systems, as well as the educational system. The Group began by identifying concrete examples of this antagonism and then set about cataloging the institutions and dynamics that, if changed, would be most relevant to child advocates.

The Group included policy makers, professors, current and former defenders and civil legal service providers. The composition of the Group proved to be a rich conglomeration of respected child advocates who were all notable in their field both locally and nationally. The bias evident in the Group was that most of the representatives were or had been employed by defender or civil legal services providers. Each representative brought unique insights into the challenges of representing children and those insights led to the Group's focus on four principal themes for recommendations directed at juvenile defender offices and civil legal service providers.

The recommendations and commentary are grouped within the following four major directives:

1. Legal representation must be client-directed and community-centered
2. Legal service providers must allow for an expanded role of their attorneys
3. Defender and civil legal service providers must design and implement effective systems for quality control and increase accountability for the care and treatment of clients
4. Training of attorneys in these offices must be based on best practices that are juvenile specific, consistent and standardized nationally

Each directive is followed by commentary designed to explain the deliberations and thoughts of the Group as it worked from general ideas to the specific recommendations. With some recommendations, the rationales were identical and redundant commentary was eliminated. The Group also provided cautions to policy makers where there were recognized challenges to implementing a

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specific course of action, but where the Group reasoned that the potential gain realized by implementing the recommendation outweighed the risk of harm.

What follows are the directives, recommendations, commentary and cautions from the Working Group on Representing Children as Members of Communities.

## II. LEGAL REPRESENTATION MUST BE CLIENT DIRECTED AND COMMUNITY CENTERED

**Recommendation One:** Juvenile defenders and civil legal service providers must expand their role as advocates to include a community focus and partnership to include community education and systemic advocacy.

This role expansion must be informed by research, client voices, positive outcomes and cultural competence. The purpose of the expanded role is to:

1. Achieve better dispositional outcomes for clients
2. Educate the community about who the clients are
3. Diffuse the hostile environment for children
4. Achieve a better understanding of our client's lives
5. Enhance and improve resources made available to our clients
6. Improve our credibility with various communities, stakeholders and decision makers

**Commentary:** For too long, adult and juvenile defenders, as well as civil legal service providers, have limited their roles to the legal representation of their clients. However, while the client-centered model addresses the needs of individual clients, juvenile defenders and civil legal service providers have long overlooked their possible *community* role. In essence, both criminal and civil legal services providers have not been fully engaged in the communities where their clients come from, live in, and return to. Their services have tended to be reactive to particularized legal circumstances involving their clients, without incorporating a proactive component that seeks to reach individuals and communities prior to their involvement with the various criminal and civil systems.

The above recommendation highlights the need for juvenile defenders and civil legal service providers to become community partners whose role is broader than individual client representation. By incorporating a community education component, these legal services offices can bridge the divide that often exists between these offices and the communities they serve. More concretely, these offices can provide information to communities that are relevant to their legal needs. Examples of these types of outreach include “know your rights” seminars, which teach individuals their Fourth and Fifth Amendment rights, how to handle “confrontations” with law enforcement authorities, stressing the importance of staying in school and attaining an education, and the collateral consequences of juvenile convictions.

In addition, by limiting their services to the individual clients they serve, juvenile defenders and civil legal service providers fail to address the systemic issues—often involving both criminal and civil issues—that ensnare the clients and create obstacles for their communities. Juvenile defenders and civil legal services should seek to change the systems in which they operating by engaging in systemic advocacy.

**Recommendation Two:** Juvenile defender and civil legal assistance providers must develop a component of their offices to allow for the expansion of the role of attorneys to act as community/stakeholder liaisons. This attorney(s) would be responsible for outreach into the community, attending meetings with stakeholders and provide a presence at any relevant transaction where the interests of the client base may be affected. Efforts in this area must be leadership-directed.

