Nick Murrieta entered the foster care system on Christmas day, 1991. He was just two years old. He had been taken from his mother after her boyfriend beat him so severely he ended up in the hospital. Murrieta, along with his twin brother and two older siblings, were placed with an uncle, where they lived for eight years. But the uncle developed a drug problem, making it impossible for him to continue caring for Nick and his three siblings. They were then sent to live with a family friend who became their legal guardian.

Murrieta went from a difficult childhood to a troubled adolescence. He was arrested for the first time at 13, after he pulled a knife on his twin brother. In high school, he spent four weeks in jail for gang-related fighting, and then another month and a half for causing more than $1,000 worth of damage to a car. Murrieta began drinking heavily. Alcohol eventually led to drugs like “ecstasy,” and, finally, “crystal meth,” Murrieta said. In July 2005, he ended up at Walden House, a residential alcohol and drug treatment center in San Francisco, CA. He spent 13 months there.

“I didn’t trust too many people... I was teaching myself everything,” says Murrieta, now 18. “And I learned the hard way.”

Now a part-time employee at VOICES (Voice our Independent Choices for Emancipation Support), Murrieta – described by his co-workers as focused, and a “total ham” – is using his hard learned lessons to help his peers.

“Right now I am just trying to be a role model,” he says.

(Continued on page 3)
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NCYL provides support services to child advocates nationwide and direct representation in cases of significant impact. It offers training and publications in substantive areas of law affecting poor children and adolescents. NCYL is funded by private foundations, individual contributions, and the California Legal Services Trust Fund Program.

Assistance in a variety of specialized areas of youth law can be obtained from the Center by calling or writing.

With the exception of the lead story, “VOICES,” all photographs that appear in this issue of Youth Law News were produced independently of articles and bear no relationship to cases or incidents discussed therein.
VOICES: A Model of Support for and by Youth Aging Out of Foster Care

By Caitlin Krutsinger (Continued from page 1)

As his 18th birthday approached, and it came time to exit the foster care system, Nick Murrieta told his case manager, “Take me to VOICES.”

VOICES

Viewed by many youth advocates as a national model of collaboration and youth empowerment when it opened in November 2005, VOICES is so far living up to its image. It’s the nation’s only foster youth-run support center, providing youth “aging out” of the foster care system with “family support,” as well as the practical tools they need to live independently - housing, education, healthcare, employment, and parenting skills.

When Murrieta left Walden House in 2006 at age 17, he was placed for the first time with a foster family and without his siblings. He had heard about VOICES through friends, and began visiting the center. VOICES helped Murrieta with little things, like creating a budget and a resume, and looking for a job. Most of all though, he said, VOICES was “a place to get away,” a place that he trusted.

Confronting the Problem: Collaborating with the System

Child welfare advocates cite the lack of collaboration between county services and private support organizations as a major obstacle to getting youth the services they need. VOICES attempts to confront this problem head on by bringing together under one roof a group of 20 national and community support agencies, including Planned Parenthood, Catholic Charities, and the Napa County Probation Department. This collaborative effort allows the center to serve as a one-stop resource, where youth connect with agencies and programs that can help them.

“We guide them through it instead of leaving them to do it on their own... We bring it all together,” Murrieta says.

California has the largest foster care population in the nation, with about 80,000 youth in care. Every year, more than 4,000 of those youth leave foster care at age 18. Nearly one-third are homeless within a year after leaving the foster care system, and more than 40 percent are unemployed within two to four years of emancipation. Both male and female former foster youth are 10 times more likely to be arrested at some point than youth of the same age, race and sex.

Napa County has about 118 children in foster care, with 25 exiting the system every year. The foster care system is “a complete abysmal failure” in terms of youth realizing their potential and

becoming independent adults, says Dan Corsello, former director of the Napa County Department of Health and Human Services, and a grant consultant to the Gasser Foundation. Corsello was instrumental in getting the center off the ground, and the Gasser Foundation provided the funding.

Corsello says he and other county officials knew that the system was failing to help foster youth transition out of care and that something needed to be done about it. Corsello helped develop the model for VOICES, and Gasser provided more than $100,000 a year for three years as a start-up grant.

Corsello sees VOICES as representing a significant step towards reform. He says the center is doing “wonderful things” within the county system of services.

Staff members from agencies such as Napa County office of Education, Napa Health and Human Services child welfare division, and Medi-Cal are paid by their organizations to work in the VOICES office part-time — anywhere from two hours per month to 30 hours per week. This keeps youth from having to look in multiple places for needed information and care, and allows VOICES to consolidate efforts.

Systems such as county welfare and probation refer youth to VOICES, confident in the center’s ability to help. Reciprocally, VOICES refers youth to county programs for which they qualify or organizations which can best serve their individual needs.

“We would be dead in the water without them,” says Mitch Findley, 20, assistant director and co-founder of VOICES, referring to the center’s relationship with the county. In addition to referrals, VOICES recruits youth by visiting skateboard parks and other youth hangouts, making school presentations, and generating “a little buzz around town,” Findley says.

One-Stop Shopping
VOICES, which opened in November 2005, aims to serve every youth who seeks its help. So far, they have been successful. The center has served 180 current and former foster youth, probation youth, and group home youth ages 16-24 in Napa County. The center employs seven full- and part-time employees who are former foster youth. Each staff member is paired with one of five adult staff members who help them develop skills like public speaking, fundraising, and management.

VOICES provides six intensive life skills training and support programs, such as SOURCES, a job-finding program, and PLACES, a housing program (See chart this page). SOURCES has placed 50 youth in jobs — and 30 of them now earn a living wage.

