Who We Are
Transforming Young Lives
by CHILDREN’S RIGHTS
Who We Are
Transforming Young Lives
Protecting Them, Providing Hope

Children’s Rights exists because there are kids living in dangerous conditions, languishing in institutions, being torn from their siblings, and shuffling from home to home to home. For more than 20 years Children’s Rights has used the power of the law to hold governments accountable and defend thousands of these children.

As a result, kids are safer.

They get the education and healthcare they need. They safely reunite with their families. They are welcomed into loving adoptive homes more quickly. They have bright futures — and dreams to match.
Areas of Expertise

Juvenile Justice

Too often, incarcerated youth are treated inhumanely. Children’s Rights is fighting on multiple fronts to change that. In addition to filing a lawsuit to protect kids in a detention center in Iowa, Children’s Rights is challenging oppressive juvenile sex-offender registration laws. And our testimony before the NYC Board of Correction brings needed attention to the harmful psychological impact of solitary confinement and physical restraints on young prisoners at Riker’s Island.
Child Sex Trafficking

Sex traffickers target children in foster care and group homes. They are more vulnerable to exploitation because of the trauma they have experienced and the lack of a permanent, stable home. A shocking 60% of domestic child sex trafficking victims come from foster care and group homes. Children’s Rights is building a strategic advocacy campaign to build awareness and put a stop to this travesty.
Areas of Expertise

Immigrant Children

Children’s Rights is proud to partner with the ACLU and a determined coalition of state attorneys general to take legal action against the government’s inhumane practice of child separation and detention. Children’s Rights is also launching a program to rapidly train lawyer volunteers and substantially increase direct legal representation for separated and unaccompanied children. With a lawyer, these kids can be protected from brutal violence in their home countries and have a real shot at staying in the United States to pursue a better life.

LGBTQ Youth

Throughout the United States, LGBTQ youth lack legal protections. Children’s Rights co-authored a groundbreaking report exposing these injustices and launched a six-state campaign that is advocating for laws and policies that protect their rights.
Lee Gelernt

“Children’s Rights has played a vital role in supporting our federal lawsuit on behalf of the thousands of immigrant children separated from their parents at the border. They took the lead in filing an amicus brief that added real heft to our claim by spelling out in stark terms that the administration is terrorizing these little children and creating irreparable harm to them. And although the fight to protect them goes on, together we’ve won some significant battles.”

— Lee Gelernt
Deputy Director,
ACLU Immigrants’ Rights Project
Areas of Expertise

Right to Counsel

Thanks to a precedent-setting decision in a lawsuit brought by Children’s Rights, kids in Georgia who appear in foster care court now have a lawyer by their side. And we’re fighting to see to it that kids nationwide have the same right to effective legal counsel. Kids don’t belong in court alone.
Access to Education

Kids need good educations to thrive. There is no debate. In systems around the country, children in group care facilities are frequently subjected to deficient on-premise schools. They are mixed with kids of different ages. They aren’t given instruction. They don’t get school credit for their work. Children’s Rights is investigating these conditions to ensure they don’t persist.

Healthy Kids Initiative

Kids in state care are at serious risk as Medicaid funding faces potential cuts. But the health of children is infinitely more important than any bureaucratic or political decision. Children’s Rights has launched a legal and advocacy campaign to ensure that these kids receive the screening, diagnostic, and treatment services they need to live healthy lives.
A landmark Tennessee case introduced by Children’s Rights has brought about the wholesale overhaul of that state’s child welfare system. The reform is now seen as a model for the nation. A federal judge has ruled that the State’s tremendous progress on 140 child welfare benchmarks has qualified it to exit from federal court oversight. Before the lawsuit, 35 percent of children were placed far from their families and were routinely warehoused in emergency shelters for upwards of six months at a time. Now 86 percent of children are placed close to home, and the use of emergency shelters has ended.
“At the time Children’s Rights filed the suit, Tennessee needed a wake-up call. We’ve got to be honest: we didn’t have a system here in 2000. I mean, we deserved to get a lawsuit. The fact is, we’re a much better system now. We’re better off for it, the kids are better off and I think the taxpayers are better off.”

