Executive Director’s Message

Thanks to you, vulnerable children know that they matter and that in times of crisis, LFC is by their side.

In over 30 years of fighting for children’s rights, I have never experienced a time when our nation’s children have faced the level of threat to their safety that they experience today. Nowhere is this more apparent than in our fight to stop the Administration’s unconscionable separation of children from their families at the border.

Whether due to increased barriers to asylum, diminished funding for safety net programs, or blurred protections for LGBT youth, the children we serve are suffering. Because of your support, we have mobilized to resist these attacks on our nation’s children through a unique combination of direct client representation, impact litigation, and public policy advocacy.

For a child, one moment can feel like an eternity. In times of frightening uncertainty, children are counting on us and the power of the law to protect them.

No matter the circumstances, our young clients know they can rely on us to listen to them, to stand up for them, and to ensure that they are safe and supported.

Thank you for being part of our LFC family and for helping us protect the rights and change the lives of vulnerable children.

With gratitude,
Karen J. Freedman, Esq.

In Hostile Times, Standing Up for Immigrant Children

In response to unprecedented threats to immigrant children, LFC is vigorously fighting on several fronts to defend the rights of our clients and for immigrant children across the country.

Stopping Separation at the Border

Over the last several months we witnessed the cruel and unimaginable—children, including infants, being torn from their parents at our border. All told, the Trump Administration’s zero-tolerance policy separated nearly 3,000 children, hundreds of whom were bused from Texas all the way to New York City.

Months before the policy ramped up and garnered media attention, LFC joined a federal lawsuit through an amicus brief that would ultimately force the government to reunify families. In its decision, the Court cited our brief to convey the tremendous harm the policy has on children, explaining, “Traumatic separation from parents creates toxic stress...
Foster Care to Prison Pipeline: Teen Vogue Features LFC

Advocating for young people means shining a light on the chronic injustices our clients face. LFC was featured in Teen Vogue as part of their national series, “Fostered or Forgotten,” on how youth in foster care can become unnecessarily involved in the justice system. LFC’s client, Randy, and Youth Advocate Coordinator, Jarel Melendez, talked about how the foster care system’s default is too often to report youth to the police for minor conflicts, entangling them in the justice system. You can read Randy’s story at www.lawyersforchildren.org.

In Appreciation

This summer, LFC bid a fond farewell to our Director of Administration, Barbara Siwula, who retired after 28 years of unwavering service to LFC. Barbara joined Lawyers For Children when there were just 8 staff members and she was critical in helping LFC transform into an organization almost 10 times that size, serving close to 3,000 children a year. Barbara says the best part of her time at LFC has been working with “fierce, energetic and compassionate problem solvers.” Thank you, Barbara!

American Bar Association Honors LFC

The American Bar Association’s Section of Litigation honored Executive Director Karen Freedman with the John Minor Wisdom Public Service & Professionalism Award. This prestigious award acknowledges Lawyers for Children for expanding access to justice. Karen’s award nominator, LFC Board Member Alan M. Klein, commented, “This honor recognizes that there are few callings more vital and noble in our profession than the need to advocate for our society’s most defenseless.”

Know Your Rights Pocket Guide

As immigration agents continue to make arrests in courts and throughout the city, we have developed an immigration pocket guide to prepare our clients for unexpected interactions with immigration enforcement and to help them invoke their rights. Many thanks to Bloomberg LLP for partnering to help translate and print a Spanish version of the guide.

Securing Legal Status for Undocumented Youth

About 500,000 New Yorkers, including many children, are undocumented. LFC’s Immigration Rights Project is working around the clock to directly support undocumented clients and navigate shifting policies that threaten years of expertise. As immigration agents continue to make arrests in courts and throughout the city, we have developed an immigration pocket guide to prepare our clients for unexpected interactions with immigration enforcement and to help them invoke their rights. Many thanks to Bloomberg LLP for partnering to help translate and print a Spanish version of the guide.

Achieving the “Unfathomable”

When Rajiv was 15, he was placed into foster care so he could be safe from his abusive father. Despite challenges, school was a grounding force. But like many children in foster care, his educational needs were neglected as he cycled through foster homes and agency caseworkers.

Rajiv recalls how this stress took a toll: “None of my foster parents took the time to attend parent-teacher conferences, never picked up calls from school, and didn’t allow me to stay home to study when they weren’t home. On weekends, finding a place to do homework meant a 40-minute bus ride to the few libraries that were open.” Soon Rajiv was failing exams and thinking about dropping out.

Things turned a corner when Rajiv’s LFC social worker and attorney took on his case. They made sure he was in a home close to school, with internet access so he could get his homework done. When Rajiv sought tutoring, they went to court to compel his agency to provide it along with other resources he desperately needed. With LFC’s advocacy and consistent academic support, Rajiv graduated with an A-minus average.

This fall Rajiv will be heading to Georgetown University, “something I could not have even fathomed just a few years ago,” he says. There, Rajiv plans to pursue his interest in politics and advocate for greater access to education.

Congratulations, Rajiv!


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LFC Welcomes 2018 Summer Interns

Each summer, LFC offers intensive internships to outstanding law and college students. These students gain an understanding of the child welfare system and the vital role that our lawyer and social work teams play in advocating for children in foster care. We are proud of the broad range of experiences that our extraordinary interns bring to their work at LFC, and we thank them for sharing their many talents & hard work with us and with the children we represent.

Legal Interns
Winter Desmarais
Pace Law School
Vilma Ilic
Brooklyn Law School
Juliana Moraes Liu
Yale Law School
Danielle Makarsky
Yale Law School
Kathlyn Salazar
New York Law School

Yong Ho (Allen) Song
Harvard Law School
Margaret Sun
New York University
School of Law
Rachel Welt
New York Law School

Social Work Interns
Anyamobi Ananaba
Columbia University
Madeleine Gilson
Princeton University
Jennifer Rose Goodman
Emory University
Sarah Jacobs
Wesleyan University
Anna Kallmeyer
Blumenthal Intern
Cornell University

Alexandra Prendergast
Wesleyan University
Maya Silverberg
Columbia University
Laura Trahms
City College of New York
Katrina Weinert
University of Chicago

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Facebook: facebook.com/Lawyersforchildren
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