**Cautions:**

1. There may be tensions where advocates align themselves with parties with a perceived adverse interest;
2. There is the possibility that those attorneys will be designated as the ones who are responsible for making change, eliminating required efforts by other stakeholders;
3. Time consuming;
4. There is the potential that you will saturate the clients with services and that the provider will reach a point of diminishing returns.

**Commentary:** In order to fulfill the roles set out in Recommendation One, attorneys must develop relationships with their client's communities. Often their clients come to them with an assortment of complex problems that require multifaceted solutions. To serve their clients more fully, as well as to fulfill their role as community stakeholders, juvenile defender and civil legal services officers must have a community presence. Attorneys are particularly well suited to serve as community/stakeholder liaisons because they work within systems that present many challenges to these communities, they are able to translate the benefits and downfalls of these systems to these communities, and they could provide information to these communities about possible legal avenues. In turn, attorneys have much to gain from acting as community/stakeholder liaisons. Perhaps most importantly, this expanded role would provide attorneys with a deeper and more complete picture of the various issues that affect their clients' lives. They could also possibly develop relationships with various community-based service providers that can aid their clients.

In order to fulfill these expanded roles, attorneys must have opportunities to interact with the communities they serve. Thus, their officers must create both the expectation of this expanded role and the avenues for attorneys to flourish in this role. As a result, juvenile defender and civil legal services offices must create a leadership-directed *norm* that sets out this community-rooted role. It is not enough for staff attorneys to take on this role, as the responsibility for interacting with the community would then fall disproportionately on those who are interested in serving in this capacity. Moreover, this particular model would frustrate the goals set forth in the above recommendation by creating divides between those attorneys who serve their communities in this way and those who abide by the traditionally narrow client-centered legal role. Rather, a leadership-directed norm is required to create a culture that engages the community in the ways set forth in this recommendation.

**Recommendation Three:** In an effort to diffuse the hostility that children are subjected to, attorneys must become more sophisticated at working with all forms of the media. Attorneys should carefully choose issues that have the greatest effect on positive outcomes for children.

The attorneys must take advantage of the full range of media sources including letters to the editor, community newspapers, Spanish language media and op-ed pieces. The attorney should work to develop relationships with individual reporters. If possible, the lawyer should use public relations experts to help with language and strategy and partner with clients to give a voice to children in an effort to educate the public.

**Cautions:** There are issues of confidentiality when engaging the media and many legal service providers have policy restrictions on communicating with the media.

**Commentary:** This recommendation is similar to Recommendations One and Two in that it advances an expanded role for juvenile defenders and civil legal service providers. It recognizes that legal issues not only play out in courts, but in various forms of media. While attorneys recognize the effect the media has on how the public perceives their clients, as well as issues involving juvenile justice, attorneys all too often do not advocate for their clients in all available fora.

To help reduce the level of hostility directed at their clients, juvenile defenders and legal services attorneys must become adept at working with the media. These possible media sources are wide ranging, and include national and local media in all forms—television, radio and newspapers. For example, attorneys can write letters to the editor in response to stories that impact their client populations, or they could write op-ed pieces that highlight these issues for the readership. This has the benefit of aiding not only their individual clients, but also sensitizing the public to the various delicate issues that often confront their client populations. In sum, attorneys should take whatever opportunities are available to provide a full and accurate picture of the issues that confront their clients, as well as the systems within which they must advocate.

This commentary recognizes that interaction with the media requires particular skill and delicacy. Thus, juvenile defender and civil legal services providers should engage public relations experts to help with strategy, which includes figuring out which issues to address. Also, working with the media presents various ethical issues relating to, inter alia, client confidentiality. Attorneys must pay particular attention to these ethical issues when dealing with all forms of media.

**Issue for Further Study:** While there was consensus that all court records should be confidential because of the potential of stigmatizing the child and further jeopardizing their opportunities, there was no consensus on whether to open or keep closed juvenile justice and child welfare proceedings.