Before VOICES, “I had never met another youth in foster care,” said Mitch Findley, assistant director and co-founder of VOICES. “It was cool to be able to connect with someone who had been through what I had been through.”
VOICES brings together under one roof more than 20 national and community support agencies, allowing the center to serve as a one-stop resource where youth connect with agencies and programs that can help them.

Top right photo: Mitch Findley and Sigfredo E. Martinez-Cabrera

Bottom right photo
Sigfredo E. Martinez-Cabrera and Alissa Gentille

Top, center, and bottom left photos: The VOICES office

Photos by Caitlin Krutsinger
PLACES is funded predominantly by California’s THP Plus (Transitional Housing Placement Plus) - a housing program administered by the Department of Social Services to help foster youth achieve stable housing, living wage employment, and higher education.\(^4\) PLACES participants have access to food aid, a living and moving expense loan, and monthly subsidies in amounts up to 80 percent of their total rent. The youth develop a post-program independent living plan, meet individually with a life skills coach, receive mental health services, money management training, and college, vocational and job placement counseling. Participants are responsible for an increasing amount of their rent and living expenses over the course of the two-year program. The VOICES housing program provides housing for eight youth, and the center has helped 30 other young people find stable housing.

The VOICES education program (CHOICES) has awarded 10 scholarships – from $1,000 to $4,000 – for youth to attend Napa Valley College, and will award up to 10 more in fall 2007. Assistant Director Findley, who was removed from his home three times during high school (twice placed with relatives and once with a foster family), works full-time at the center and is a scholarship recipient.

VOICES staff members help youth write resumes, apply for college financial aid, and provide bus passes for travel to and from work and school. The administrative heart of the center is the resource cabinet, with three drawers filled with DMV forms, health care information, college financial aid applications, Planned Parenthood brochures, and other forms and information.

**“Nothing About Us Without Us”**

Michele Byrnes, project manager of the John Burton Foundation for Children Without Homes – founded by John Burton, who has served as both a US Congressman and California State Senator, to help foster youth find housing and other support services – believes youth involvement is crucial to the success of VOICES and other similar organizations. “Nothing about us without us,” is the motto of many youth-run organizations cropping up across the country, she says. Byrnes calls the VOICES model impressive because it “is really youth run. They definitely walk the walk.”

VOICES youth leaders work with the media, conduct outreach and recruitment, train service providers how to better serve foster youth, and systematically collect feedback from VOICES members in order to improve the program.

Although state-funded programs, such as PLACES, have specific eligibility requirements, “there are other ways to serve youth,” says Alissa Gentille, 27, VOICES’ program director. If a youth does not qualify for a certain program, the center works to find him or her an alternative, serve as a resource, and most of all provide crucial social support. If youth demonstrate a commitment to helping themselves and supporting their peers, the center will assist them in any way it can, Gentille explains.

“That’s just who we are,” explains Mitch Findley.

**Fostering a Family**

Findley says that for many youth, VOICES is “a chosen family.”

Before VOICES, “I had never met another youth in foster care,” Findley says, “It was cool to be able to connect with someone who had been through what I had been through.”

If the youth involved with VOICES represent a family, then the “Make Your Mark Art Wall” is their refrigerator door, proudly displaying original song lyrics and poems, artwork, and a few photographs of smiling children snapped by their proud young parents. The wall, centrally located within the VOICES Napa office, showcases youth creativity, and adds to the feeling of familial support, which, for many, blood never quite provided.

All the spaces, desks, and computers in the office are communal. There is a pantry stocked by the local food bank, and a washer and dryer for all to share.

In less than two years, the center has built a support network of more than 20 funding organizations, consisting of foundations, government, and private donors.

Foster Youth:
Left Behind By The No Child Left Behind Act?

By Jesse Hahnel

The reauthorization of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) is in the midst of national discussion. It is the topic of presidential debates,1 the House Committee on Education and Labor has begun NCLB hearings,2 and numerous think tanks and policy groups have released recommendations for amending the Act and are lobbying for change.3 But lost in the clamor is a group of children who desperately need extra educational opportunities and support – youth in our nation’s foster care systems. They are not mentioned in the Act, nor are they addressed in any of the major proposed amendments.4 Their omission is little noticed.

But a few organizations, those specifically committed to improving the lives of youth in foster care, have proposed amendments to NCLB that focus on foster youth. These proposals require states to provide specific educational and supportive services to children in the care of the state.5 This article highlights and provides an overview of these proposed amendments, and suggests that these reforms, though necessary, do not go far enough. Congress should also facilitate reform by utilizing an additional approach: that of establishing goals and metrics by which improvement is measured, and then allowing local school administrators and others to decide the best means for achieving the desired ends.6

4 See Id.
5 Most of the proposed amendments also supply funding for these services.
Two existing Acts provide apt models for the different approaches to foster youth educational reform: the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (which contains specific requirements that states must follow) and the current NCLB (which establishes goals and allows states to choose the means to achieve them). Legislation embracing both approaches is necessary if we hope to improve the educational outcomes of foster youth.

I. The Need for Action

Perhaps more than any other group of children, foster youth depend on public education. The educational system provides positive role models for foster youth, the role models other children might find at home. It provides them a network of relationships other children receive through their extended family and family friends. It also provides the educational opportunities that foster children need to overcome their history of abuse, neglect, and separation.

