

ANNUAL REPORT 2022



Children's
Legal Services
of San Diego



**FAMILY
SAFETY
STABILITY**

WWW.CLSSANDIEGO.ORG

COMPANY PROFILE

OUR MISSION & VALUES

OUR MISSION

Children's Legal Services of San Diego protects and defends the rights of children and youth in the child welfare system through high-quality and compassionate legal representation.

CLSSD is a non-profit, interdisciplinary organization that consists of four law firms, which are court-appointed to represent both minors and non-minor dependents in Juvenile Dependency Court within and out San Diego County.

OUR VALUES

- **Client Centered** - We value and actively listen to the voices of our clients and represent their unique, holistic needs.
- **Zealous** - We are courageous leaders in our advocacy for the protection of each child's right to safety, stability and well-being.
- **Collaborative** - We work as a team through meaningful dialogues and formalized partnerships, internally and externally, to achieve positive outcomes.
- **Compassionate** - We provide culturally competent services and strive to achieve social justice and dignity for the most vulnerable.
- **Excellence** - We exhibit quality legal representation by ensuring our staff are highly trained and practice with dedication and commitment.
- **Trustworthy** - We gain the trust of our clients, partners and peers by consistently exhibiting knowledge and integrity.



OUR TEAM

ATTORNEYS, INVESTIGATORS, ADMINISTRATIVE



Our team is comprised of 40 intelligent, generous, hard-working people who are committed to improving the lives of the clients we serve. We are committed to advocating for our clients' wishes to maintain their family, community and culture.

STAFF

Jeanette Aldana-Perry
Jo-Ellen Alicie
Carolyn Barbadoro
Marianne Barongan
James Blackburn
Lauren Calton
Charlene Campbell
Kammarie Clark
Maria Diaz
Ayana Faison

Cesar Flores
Kelley Fleming
Delanie Freiberg
Kristin Garrett Montgomery
Amanda Gonzales
Carolyn Griesemer
Lisa Haight
Lourdez Jimenez
Joelle Lackey
Carol Leon

Erin Lininger
Mike Long
Julie Luke
Nicole McConn
Susan McPhee
Stephanie Mercado
Angelika Oliver
Angel Perez
Liza Pinard
Beth Ploesch

Karen Prosek
Silvia Romero
Sharaye Samuels
Justin Shagrin
Sarah Snyder
Sharna Vigil
Steve Wedel
Luke Wiley
Jenna Yutsus
Caitlin Zaback

OUR CULTURE

DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION (DEI)

CLS's staff and management team has prioritized and addressed Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) as an organization through an active and robust CLS DEI Committee. Over the past two years, the committee has focused on education, training and enhancing internal practices. Thanks to this work we have sharpened our DEI focus into our human resources practices, including recruitment, onboarding, and performance evaluations.

In 2022, our committee's training focus was LGBTQIA+. Our CLS staff was trained on the history of LGBTQIA+, bias reduction and how to work effectively with LGBTQIA+ youth. An impactful highlight was when one of our clients shared his experience in the dependency system as a transgender foster youth with our staff members. This client and his attorney were subsequently invited by the Judicial Council of California to address the issue of racial disparities in the Juvenile Dependency System.

Youth lived experiences are powerful catalysts in the child welfare system. Our client's message is one of inclusion and compassion. He calls upon us to be better and do better with the simple act of listening. ***"Ask them how they are doing. Listen. Let the youth have more speaking opportunities to tell you what they need. They gave me speaking opportunities. I got to speak my mind."*** Because he had the courage to speak his authentic truth, the court granted his requests for court orders surrounding his identity, medical care and visitation with his mom. He was authorized to undergo hormone replacement therapy and was granted an order to change his gender markers and request a new birth certificate. He launched into attending college as he participates in Extended Foster Care and will one day be an extraordinary filmmaker. He shared, ***"I feel free"*** and that he has **never felt happier.**



LEGISLATIVE HIGHLIGHT

AB 1735 (Bryan): CLS cosponsored with Children's Law Center of California. Ensures dependent youth receive translations of dependency documents in the youth's preferred language. Signed into law, September 18, 2022.

OUR ADVOCACY

CLIENT-CENTERED, COMPASSIONATE, ZEALOUS

Our attorneys and investigators provided direct representation and assessed the best interests for nearly **4,000** children this year. By conducting trials, attending Child and Family Team meetings, and visiting our clients in placements, CLS elevated our clients positions.

Our highly skilled attorneys, investigators and support staff advocate for:



Family reunification



Physical health



Mental health



Education

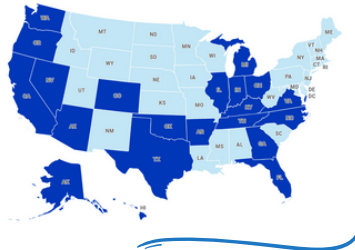


Permanence



Self-sufficiency

Throughout the year, our clients are visited by our team of investigators or attorneys at their placement which includes travelling all over the United States. We go the extra mile when our clients are placed out of state to ensure they are safe and connected to the court process, wherever they are.



25 states

98 clients

- Our staff attended **564** Child and Family Team meetings
- Over the past 6 years, our team has helped nearly 7,000 children achieve permanency through reunification, guardianship and adoption.