### III. LEGAL SERVICE PROVIDERS MUST ALLOW FOR AN EXPANDED ROLED OF THEIR ATTORNEYS

**Recommendation One:** Given the complex nature of a child's life and environment, the role of the attorney must be expanded and encompass a holistic model of representation and advocacy.

**Commentary:** Children, including adolescents do not commit crimes in a vacuum. Multiple contingencies encourage and coexist with the delinquent

behavior. Attorneys representing children must examine the child's entire life timeline in order to assess the nature of the multiple needs in the case. The realm of representation must continue to expand in response to a child client's individual needs.

Points of identified areas of expanded representation exist in pre-adjudication and post-disposition arenas. In the pre-adjudication phase of representation, attorneys must provide zealous advocacy at probable cause hearings with a focus on release of the child into the community with appropriate monitoring, if required. All of the issues that may be an integral part of the offending behavior such as truancy, special education status, mental health and medical disabilities need to be assessed in the pre-adjudication stage.

Collateral issues that stigmatize the child client at the initial stages of court involvement, such as imposing gang related prohibitive conditions, must be challenged. The practice of including the child in police, school, or court databases with derogatory and damaging labels must also be challenged.

Post-disposition representation is an essential part of a holistic model of advocacy. Multiple barriers prevent a child from achieving a level of rehabilitation ensured by statute and success in the community following adjudication and/or release back into the community.

Effective post-disposition advocacy would include an assessment of the quality of any experience in confinement, including programming, conditions and duration. Ineffective programs and services should be evaluated and challenged. Community based alternatives must be developed. The barriers to re-entry into the community must also be eradicated. Transition services must be developed to facilitate a successful re-entry.

The pervasive issues of immigration, expungement, housing, and employment must also be considered when representing children in this model of advocacy.

The center of this holistic model is the child client. Although the role of the attorney is expanded in an effort to achieve the most full serviced outcomes for the child, no one person is responsible for providing all of the services. The model is a blending of the best representation available in the civil and criminal systems, combined with providers from an array of the other disciplines. It is this interdisciplinary model of advocacy that is best able to ensure a continuity of representation from pre-adjudication through post-disposition, whether the child is in the delinquency or welfare system.

**Recommendation Two:** Children at risk of being transferred to or transferred from the adult system shall be provided counsel with expertise in both systems.

**Commentary:** The recent and developing research in the area of adolescent brain maturation significantly affects this area of law. The Supreme Court decision in *Roper v. Simmons* also provides the basis for the development of new strategies to challenge the statutes that require adult sanctions for certain criminal behavior. Attorneys must be cognizant of these new developments and how they interact with the current status of state and Federal law.

**Recommendation Three:** Attorneys must work with interdisciplinary teams in order to best address and utilize issues of their clients' psychosocial development.

**Commentary:** A child or adolescent's psychosocial development is a critical aspect in every case. The majority of child clients have experienced trauma, and suffer from mental, physical, and/or educational disabilities. We also know that their natural state of immaturity is compounded and enhanced by their state of limited brain development. These adolescent development issues must be examined by counsel and the team in order to develop legal strategies, theories and a disposition plan.

**Recommendation Four:** The development of a cohesive model of representation including civil and criminal legal services must be supported within the respective venues and offices.

**Commentary:** A symbiotic culture of reliance must be created and supported by the directors of civil and criminal legal service offices. Adequate funding plans for this model of blended representation must be developed and supported by the offices, courts and communities. It is this enhanced and expanded concept of holistic representation that will support a team in challenging existing practices that continued to stigmatize our clients and prevent them from obtaining services to which they are entitled.

#### IV. DEFENDER AND CIVIL LEGAL SERVICE PROVIDERS MUST DESIGN AND IMPLEMENT EFFECTIVE SYSTEMS FOR QUALITY CONTROL AND INCREASE ACCOUNTABILITY FOR THE CARE AND TREATMENT OF CLIENTS

Individuals and organizations that provide services to children should be held to high standards, and should work within systems that demand accountability and provide meaningful oversight. It is incumbent upon attorneys representing children to understand the public and private service delivery systems in which their clients are involved, and to hold systems accountable that provide for the care and treatment of children and families. Conversely, those attorneys who provide legal representation to children must also work to ensure that the legal service delivery system achieves high standards, and effectively meets the needs of the client.