Yet our nation’s systems of public education routinely and systemically fail foster youth. Youth in out-of-home care score significantly lower than the general student population on statewide standardized tests. A three-state Midwest study found that even those foster youth that have completed 10th or 11th grade read at only a 7th grade level. Compared to their peers,

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8 Mark E. Courtney et al., Chapin Hall Ctr. for Children at the Univ. of Chic., Midwest Evaluation of the Adult Functioning of Former Foster Youth: Conditions of Youth Preparing to Leave State Care 45 (2004), http://www.chapinhall.org/article_abstract.aspx?ar=1355.
foster youth are about half as likely to graduate from high school in five years, and significantly less likely to complete high school at all. And studies suggest that only 37 percent of the foster youth who graduate from high school go on to attend college, compared to 60 percent of all high school graduates. Hard data is difficult to find (this is part of the problem), but there is little doubt that as a group, foster care children are being left behind.

The Existing Proposals: Requiring Specific Educational Opportunities and Services

The existing proposals to amend NCLB to include foster youth can be placed into three broad categories: (1) amendments intended to increase the school stability and attendance of foster youth, (2) amendments requiring school districts to establish an educational “liaison” for foster youth, and (3) amendments aimed at increasing the supplemental educational services available to foster youth. These proposals derive directly from the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (McKinney-Vento Act). That Act, designed to address the educational needs of homeless children and youth, requires local school districts to provide specific services to homeless youth in order to receive McKinney-Vento Act funding.

Amendments Designed to Increase School Stability and Attendance

Studies routinely show that foster youth are much more likely than their peers to change schools, both during the school year and between school years. Studies also demonstrate that, in general, students who change schools are substantially less likely to graduate than their more stable peers. The decreased academic achievement associated with school change is at least partially caused by attendance loss. This problem is particularly acute for foster youth, whose school enrollment is often delayed for a variety of reasons, including failure to transfer immunization and academic records in a timely fashion.

Not surprisingly, a number of proposed amendments to NCLB are designed to increase school stability for foster youth and require schools to promptly enroll foster youth in school, despite missing records. Since the McKinney-Vento Act already provides homeless youth with these services, the proposed amendments to NCLB typically suggest that Congress extend these provisions of the McKinney-Vento Act to all foster children, with a commensurate increase in funding for the Act. Those McKinney-Vento provisions include permitting homeless children to continue attending their school of origin (the school in which they were last enrolled before becoming homeless) for the remainder of the academic year, even if they no longer reside in that school district, and even if they cease being homeless; requiring school districts to provide transportation to and from this school; and requiring school districts to enroll homeless children in schools immediately, even when they lack required paperwork, such as medical and educational records and proof of residency.

Amendments Establishing Educational Liaisons for Foster Youth

Studies show increased student academic achievement when districts have a “liaison” who coordinates school district efforts to support select students through identification, enrollment, and referrals for services and programs. Research suggests that foster youth especially would benefit from such liaisons as they frequently lack an advocate inside the educational system and often require coordination of a range of services spanning multiple governmental agencies.
Amendments That Provide Specific Support Services to Foster Youth

Finally, a number of suggested amendments focus on increasing specific support services to students in foster care. Because research suggests that the educational outcomes of students with multiple academic risk factors improve markedly when they are provided with stable adults and support structures in schools, some proposals would increase the number of guidance counselors serving foster youth. Because a high percentage of foster youth face mental health challenges, contributing to school-related behavioral problems, which in turn affect their academic achievement, some proposals suggest increasing the mental health services available to foster youth. The most common proposal, however, recommends granting foster youth immediate eligibility for the supplemental educational services available under NCLB, rather than granting such services only to those foster care students in schools that fail to meet established yearly goals, as is currently the law. These supplemental educational services include tutoring and other educational interventions aligned with the state’s content standards. Because the McKinney-Vento Act makes homeless youth eligible for such supplemental educational services regardless of the school the student attends, most such proposals again suggest amending the McKinney-Vento Act to cover all youth in foster care.

Each of the above proposed amendments – increasing school stability and facilitating enrollment, providing educational liaisons, and facilitating access to supplemental educational services -- are supported by research suggesting that such measures will increase the academic achievement of foster youth. But are they sufficient to ensure foster youth will obtain “a high-quality education and reach, at a minimum, proficiency on challenging state academic achievement standards and state academic assessments”? Unfortunately, these proposed amendments do not hold states accountable for actively raising the academic achievement of foster youth.

The next section suggests that in addition to the above amendments, a complementary approach should be employed, one holding states accountable for raising the academic achievement of youth in foster care while allowing states’ flexibility in choosing the means to do so.

Another Approach to Reform: Holding States Accountable for Student Achievement

The NCLB’s provisions work together to give states greater autonomy in exchange for increased accountability. The Act requires states to develop statewide academic content and standards and to adopt a set of “high-quality, yearly student academic assessments” for determining each student’s mastery of such standards. The assessment results must be disaggregated by each major racial and ethnic group, by English proficiency status, by students with disabilities as compared to non-disabled students, and by economically disadvantaged students as compared to students who are not economically disadvantaged. States must define Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) for the student body as a whole, and for each subgroup, with the goal of having every student demonstrate “proficiency” by 2014. The Act then provides two main mechanisms for holding schools accountable for student performance. The first is increased transparency: states are required to make public the performance of each subgroup, and to inform parents if their child’s school fails to make AYP. The second is “destabilization” – a series of increasingly severe improvements, corrective actions, or restructurings for schools failing to make AYP.