2022 IMPACT SNAPSHOT

596

children reunified with their parents and found permanency in going home

361

children were adopted into loving families

111

children achieved permanency through appointment of guardianship

PRACTICE IMPROVEMENTS & COMMUNITY COLLABORATION



At CLS we are fortunate to have a staff that seeks to continually learn and improve the quality of our services. In addition to our monthly trainings for attorneys and investigators, we continued to bring in national trainers to ensure we are striving for best practices for the sake of our clients. Some highlights included:

- CLS hosted Cristina Freitas and Debbie Freitas from Massachusetts presenting on: *"Centering Client Voice and Experience to Access Racial Justice."*
- CLS was privileged to again host the National Institute for Trial Advocacy for an intensive child welfare advocacy trial skills training program for our lawyers.
- CLS participated in the 45th annual National Association of Counsel for Children Conference in Baltimore, MD, *Bridging Theory to Practice: Learning and Unlearning to Drive Effective Advocacy.*

CLS also was busy this year sharing our experience and expertise with other professionals. CLS staff members presented at various state-wide trainings such as:

- *"Providing Client Centered & Trauma Informed Representation for Children & Youth in Dependency Proceedings"* for the Riverside County Bar Association Juvenile Law Section.
- University of San Diego School of Law's Children's Advocacy Institute – *The Pursuit of Permanency: The First 90 Days.*
- *Foster Care Bill of Rights* for the Judicial Council of California.
- CLS provided the legal content for a training video for Voices for Children's Advocate University which trains Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) throughout the county.

CAREERS IN DEPENDENCY

CLS is dedicated to inspiring and training future dependency workers.

✓ POST-BAR CLERKSHIPS

✓ INTERNSHIPS

**INTERESTED IN A CAREER IN CHILD ADVOCACY?
LEARN MORE AT WWW.CLSSANDIEGO.ORG/INTERNSHIPS**



BOARD OF DIRECTORS



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Board President



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Morgan Shaw, Psy.D.



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John Edson, Esq.

FINANCIALS

2022 AT A GLANCE

TOTAL REVENUE IN THE PAST FISCAL YEAR:
\$4,008,000

ALLOCATIONS OF EXPENSES



SALARY & BENEFITS: **86%**

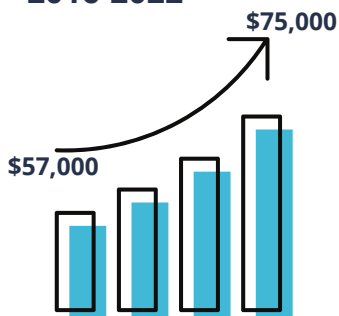
PROGRAM & OPERATING: **14%**

MAJOR INVESTMENT

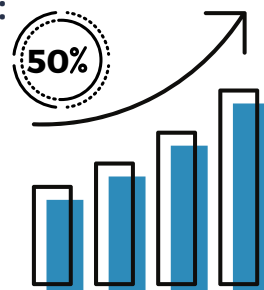
Since 2016, CLS has been dedicated to providing our committed team with a competitive salary.

While we recognize we have more work to do to keep pace with the rising costs of living in California, we are proud to showcase that over the past 6 years, we have consistently invested in our staff by increasing salaries.

Entry-level attorney salary increase from 2016-2022



On average mid-level attorney salaries increased from 2016-2022 by:



BEYOND THE COURTROOM

CLIENT NEEDS FUND

When foster children enter the system it's always unexpected, overwhelming and life changing. Thanks to generous donations from our supporters the Client Needs Fund is a critical resource to our clients who face unique or unforeseen challenges. The fund has provided birthday gifts, clothing, shoes, sports equipment, strollers and more. By supporting CLS, you can bring joy into the lives of children in the San Diego County foster care system.

CONNECTING TO CULTURE



Client MC told her legal team she wanted to feel more connected with her Nigerian culture. Through the Client Needs Fund we were able to grant MC a Nigerian flag to display in her room, a hoodie, map and Nigerian flag earrings.

CHEMO CARE KIT

KB was a 2 year old client diagnosed with leukemia and on chemotherapy treatments. CLS put together a chemo kit to help comfort her during appointments, bought Christmas presents and Target gift cards to help support the family during the difficult time.



"Please thank everyone from the bottom of my heart for helping to make KB's Christmas and birthday a little brighter this year. KB lit up with joy! It's been a hard year for us with KB's diagnosis, we are forever grateful and always felt the support from your office." - KB's caregiver

SUPPORT OUR CLIENT NEEDS FUND!



GIVE TODAY

OTHER WAYS YOU CAN SUPPORT YOUTH IN FOSTER CARE



- Shop for culturally relevant and foster care related books for our clients from our wish lists [CLS Book List](#).
- Follow CLS on [Facebook](#) and then follow organizations we follow to stay informed.
- Designate Children's Legal Services as your charity of choice on [AmazonSmile](#).
- Consider opening your home to a youth as a resource family. Visit www.sdcares4kids.com to find out more.
- Are you a lawyer who could represent a youth pro-bono? Advocate with us, join our [pro-bono panel](#).

QUESTIONS?
CONTACT US.



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info@clssandiego.org



www.clssandiego.org



4801 Viewridge Ave, San Diego



858-221-0404

**WE THANK YOU
FOR YOUR CONTINUED SUPPORT OF
OUR PROGRAMS**