**Recommendation One:** Juvenile defender offices and civil legal assistance providers should ensure that an adequate system of accountability for legal service delivery is in place that is responsive to client needs and can identify and document appropriate outcome measures.

**Commentary:** Defender and civil legal assistance offices should strive to ensure excellent in their legal services, using nationally recognized standards of practice. Offices should engage in periodic strategic planning to develop measurable goals and outcomes for their services, and then engage in periodic internal and external evaluation of goals and outcomes. Offices should create effective data systems to document services and outcomes. Services should be tailored to meet the unique needs of clients relative to race, gender, ethnicity, disability.

For contract or appointed counsel not part of defender or civil legal assistance provider offices, the state or county shall establish a system of quality assurance through an independent evaluation to ensure competent representation.

The National Juvenile Defender Center has developed a protocol for assessing state indigent juvenile defense systems, and has released reports in more than a dozen states to date regarding access to and quality of representation for youth in the delinquency system.<sup>1</sup> Assessments also highlight promising approaches and innovative practices within the state and offer recommendations to improve weak areas.

Standards for indigent juvenile defense services have been developed in several states, and should become a staple for practice within defender offices. Similarly, a number of national publications are available that provide guidelines for juvenile delinquency representation, and improving court practices for juvenile delinquency cases. Some of the more recent publications are listed below:

1. American Council of Chief Defenders, National Juvenile Defender Center, *Ten Core Principles for Providing Quality Representation Through Indigent Defense Delivery Systems* (January 2005).
2. National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges, *Juvenile Delinquency Guidelines: Improving Court Practice in Juvenile Delinquency Cases* (2005).
3. American Bar Association, *Standards for Representation of Children in Abuse, Neglect and Dependency Cases*.
4. American Bar Association, *Standards for Representing Children in Child Custody Proceedings*.

**Recommendation Two:** Attorneys for children must hold service providers accountable for their care and treatment of their clients by challenging ineffective and/or harmful programs, policies or practices which do not effectively meet the individualized needs of clients relative to race, gender, ethnicity, or disability and by understanding and encouraging the use of best practice models, including evidence-based programs.

**Commentary:** It is incumbent upon lawyers for children to understand and scrutinize the public and private service providers to whom the care and custody of child clients are entrusted. Lawyers should visit clients in residential facilities and other programs in which clients are placed, and question practices that may offend the civil rights or due process rights of clients, or which may otherwise impede their treatment and care. Lawyers should make judges aware of abuses or other concerns regarding the treatment and care of children by providers, and should, where appropriate, continue to invoke the review powers of the court when programs are ineffective, unnecessary and/or abusive. Lawyers should question providers at disposition hearings about services offered that are not conducive to the client's needs, and/or which may impose harmful effects on the child and his or her family and their treatment needs, and advocate for programs that have proven positive outcomes for youth.

The Group agreed that far too often, juvenile defender offices and civil legal service providers lack the resources or the time to effectively scrutinize and remedy shortcomings that may exist in facilities or services provided to their clients. Effective and professional service and facilities providers were deemed critical to putting the client in the best position possible to succeed.

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<sup>1</sup> For more information, go to [www.njdc.info](http://www.njdc.info) to review Assessments in states such as Ohio, Kentucky, Washington, Maryland, Georgia, North Carolina, Texas, Louisiana, Maryland, Virginia, Montana, and Maine.

The Group recognized that if advocates were precluded from bringing to light ineffective treatment practices then the attorneys and their offices were failing the clients in a vital component of representation.