Unlike the provisions in the McKinney-Vento Act, the interventions required by the NCLB are not prescriptive in nature. Instead, they take the form of changes in school governance, characterized by replacement of school staff, decreased management authority at the school level, restructuring of the internal organizational structure of the school, state takeover, conversion to a charter, or school closure. These changes in governance do not guarantee school improvement, but this method of reform does empower those closest to the children to make decisions as to the means for raising achievement.
II. Making the NCLB Work for Foster Youth

Adding a flexible, goal-oriented component to foster youth education reform would complement the existing proposed amendments that set forth specific requirements for states. The additional reforms could be accomplished by adding foster youth as a subgroup to the existing NCLB legislation, while at the same time holding state educational institutions and state child welfare agencies, not individual schools, accountable for the academic achievement of foster youth.

State Educational Agencies, not Schools, Should be Accountable for Foster Youth Academic Achievement

By including foster youth as a subgroup in the NCLB, agencies would become accountable for tracking and addressing the academic progress of foster youth and seeing that foster youth, as a group, demonstrate “proficiency” in order to avoid destabilization measures. Yet this approach works only if state educational agencies, not schools, are held accountable for foster youth achievement, as explained below.

Currently, individual schools are accountable for student subgroup achievement pursuant to NCLB. However, the NCLB has a reporting and accountability exemption for small subgroups: schools are not required to report on, nor are they held accountable for, the academic growth of subgroups for which “the number of students... is insufficient to yield statistically reliable information or the results would reveal personally identifiable information about an individual student.”41 Because foster youth constitute a small percentage of the nation’s overall student population42 and are rarely concentrated in any given school,43 foster students in most schools will fall into the small subgroup exemption.

School accountability would also be undermined by the high mobility of foster care students. Knowing that foster students are less likely to be present and tested at the end of the academic year, schools might feel less inclined to focus services and resources on them. Conversely, the schools to which foster students transfer would be held accountable for their academic results, regardless of how late in the year they enrolled.44

In order to overcome these problems, NCLB amendments should hold state educational agencies, instead of schools, accountable for the academic performance of foster youth. Treating foster youth as a state-wide subgroup eliminates (Continued on page 19)

The impending reauthorization of NCLB provides an important opportunity to ensure that foster youth are included in education system reforms

41 id. § 6311(b)(2)(I)(ii).


43 See, e.g., Smithgall et al., supra note 3, at 11 (finding no general Chicago Public School to have more than 6 percent of its student population in out-of-home care at any one time).

44 This is a problem for all students with high mobility.
Francis V. (Frankie) Guzman Joins NCYL as Assistant to the Director.

Frankie has a BA in English from the University of California at Berkeley. Last year, he also attended the Junior Summer Institute at the University of Michigan’s Ford School of Public Policy on a Public Policy and International Affairs Fellowship. He worked at the Greenlining Institute for the last two years, first as a Communications/Research Intern, and then as a Summer Associate this year before accepting his new position here at the Center.

Frankie began his undergraduate studies at Oxnard College in Oxnard, CA, where he grew up. His extracurricular and volunteer activity there, and since, illustrate clearly his commitment to serving disadvantaged and at-risk youth.

As an Outreach Motivational Speaker at Oxnard College, Frankie spoke to youth in schools, probation agencies, and community youth groups on the importance of pursuing higher education. He also served as Student Assistant to the Director in Oxnard’s PACE (Program for Accelerated College Education) which assists students who cannot attend class every night to complete an Associates’ degree and/or transfer to a four-year university within two years.

At Cal, Frankie was Executive Officer and Transfer Coordinator for the University’s Raza Recruitment & Retention Center. In that capacity he coordinated the work of dozens of interns, managed the budget, and organized informational and recruitment visits for more than 1,000 low-income high school and community college students.

He also tutored and mentored students at Berkeley Alternative High School and Explore College-Prep Middle School in Oakland.

Recently, Frankie was named recipient of the 2007 Outstanding Achievement Award by the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, Division of Juvenile Justice. The award ceremony took place in South Lake Tahoe at the annual California Probation, Parole, and Correctional Association Conference in September.

Frankie’s career objective is to seek law and public policy degrees as preparation for public service to low-income and minority communities. He sees his new position at NCYL as an ideal step toward that objective. We are delighted to welcome him aboard!
NCYL News

Laura Townsend has completed her Equal Justice Works Fellowship at NCYL and accepted a staff attorney position at the Children’s Law Center (CLC) in Washington, DC. CLC helps at-risk children find safe, permanent homes and get the education, health care and social services they need. It provides a comprehensive range of legal services to children, families, and caregivers. As an attorney in CLC’s Guardian Ad Litem division, Laura will represent children in the dependency system.

A native east coaster, Laura is excited to be moving to DC and joining the staff of the Children’s Law Center. Says Laura, “It has been a privilege to work at NCYL. I could not have asked for a more rewarding fellowship experience, and I am confident that the skills I have developed over the past two years will serve me well as I begin my career in Washington, DC.”

Laura’s work at NCYL focused on mentally ill youth involved in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems. As the coordinator of NCYL’s Juvenile Mental Health Court initiative, she implemented a project to help mentally ill youth access government benefits, educational services, and other supports. She was also part of the litigation team for Katie A. v. Bonta, NCYL’s class action lawsuit seeking community-based mental health services for California’s foster children.

Laura received her B.A., Magna Cum Laude, from Williams College in 1998 and her J.D. from Northwestern University in 2005. While at Northwestern, Laura represented youth in delinquency and school expulsion matters at the Children and Family Justice Center, and served on the boards of the Student Effort to Rejuvenate Volunteering (SERV) and the Public Interest Law Group (PILG). A 2005 recipient of the Justice John Paul Stevens Public Interest Fellowship, Laura has clerked at the Cook County Office of the Public Guardian, the ACLU of Illinois, and Children’s Rights, Inc.

