



May is National Foster Care Month... You Can Change a Lifetime!

May is National Foster Care Month. At Advokids, we are not celebrating foster care in and of itself. We are celebrating the many wonderful, loving, nurturing caregivers, and the dedicated attorneys, social workers, mental health professionals and community members serving our children in foster care.

Advokids is committed to holding the foster care system accountable for meeting the needs of foster children. Advokids also advocates for timely permanency for children who cannot be safely returned to their parents. Part of our mission is to teach anyone concerned about the well-being of a child in foster care how to advocate for the child, how to hold the system accountable for the well-being of that child, and how to establish permanency for those children who cannot be reunified with their birth families.

Our free telephone hotline receives calls from caregivers, relatives, attorneys, therapists, child welfare workers, CASA volunteers, and people in the community who are concerned about the impact of a systemic decision on the well-being of a child in their care. In the past 15 months, Advokids' hotline has served over 350 foster children, a 40% increase over 2009. In celebration of National Foster Care Month, this newsletter contains a few of the many letters and emails we have received from people who were able to successfully advocate for a foster child with a little help from Advokids. As you can see, foster parents and other caregivers can be powerful advocates for the children in their care. Advokids salutes these wonderful people and all other caring professionals who go that extra mile for a foster child.

Advokids' Commitment to Stability and Security for Our Children In Foster Care

(A letter from a telephone hotline client)



When we called Advokids we had been told our one-year old foster daughter, whom we'd had since birth, was going to be removed the next morning. We had no time and no idea how to stop this move and prevent the trauma it would create for our daughter. We knew she was going to be reunified with her birthmother in 6 weeks' time, but we felt moving her from our home to her cousin's home, for only 6 weeks and then have to move again to her birthmother's home was not in her best interest. Shuffling children around from home to home creates a multitude of problems and it wasn't necessary. We wanted to fight for her stability, but didn't know how. Advokids' advice and recommendations were indispensable and we were able to stop the move thanks to Advokids! We now feel peace knowing we provided a stable, loving home for our daughter in the time we had her and that she didn't become a victim of the system because no one stood up for her rights. We want to thank all of the folks who work for Advokids. You are making a difference for children that have no voice.

Charlotte and Brian

Advokids adds "Accountability" tab to website

The best outcomes for foster children occur when everyone involved in the child's care and supervision works together using all of the tools available to them.

Too often problems in a foster child's case are not identified and communicated effectively to the Juvenile Court or the responsible agencies. Everyone involved should know how to use the legal tools and reporting tools available to them in order to effectively bring to light issues that must be addressed in order to assure the safety, security and success of every child in foster care.

Advokids is about making the child welfare system and the adults in it accountable to the children they serve and to the people of California. Accountability is the key to our foster children's safety and security!

To read more visit:

www.advokids.org

and click on "Accountability"

Adopting From Foster Care... A Personal Story

(A letter from a telephone hotline client in the process of adopting her 2 year old foster son)



Dear Advokids- I wanted to update you on my foster son's case, because you have been a tremendous help to me each and every time I have contacted you during these last few months of his 25 month case. David has been with us since birth and his biological parents have had sporadic contact over the past 2 years. We are finally moving towards adoption.

My husband and I have established a nice relationship with the biological dad and his family. I am very proud of the man he has become. He will continue to be a part of his son's life as long as he continues to remain appropriate, clean and sober. We plan to all sit down and talk about how our relationship will go on from here in the best interest of David. We are thankful that we all genuinely like each other, which is good for David...

As I reflect over the last 2 years of sitting in court hearings, I can see the strong need for child advocates. Our littlest ones, with no voice of their own, need adults to speak for them on their behalf. I wish I could take your CASA classes but our 8+hour driving distance from one another makes that nearly impossible for me right now.

Thank you for helping me navigate the unfamiliar territory of court proceedings. I truly believe that becoming De Facto parents helped us to become another voice on behalf of our foster son. At first I was concerned about how the biological dad would feel about it, but the biological dad saw it as an advocate voice for his son and that is what he wanted and his son needed.