V. TRAINING OF ATTORNEYS IN THESE OFFICES MUST BE BASED ON BEST PRACTICES THAT ARE JUVENILE SPECIFIC, CONSISTENT AND STANDARDIZED NATIONALLY

The participants in this Group recognized that the changes in representation that they are suggesting cannot occur without extensive training of practitioners. Additionally, in some ways it was seen that the Recommendations of *Fordham* and this Group regarding training are not an end in themselves, but rather, ongoing. The changing environment of the law and child development, as well as obtaining the skills necessary to effectively represent children, is on going and never-ending. These Recommendations are made with the caveat that the burden of providing educational and skills-building programs should not come at the exclusion of other efforts.

**Recommendation One:** All attorneys representing children must have the appropriate training in the following:

1. Limitations of and impact of their power
2. Understanding of current adolescent development
3. Incorporation of adolescent development into legal skills
4. Effective child interviewing skills
5. Existing juvenile defense standards including the National Juvenile Defender Center Ten Core Principals and the standards of the National Legal Aid and Defender Association and the American Bar Association
6. The cross-disciplines of juvenile justice and child welfare
7. Leadership skills to foster systemic change and community empowerment

**Commentary:** To incorporate fully a holistic representation model into current practice it was strongly suggested that lawyers who represent children be continually trained. The attorney for the child wields tremendous power and influence over their client. Accordingly, it was suggested that all attorneys representing children have specific training in interviewing children with a focus on realizing what their limitations are. The Group was aware of the impact power plays in this attorney/client relationship and therefore it was suggested that all attorneys become aware of this impact and the ways it can be used and misused.

The Group recognized that the representation of children is as much a legal practice as it is a professional that incorporates many social aspects of practice, specifically child development. The Supreme Court's decision in *Roper v. Simmons*,<sup>2</sup> affirms that children are different and that attorneys representing children have an obligation to learn about those differences and utilize the existing social and psychological research in the representation of their clients. The aspiration is that attorneys who represent children will look upon the interdisciplinary nature of their practice as "normal" and essential rather than as an additional task that must be performed.

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<sup>2</sup> 543 U.S. 551 (2005).



This Group also recognized that other agencies and groups interested in the representation of children have already drafted suggestions for attorneys in this field. It is incumbent upon the child's attorney to be knowledgeable of those suggestions and standards and to incorporate them into their practice. Because so many of the children involved in the juvenile justice system are involved in the child welfare system, the Group believes that attorneys should be trained in and be aware of both systems.

Finally, this Group spent a considerable amount of time discussing the role that attorneys for children have in the communities they (both the client and attorney) are members of. It was agreed that children's lawyers have an obligation to participate fully in these communities and be actively involved in conversations that take place which affect our clients. To be able to effectuate change on behalf of our clients, attorneys must be trained in leadership skills. As we are invited to more tables and engage in more discussions about systems and services, we will be representatives that are more effective for our clients.

**Recommendation Two:** Juvenile defender and civil legal service providers shall create specialized divisions where attorneys only represent children; but share an emphasis on trial skills training in order to instill a culture of aggressive advocacy.

**Commentary:** This Group agreed that the practice of representing children is a specialized practice and should be treated by defender and legal service offices as such. The representation of children should not be part of an attorney's other tasks in such offices, but rather, should be the only work that attorney performs. The attorneys in this specialized role should not focus solely on dispositional practice, but should be instilled in a culture of aggressive advocacy, stressing the importance of trial skills training.

**Recommendation Three:** Public Defender's offices shall end the practice of using juvenile delinquency as a training ground for adult felony trial work.

**Commentary:** The participants were disheartened by the practice of Public Defender offices using Juvenile Justice as a training ground for felony trial work. This practice infuses that Division with the sense that juvenile work is less important than working with adults. Also, this attitude gave the impression to the attorneys, and others in the system, that the consequences to the youth are less. Consequently, the attorneys were "in training" and could make mistakes and were not viewed as performing as "important" a service to the office or the clients. Both the *UNLV Conference* and *Fordham* disabuse this notion. Rather, juvenile work is seen as a specialized field (as discussed in Recommendation Two) which demands the use of the best resources and most skilled attorneys who wish to invest their careers in representing children.