— Jim Henry
Former Commissioner, Tennessee Department of Children’s Services
Our Scope and Reach

Setting the Stage for Reform

Texas

Thanks to Children’s Rights and our local partners, a federal judge in Texas issued a landmark decision stating that the foster care system is broken. She found that in dangerous, poorly supervised group homes “rape, abuse, psychotropic medications, and instability are the norm” and that children “almost uniformly leave state custody more damaged than when they entered.” Children’s Rights remains on the frontlines here to protect the 12,000 children in the state’s system.

Protecting Kids in Detention

Iowa

There are young boys in a juvenile justice facility in Iowa facing severe mental health challenges brought on by trauma. They need therapeutic care to live healthier lives. The state refuses to give it to them and instead controls their behavior with powerful drugs, physical constraints, and prolonged solitary confinement. Children’s Rights has filed a class action lawsuit to stop these inhumane practices and help these boys get the care they need.
Ending Medication Misuse

**Missouri**

Thousands of children in Missouri’s state care are given dangerous psychotropic drugs without proper oversight. Others aren’t provided with the appropriate trauma-informed mental healthcare that they critically need. Children’s Rights has brought a first-of-its kind lawsuit against the state to fight for these kids.

Demanding Safer Placements

**Michigan**

A court settlement in Michigan mandated improvements to critical areas of the state’s foster care system. Ongoing efforts by Children’s Rights and the court-appointed monitor have succeeded in bringing about substantial reforms, specifically improvements in helping youth transition into adulthood and managing child welfare workers’ caseloads. But there remain serious ongoing safety concerns for children, from mishandled reports of maltreatment to improperly licensed homes. Children’s Rights will continue to demand that the state make the safety of kids a priority and make all necessary improvements to protect them.
Our Scope and Reach

Keeping Kids with Families

Connecticut

After Children’s Rights successfully sued the state, the latest court monitor’s report on Connecticut’s ongoing efforts to improve its child welfare system show continuing and steady progress toward protecting at-risk children under the state’s care. The state has dramatically reduced the number of children in foster care placed in non-family group and institutional homes, from 25 percent to less than 10 percent. At the same time, the state has safely lowered the number of children put into foster care in the first place, allowing them to remain safely at home.

Ensuring Every Kid Has a Lawyer

Georgia

Children’s Rights reached a historic settlement with Georgia outlining a set of goals that will dramatically improve the lives of kids in its child welfare system. As a result of our case, all abused and neglected children in Atlanta are guaranteed the right to an attorney in child welfare proceedings. The state also agreed to provide more timely investigation of maltreatment of children in foster care and ensure that child welfare workers meet regularly and privately with the children in their care.
Angela Vigil

“I’ve been a children’s rights lawyer for over 20 years, but the outrage I feel as a witness to the abuse and neglect of innocent children never goes away. At Baker & McKenzie our focus is on making an impact on children’s lives that is measurable and sustainable. Our partnership with Children’s Rights has been rich and rewarding. We share the same values – superior legal talent, a passion for collaboration and a commitment to systemic change.”

— Angela Vigil
Partner and Executive Director,
Pro Bono Practice
Baker & McKenzie LLP
They need us as never before.

For over 20 years, Children’s Rights has delivered real improvements to the lives of thousands of children. But every day we see new and troubling evidence that the attack on children in America has not abated: immigrant children in cages; poor kids denied access to healthcare; juveniles in detention given dangerous medications; LGBTQ youth bullied and abused; and a national opioid crisis breaking more families apart.

That is why Children’s Rights has expanded our capacity to reach even more vulnerable children whose health, safety, and well-being are threatened in these perilous times.
Every day, children are harmed by America’s broken child welfare, juvenile justice, education, and healthcare systems. Through relentless strategic advocacy and legal action, we hold governments accountable for keeping kids safe and healthy. Children’s Rights has made a lasting impact, protecting hundreds of thousands of vulnerable children and we are poised to help millions more.

They are depending on us... and you.

ChildrensRights.org

facebook.com/ChildrensRights

@ChildrensRights

@ChildrensRights