Prior to law school, Laura worked as project director in the child psychiatry department at Columbia University and completed two years of graduate work in clinical psychology.

Good luck Laura – we’ll miss you!!

Catherine Wollard, a third year student at Golden Gate University School of Law, is clerking at the Center this fall, working with Patrick Gardner on children’s mental health issues. At Golden Gate, she is involved in the Litigation Program, Women’s Law Association, National Lawyers Guild, and the Public Interest Law Foundation.

Catherine earned her undergraduate degree in Psychology at University of Southern California, where she was a member of the Pre-Law Society and the Women’s Student Assembly. This summer, she served as a Judicial Extern for Superior Court Judge Ronald Evans Quidachay in San Francisco. The previous summer she interned at the San Francisco Sheriff’s Department’s Prisoner Legal Services. Catherine also worked for two years as a legal assistant in a family law office in the Los Angeles area. She intends to pursue a career as a children’s attorney.

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Alumni News

Three former NCYL law clerks began Skadden Fellowships in September: Emily Kernan, who clerked at the Center in summer 2005, is at Lawyers for Children in New York City. Brian Blalock, who clerked at NCYL in summer 2006, is in the Oakland office of Bay Area Legal Aid. Mark Tafolla Young, also a NCYL clerk in summer 2006, is at the Lawyers’ Committee for Civil Rights in San Francisco.

Christina Bark, a NCYL law clerk in 1991, sends notice of the birth of a daughter, Alexandra Morgan Bark, in July (see photo below). At last writing, Christina was tired, and thrilled.

Lyn Duff, a NCYL Board Member from 1994 through 2001, has earned an MSW from Wayne State University, and is living in Detroit. A year ago, Lyn, who now works professionally under the name Athena Kolbe, published a study of human rights violations subsequent to the coup that removed Haitian President Aristide from office in February 2004. The article, coauthored with Wayne State social work professor Royce Hutson, appeared in the British medical journal, The Lancet. The study reported significant violations, including 8,000 murders and 35,000 rapes, in the Haitian capital Port-au-Prince. Many of the crimes were committed by the Haitian National Police and other of Aristide’s political opponents. (The article can be accessed at http://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140673606692118/fulltext, free online registration required.) Although currently focusing on social work, Lyn has worked for 10 years as an international journalist, with postings in Israel, Croatia, several African countries, and Vietnam, as well as Haiti, from which she covered the aftermath of the 2004 coup. On a personal note, Lyn recently became legal guardian of Sarah, who she describes as “the greatest teenager in the world.” Former NCYL Skadden Fellow, Sara Woodward, who also lives in Detroit, helped Lyn and Sarah with that process. Lyn recently bought a home that was built in 1880 near Comerica Park in central Detroit, and goes to lots of Tiger games.

Amelia Martínez Cantos, assistant to NCYL’s Director from 1998-2003, has accepted a position as Research Associate at LaFrance & Associates. LFA is a San Francisco-based consulting group that provides the nonprofit, philanthropic, and public sectors with information and technical assistance to design, implement and evaluate social and health programs. LFA supports the work of the nonprofit, philanthropic, and public sectors that promote the “health and well-being of at-risk, low-income, under-served, and otherwise disadvantaged” communities. Amelia had been working at the San Francisco Welcome Back Center, an agency that assists health professionals from all over the world who have come to the United States and have not been able to exercise their professions.

Rita McLennon, NCYL’s Director of Development from 1983-1991, is leaving her long-time position as Executive Director of the Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law. On Oct. 1, 2007, Rita began a new job as Director of Development at the New York Legal Assistance Group (NYLAG). NYLAG is a nonprofit law office that provides free civil legal services to low income New Yorkers. Rita was the ED of the Shriver Center for 14 years, and, before that, served on the Center’s board for 11 years. When McLennon launched the reorganization of the Shriver Center in 2006, which is now complete, she indicated that she would pursue new career objectives after the transition.

Chris Palamountain, a NCYL Skadden Fellow and law clerk before that in the 1990s, and her one-year-old daughter, Caroline, have moved to Houston. Chris has family there and, while at the Center, always flew the Texas flag proudly.

Jamie Popper, a NCYL clerk in Fall 2003 while a student at Boalt Hall, participated in the death penalty clinic at Boalt. She was part of an appeals team that won the freedom of an Alabama man whose murder trial there was marred by misconduct on the part of his attorney, the judge, and jurors. The case, and Jamie’s work on it, were profiled in a recent issue of the San Francisco Daily Journal when Walter Lee Rhone, the man she helped free, visited Boalt Hall to thank people at the clinic. Jamie is currently practicing with Appellate Defenders Inc. in San Diego.
CA Governor Signs Law Mandating Public Access to Records of Children Who Die of Abuse or Neglect

Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger has signed SB 39, which mandates public disclosure of findings and information about children who have died of abuse or neglect. The goal of the bill is to promote public scrutiny of cases in order to improve child welfare policy and practice to ensure children’s safety. The bill, signed on Oct. 11, 2007, was authored by Sen. Carole Migden (D-San Francisco).

“Little is known about these children, the suffering they endured prior to their deaths, and the steps that might have been taken to protect them,” said Bill Grimm, senior attorney at the National Center for Youth Law, which co-sponsored the legislation with the Children’s Advocacy Institute. “This new law will make it possible to get information that is vital to reform, while protecting the privacy rights of those involved.”

California’s new law is unique in that it allows public access to portions of a child’s actual case file, rather than a summary of information provided by the child protective agency responsible for the child’s safety. In addition, there is a presumption under the new law that the entire case file will be released upon request to the juvenile court.