In contrast to the usual practice of Defender Offices, the members of this Group agreed that the appropriate career path for juvenile defenders is to require that adult felony work be a predicate for practicing in juvenile justice. This will ensure that only aggressive advocates who want to work with youth will be in juvenile court.

**Recommendation Four:** Law schools shall provide training that emphasizes holistic representation of children as a means of minimizing the harm to child clients by fragmenting their representation.

**Commentary:** The Group recognized that many law school clinical offerings compartmentalize child advocacy in ways similar to practitioners. For instance, separate clinical programs exist for juvenile delinquency, for child welfare and for educational advocacy, forcing law students to choose among the three at law schools that offer all options. At other schools where the options are more limited, law students are exposed to narrow and limiting roles that attorneys play. In addition, few clinical or other law school opportunities provide for the exposure to legal representation of children using multiple forms of advocacy, including individual legal representation, administrative and legislative advocacy, class action litigation. While it is unrealistic to expect that law students can thoroughly become expert and learn a curriculum in all fields, there can be unique partnerships created among clinical faculty to reduce the fragmentation and result in a more holistic approach to representing the child. For instance, a child welfare clinic representing children in foster care can also offer representation to that child client in any educational issue (most often special education) that the child may present with. That clinic could then pair with a criminal or juvenile justice clinic to offer that same child legal representation if the child is arrested and offer representation in conditions of confinement. This provides a “one-stop shopping” approach for the child who is then not forced to interact with numerous attorneys and law students. Furthermore, it allows a collaborative partnership to develop among supervising attorneys and law students, and broadens a law student’s understanding of the power of providing holistic representation to the child.

There was a lot of discussion around gaps in law school clinical offerings that match gaps in legal representation of children and could be filled by expanding clinical offerings in such areas. For instance, it was suggested that a clinic could focus on re-entry issues when a youth returns from the juvenile justice system. Another example of need related to expungement issues of juvenile records or of child welfare substantiations.

**Recommendation Five:** Law Schools should expand clinical offerings and other opportunities to include non-traditional models for ignored or underserved populations such as those needing post-dispositional representation. These could also include efforts to address pre-adjudicative issues such as removing children’s names from gang registries and immigration issues.

**Commentary:** A consistent theme throughout the working sessions was that law schools consistently fail to prepare students adequately for the practice of law. Applying that theme to the representation of children, the Group concluded that law schools limit the concept of legal representation to the traditional, narrow focus of litigation. The Group’s directive to expand the role of the attorney requires that law schools take steps to educate their students accordingly. This new, expanded role necessarily means that students must learn that the practice of law transcends motion writing and oral advocacy and requires that students approach the representation of children from a holistic perspective that is highlighted in recommendation number six. Clinical education was determined to be a vital part of legal education and perfectly suited to introduce students to the concept of holistic representation. As such, the Group identified potential types of legal clinics that were ripe for exploration in both the pre-adjudicative stages as well as post-disposition stage. Children re-enter-

ing the community after confinement was seen as a particularly hopeful option as the Group agreed that very little services are offered this group of children.

**Recommendation Six:** Law schools should partner with other professional schools to develop interdisciplinary teams and a curriculum that addresses a holistic and interdisciplinary approach to representing children.

**Commentary:** The Group felt strongly that legal representation of children cannot be performed in a vacuum. Too often attorneys for children are well trained in the law and courtroom advocacy, but are unfamiliar with the social, emotional, and physical aspects of a child's well-being. Being uninformed as to the developmental stages of children places the attorney at a disadvantage when advocating for appropriate services for them. Similarly, without understanding such concepts as reactive attachment disorder, it is difficult for the attorney to be knowledgeable about an appropriate placement for the child. Furthermore, the Group discussed how other disciplines and experts are crucial in determining proper outcomes for children. For example, since attorneys are not well versed in the evaluation of particular models of service delivery (e.g. is multi-systemic therapy more effective than functional family therapy?) or placements, (is one particular residential facility more appropriate than another?), the attorney must rely on experts outside of the legal field.