I will update you again when the case closes. You will also receive our joyful news along with photos when the adoption is made final.

From a grateful foster mom to a son who is loved beyond measure,
Tracy

Returning Home & Protecting Relationships

(A Letter from a telephone hotline client)



I am not sure if you will remember my case but you were a great help for me with my foster son Nate a few years back. I feel because of the advice you gave me, I was greatly able to manage his situation for the best. Instead of being torn quickly from my home to return to his biological dad with whom he had very little contact in the past, the court allowed transition visits. It was a much more humane plan. He has reunified with his family but I am happy to say we are still in touch and the family seems to be doing quite well. They moved to Oregon. I speak with him on the phone occasionally and get to send him lots of love and presents. It would not have happened that way without your guidance.

Lory

****Advokids' hotline information and legal trainings encourage the adults involved in our foster children's lives to understand the loss and grieving that ensue when children are moved. We advocate for gradual, sensitive "transition plans" when we move children from a foster home to new foster homes, to a relative's home or to a home with biological parents.**



Thank you!

A big thank you to all of our supporters for their generous donations in 2010/2011. Advokids can't help the kids without you!

SAVE THE DATE... MARCH 10TH 2012--CASINO NIGHT!!!

CASA Volunteer Gives Praise to Advokids

"I just wanted to offer many, many thanks to your program for your help on my case. With your assistance, I was able to find a resolution that will protect the young foster child that I work with as a **Court Appointed Special Advocate**. You guys are awesome! Thank you!!!"

Advokids' Legal Trainings

****"Great presentation, very informative. I liked the "real life" stories too." (Attorney- training attendee)**

*****"Our foster child's permanency hearing was in nine days. The legal information we received at the training was priceless" (Foster to adopt parent- training attendee)**

*****"The course was a wealth of legal information - I know I will be using the handout as reference in the future." (CASA Volunteer- training attendee)**

Giving Child Welfare Professionals the Legal Tools!

(See all Advokids training curriculum on our website.)

Grandmother Sends Her Thanks

(A Letter from a telephone hotline client)

I stumbled upon Advokids in a desperate attempt to find any help I could, when I found myself caught up in the child welfare system. We had temporary custody of our granddaughter and with each court date we were more confused than ever. We had no idea what to expect and what was next. I called Advokids and I was so surprised when I was put through to a real lawyer, immediately. The Advokids' Hotline Attorney took the time to listen to me and to help me understand what was happening and what would most likely occur next. She was incredibly patient and ever so kind. Of course I was anxious and she helped me to understand the process and my anxiety was immediately relieved. I was then put in touch with Lucy, Advokids' wonderful social worker who further helped me with the social issues I was facing with my family and with others. What was also so amazing is they called me a few weeks later to follow up regarding what was happening and to help answer any questions I had. Thank you so much for your kindness and graciousness towards me. I will never forget you and I intend on supporting your efforts as I am able. You are so needed for all of us who have no where to turn. Thank you so very much for caring about the children."

*Very truly yours,
Pam*

A Message From Our President "Paying It Forward"

Calls to our telephone hotline have increased exponentially over the past few years. A number of our hotline callers have shown their appreciation for the assistance they received by sending donations to Advokids. These generous people are "paying it forward"--helping to ensure that the assistance they received remains available for those who call in the future. You too can help ensure that the hotline and the website continue to be available to everyone who is concerned about the welfare of a foster child by making a donation to Advokids now. Information on how to donate is below. Every little bit helps. Thank you for helping to keep these services free and available to everyone who calls us for help and information.

Sincerely,
Jan Sherwood
Advokids Board President

DONATE TO ADVOKIDS



Advokids needs your donations to sustain our services and programs. Our annual fundraiser and sponsorships cover ONLY 25% of our annual expenses. Please give now to change a lifetime.

Advokids' Programs

-  Telephone Hotline
-  Educational Website
-  Legal Education & Seminars

You may send a check, or call us at 415.924.0587 (toll free at 1.877.ADV4KID).
We'll be happy to process a credit card payment over the phone.



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