“This really is one of the only laws – if not the only law – in the country that allows this degree of access,” said Grimm. He said most states release summaries of case information or allow access to a child’s case file only under certain circumstances.

In 2002, the last year data is available, an estimated 140 children in California died due to abuse and neglect, and another 191 died under suspicious circumstances. Just in the past week, two children from the Bay Area are believed to have died of abuse.

Under the new law, the public will have timely access to specified information in juvenile court records. The law lays out a three-tiered system for the release of records:

1) Reasonable suspicion - Within five days of a child’s death that is reasonably suspected to be the result of abuse or neglect, the county welfare agency must, upon request, release minimal information about the child, including:
   • Child’s name and gender
   • Date of death
   • Whether the death is under investigation by child welfare officials or law enforcement
   • Whether the child was in foster care or at home with his or her parent/guardian at the time of death.

2) Substantiation – If the suspected abuse or neglect is substantiated, documents relating to the circumstances surrounding the death must be released, upon request. These documents include:
   • All previous referrals to the child welfare agency regarding abuse or neglect
   • Emergency response referral information
   • Reports made by the child welfare agency to law enforcement
   • All health records, excluding mental health records, relating to the child’s death and previous injuries
   • Police reports regarding the person believed to have inflicted the abuse
   • Records pertaining to foster parents’ licensing and training, if the child was in foster care at the time of death

3) Court procedure for releasing documents – The law sets forth an expedited judicial procedure for release of other documents, favoring the release unless statutory grounds for confidentiality exist. No balancing or weighing of interests is required except where interests of another child are involved.

Among the bill’s supporters are the California Newspaper Publishers Association, the California Nurses Association, and the County Welfare Directors Association of California.

Advocates Demand that Governor Restore Funding for Homeless, Mentally Ill or Face Lawsuit

Several state and national advocacy groups have demanded that Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger restore a highly effective program for homeless, mentally ill adults. The Governor eliminated the funds through a line-item veto and counties and mental health providers are scrambling to help individuals with mental illness get critical services and stay off the streets. The groups say that if the Governor does not respond, they will file a lawsuit against him and the state Department of Mental Health.

The state legislature authorized the funds for the program – about $55 million annually – in 2000 under Assembly Bill 2034, and the program has been fully funded each year since. The funds pay for housing and support services for adults with severe mental illness. The program currently serves nearly 5000 people in the state, and has had proven success in reducing home-
lessness, incarceration, and hospitalization.

Not only inhumane, but illegal “Balancing the budget by depriving these individuals of services that are so critical to their well-being is not only inhumane, it is illegal,” said the advocates in a letter sent Oct. 9, 2007 to both the governor and Stephen Mayberg, Director of the state Department of Mental Health. The advocates represent the Mental Health Association in California; the California Network of Mental Health Clients; and NAMI California. “On behalf of our clients, we demand that you immediately restore funding to these mandated programs. If you refuse to do so by October 23, 2007, we will have no choice but to take immediate legal action,” the letter said.

“This program is a foundation that the Mental Health Services Act was intended to build on,” said Laurel Mildred, executive director of the California Network of Mental Health Clients. “The Mental Health Services Act was intended to add funds to this program, not to replace them. Elimination of this program is a breach of the public’s trust as well as a violation of the law.”

“It’s not like the governor is cutting funding for an ineffective or wasteful program. This program has been a godsend for this population, providing much needed mental health and other supportive services,” said Patrick Gardner, Deputy Director of the National Center for Youth Law. “It is vital to the people it serves.”

Organizing against the Governor’s veto
On August 24, Gov. Schwarzenegger eliminated all AB 2034 funding through a line-item veto. Many counties and local mental health service providers are now exploring how to replace that funding. Some are using money provided through Proposition 63 – the Mental Health Services Act – to continue services. In an attempt to lessen the blow of the governor’s veto, the Department of Mental Health announced that it would make a one-time $64 million in unspent Prop 63 administrative funds available to counties. The counties may use the money to provide services to those individuals who had been served by AB 2034 programs.

Advocates for AB 2034 strongly disagree with this solution. They say Prop 63 was intended to expand mental health services and expressly prohibits the kind of actions taken by the Governor and Department of Mental Health – namely the blatant elimination of state funding for mental health programs that already exist. In addition, the $64 million is a stop-gap measure, available only for one year, according to Ralph Nelson, President of the Board, NAMI California.

Counties have $55 million less for mental health services
“The release of additional Prop 63 funds in no way compensates for the Governor’s elimination of the 2034 program,” said Rusty Selix, Executive Director of the Mental Health Association in California. “This money would have to be released to the counties anyway and counties still have $55 million less to spend on mental health services than they had before,” he said.

It is expected that in a number of counties, people will lose the essential services that they previously received, said Dan Brzovic, an attorney with Protection & Advocacy, Inc.

The letter was sent by Protection and Advocacy Inc., Oakland, CA; Western Center on Law & Poverty, Los Angeles, CA; Mental Health Advocacy Services, Los Angeles, CA; National Center for Youth Law, Oakland, CA; and the law firm Howard Rice Nemirovski Canady Falk & Rabkin, San Francisco, CA.

Groundbreaking Foster Parent Survey Shows Some Progress, Major Deficiencies in Washington State

Results of a survey of more than 1,200 foster parents in Washington State show the vast majority of foster children do not receive monthly visits from caseworkers, and that a significant percentage of children did not receive a single caseworker visit in 2006.