The Group felt that it was important to emphasize to law students during their formative years of training that they need to recognize the limitations of their expertise and be humbled by their power. Too often, it was felt, law students are in danger of graduating with an arrogance and belief that they know it all, without realizing that their advocacy can only be effective to the extent it is informed by other disciplines.

There was also a recognition that law students (and attorneys) often perceive the legal representation of children as involving too much "social work" practice which then makes students refrain from wanting to pursue a career in this area. By infusing the child law curriculum with concepts from other disciplines, the role of a child attorney can be re-conceptualized, and law students can be trained to understand how such disciplines form the necessary underpinnings for aggressive legal advocacy.

The Group had knowledge of a few unique programs around the country where a partnership with a law school program, graduate school of social work, or psychology, as well as a medical school had provided opportunities to create interdisciplinary teams of law students, social work students, psychology graduate students as well as medical students and pediatric and psychiatric residents.<sup>3</sup> These teams had the consequence of allowing students in all these professional schools to break down any preconceived barriers about each other's professions, as well as enrich the legal advocacy by providing holistic representation to the child.

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<sup>3</sup> See e.g., Center for Children's Advocacy at University of Connecticut School of Law, [www.kidscounsel.org](http://www.kidscounsel.org); Civitas ChildLaw Center at Loyola University School of Law, [www.luc.edu/law](http://www.luc.edu/law); Fordham University Interdisciplinary Center for Family and Child Advocacy, <http://law.fordham.edu>; University of Michigan Law School Child Advocacy Law Clinic, <http://www.law.umich.edu/CentersandPrograms/clinical/calcl/>; Child and Family Justice Center at Northwestern School of Law, [www.law.northwestern.edu/cfjc](http://www.law.northwestern.edu/cfjc) (all websites last visited May 14, 2004).

**Recommendation Seven:** Law Schools should support loan forgiveness initiatives to assist attorneys who want to pursue a career in representing children.

**Commentary:** The high cost of a legal education was identified as a fundamental problem whose consequences are profound. The Group considered that the cost of a legal education necessarily made it impossible for many students to pursue a career working in the public interest. The Group agreed that most if not all avenues for legal work with children are with public interest or governmental agencies. The Group observed that the majority of students in law school must borrow substantial amounts of money to pay for tuition and living expenses. The large sums borrowed require monthly payments after graduations that, in many cases, rival a residential mortgage payment. In order to ensure a stream of consistently high achieving, inspired and qualified attorneys, the Group concluded that law schools must collaborate with legal service providers and the public interest community to provide a means to relieve the financial burden borne by a majority of graduating law students. Some examples of existing models include school-sponsored fellowships with public interest organizations, loan forgiveness in exchange for a specific number of years with a public interest organization and stipends for new graduates who are placed in a public interest setting.

**Recommendation Eight:** Juvenile defender and civil legal services shall provide and/or promote opportunities for education and training to legislators, policy makers, prosecutors, judges, and the private bar in adolescent brain development, immigration consequences, collateral consequences, evidence-based practices and other areas that will expressly promote just outcomes for children.

The participants discussed the ways in which individuals and groups who are hostile to our clients can be made to explore their views about youth involved in these systems. In addition to being present “at the table” as discussed in Recommendation One, it was decided that it is incumbent upon juvenile defender and civil legal service agencies to encourage training for other members of the system. That training and education can occur in any number of ways: making ourselves available to go to their training events and make presentations, inviting them to our training events, or creating training events specifically for these populations. “Teachable moments” can also occur in everyday conversations in meetings or in the hallways.