One of the more troubling aspects of the survey was the number of foster parents for whom the state Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) has no working phone number. Close to 1,000 of the 3,800 foster parents to be surveyed could not be reached because the number provided by DSHS was not a working number and the foster parents were not listed.

The survey was conducted as part of the settlement implementation plan in Braam v. Washington, a lawsuit brought to reform the state’s foster care system. Survey answers will be used by the Braam monitoring panel to track the state’s progress in complying with the settlement. DSHS and stakeholders will also use the information to improve services. The survey, which will be conducted annually until 2011, is believed to be the most comprehensive ongoing survey of its kind in the country.

Some Progress
While the survey pointed up continuing deficiencies in the system, it did indicate progress in certain areas, including foster parent training. About 88 percent of licensed relative and non-relative caregivers reported that they received adequate training, and more than 70 percent said they received adequate support and information. However, DSHS is required to increase all of those percentages by about 10 percent a year.
More than 75 percent of respondents reported that children in their care received behavioral health services from the same individual provider in 2006. DSHS is required to bring that percentage to 90 percent by 2009.

Low Caseworker and Sibling Visits
Although DSHS committed long ago to meet a national standard requiring monthly caseworker visits to children in out-of-home care, more than 60 percent of all survey respondents said their foster children did not receive such visits. In fact, the survey indicates that 17 percent of foster children did not receive a single visit in 2006.

The lack of monthly visits was a major issue in a recent 6.2 million dollar verdict against the DSHS. A lawsuit was brought on behalf of two siblings who were brutally beaten in their foster home. While the Legislature this year provided some funding to reduce caseloads in order to allow caseworkers to visit children more often, the Department has indicated it still may not be able to provide these visits by the summer of 2009.

The survey also indicated that most of the children placed apart from their siblings do not have more than monthly visits with them, and almost 10 percent never see their siblings.

The survey was conducted by the Social & Economic Sciences Research Center at Washington State University with funding from DSHS. Input was provided by DSHS, stakeholders, the Braam monitoring panel, and plaintiffs’ counsel. Plaintiffs’ counsel include NCYL, Columbia Legal Services, and Bellingham, WA attorney Tim Farris.

For more information about the survey, go to our website at www.youthlaw.org or Braamkids.org, an informational website provided by plaintiffs’ counsel in Braam.

Report Says Many Arkansas Youth Incarcerated for Minor Offenses
Confinement Harmful and Adverse to Rehabilitation, Experts Say

A report commissioned by NCYL and other advocates working to reform Arkansas’s juvenile justice system says the single most pressing problem in the state’s juvenile justice system is an excessive reliance on secure confinement of youth who do not require such expensive and restrictive custody. The report specifically finds that the unnecessary confinement of youth at Alexander, the state’s largest juvenile prison, places them at risk of serious harm.

The report finds that 90 percent of youth placed at the Alexander Juvenile Correctional Facility near Little Rock are there for minor, non-violent offenses. Experts conclude that about 100 of the 140 youth presently incarcerated at Alexander should be transitioned home or into other community-based settings. Also, they should be provided a “range of services designed to ensure public safety and guide the youth on a constructive path to adulthood.”

The authors of the report are Tim Roche and Kelly Dedel, nationally renowned juvenile justice experts.

“While Arkansas and other states need the option of secure custody for youth who present a real danger to society, far too many youth are incarcerated unnecessarily at great fiscal and human cost,” said Pat Arthur, senior attorney at NCYL. “The report shows that this incarceration causes them serious harm and diminishes their chances for rehabilitation.”

The experts’ report will assist NCYL and the Arkansas Disability Rights Center stop on-going abuses at Alexander. Despite years of monitoring by the U.S. Department of Justice, Alexander continues to operate in violation of state and federal law. Among the problems:

- Children at Alexander are inappropriately medicated with anti-psychotic drugs
- Two boys committed suicide by hanging themselves, just six months apart and in the same cell
- Deficiencies in medical care resulted in the avoidable death of a teenage girl
- Children are subjected to painful and unnecessary physical restraint
- Children do not receive the basic education necessary to earn a high school diploma
- Special education and related services mandated by federal law are not provided

In an effort to avert litigation over conditions at Alexander, NCYL and the Disability Rights Center have met with Gov. Mike Beebe, top Division of Youth Services officials, legislators, and other state stakeholders. Advocates have obtained legislative, agency, and stakeholder support for Senate Resolution 31, which calls on state agencies to develop a broad juvenile justice reform plan. SR 31 requires the reform plan to be based on an assessment of the needs and risks of the entire juvenile justice population, as well as any gaps in types and location of community based services. Agency officials have publicly committed to effecting “bold” reforms.

At a recent press conference held by Arkansas Advocates for Children and Families, the Disability Rights Center, and NCYL, agency officials endorsed many of the recommendations in the expert report on Alexander.

“I commend leaders in Arkansas, who are taking a hard look at this issue, and have committed to developing more and better community-based treatment programs,” said Arthur.
VOICES: A Model of Support for and Youth Aging Out of Foster Care
By Caitlin Krutsinger (continued from p. 6)

Murrieta says that the community created by VOICES provides an outlet for youth.
"We get into each others lives," he says, helping each other change, and keeping each other from going back to old ways. Murrieta works full time – about 20 hours a week at the center, and another 20 hours at a Napa elementary after-school program. A self-proclaimed "sports maniac," he plans to attend Napa Valley College and go on to work in sports management. Throughout his 16 years in the foster care system, and five years in the juvenile justice and probation systems, Murrieta says he never let his education slide.
"I never really had anyone in my family that had stuck to education. I wanted to be the first," he explains. Murrieta graduated from high school in April 2007 with a 3.5 GPA.

The VOICES Path
The VOICES concept began to take shape in 2005. The Gasser Foundation along with Auction Napa Valley and Napa Community Foundation formed a steering committee which created a three-year initiative to improve access to services for youth transitioning out of care.
"Somehow, at 18, we expect them to be self actualizing," and successfully independent, says Corsello of the Gasser Foundation.
The committee partnered with On the Move, a non-profit organization that works to train and develop young leaders. On the Move and the Progress Foundation, a non-profit mental health agency whose clinical director was on the original steering committee, now serve as the center’s two fiscal agents. The steering committee still plays a largely advisory role in the workings of the center and its ongoing program development.
"It became evident very early on that we needed to get kids involved," Corsello explains. "They have got to run it. What the rest of us have to do is support it."
Findley, his 16-year-old sister Katie, and eight other current and former Napa foster youth formed the original founding team. With insights informed by their backgrounds in the foster care system, the team held focus groups and visited foster group homes in order to determine the most pressing needs facing emancipating youth, recruited agencies to locate staff members in the VOICES office to provide necessary services, and spread the word about the new center to local youth.
During its development phase, VOICES looked to organizations such as the California Youth Connection (CYC), which first emerged in 1988 and really "paved the way" by creating a model of advocacy and support guided, focused, and driven by foster youth working through policy development and legislative change.5 CYC does not currently have a Napa chapter, a fact that VOICES' staff said they hope to change.

Although Gasser pledged only a three-year monetary commitment, the foundation worked with the center to help it become integrated into the Napa community, build relationships with individuals and organizations, and develop a network of support and, thus, financial sustainability. In less than two years, the center has built a support network of more than 20 funding organizations, consisting of foundations, government funders, and private donors. Including state funding provided specifically for the housing initiative, the center's annual budget is now $850,000.
This fall, the VOICES office will more than double in size. The center is preparing to make a much needed move from its small office park space in a business district to a large Victorian style house across from a 10-acre park on the edge of Old Town Napa. The house has 2,800 square feet, compared with the 1,300 square feet provided by VOICES' current office.
Without VOICES, Murrieta says, "I would still be looking for a job, still doing the same dumb stuff around town ... I would still be that same person I was two years ago."
"People know the old me, so I tell them what I am doing now," he says.

Caitlin Krutsinger was a summer 2007 intern at NCYL, working on communications. An English major, she will graduate from the University of Oregon in spring 2008

"Nothing about us without us," is the motto of many youth-run organizations cropping up across the country.

small sample sizes and reduces the impact of foster youth’s high mobility. More importantly, it recognizes that many policies affecting schools, and the performance of foster students in schools, are made at the district and state level. Most public schools do not control the amount (if any) of additional funding they receive for foster care students, the composition of students entering their school, or the quality of the services, such as foster student liaisons, provided by the district. Thus, it makes sense to hold state educational agencies accountable for raising the achievement of foster youth.45

Accountability Should Also Extend to State Child Welfare Agencies

Accountability should not end with state educational agencies. Foster youth, unlike the general student population, frequently interact with and depend on other state agencies. Because of this, it makes sense to hold a state’s child welfare agency responsible for the academic achievement of foster students. Indeed, that was the approach taken by Plaintiffs in Braam v. Washington,46 a case brought by the National Center for Youth Law and others47 challenging Washington State’s child welfare system. The case settled after extensive litigation, with Washington’s Division of Children and Family Services (DCFS) agreeing to take full responsibility for improving “the educational achievement of adolescents in the custody of DCFS”.48 The settlement implementation plan was built around accountability measures, requiring the agency to decrease the difference between the educational achievement of the foster care population and the general population with a special emphasis on increasing the percentage of foster youth with a high school diploma to equal that of the general population.49 The plan provided timelines

45 State educational agencies might then hold districts or schools accountable should they see fit.
46 81 P.3d 851 (Wash. 2003).
47 Plaintiffs’ counsel in Braam v. State of Washington are the National Center for Youth Law, Columbia Legal Services, and Bellingham, WA attorney Timothy Farris.

Foster youth should be added as a subgroup to NCLB, and NCLB amendments should hold state educational and child welfare agencies, instead of individual schools, accountable for the academic performance of foster youth.
and benchmarks for monitoring the agency’s success in raising foster student achievement.\textsuperscript{50} While the agency was required to take certain concrete steps such as establishing “educational outreach positions to assist children in out-of-home care in meeting higher educational goals” and offering “caregivers training on educational advocacy skills,”\textsuperscript{51} it was free to accomplish the accountability goals through different means upon approval by a specially appointed panel.

So which agency should be held accountable – the state educational agency or the state child welfare agency? In order for reform to work, both must be accountable. An example illustrates. Imagine that state educational agencies alone were held responsible for raising the academic achievement of foster students. In order to decrease school instability, the educational agency might decide to fund transportation for foster students whose foster placement changes during the school year, allowing them to complete the academic year in their “school of origin.” Yet the resources the educational agency spends on transportation might be better spent on increasing foster youth placement stability (thus avoiding school transfers altogether) – an issue under the domain of the state’s child welfare agency.

Now imagine that the child welfare agency alone is held accountable. The child welfare agency might spend endless resources on supplemental educational services for foster youth to compensate for the fact that most foster youth are placed into schools with less experienced teachers and lower per-pupil funding, issues more effectively remedied by the state or district educational agencies.

Because the educational achievement of foster youth is affected by the policies of a number of state agencies, each agency must contribute to increasing the academic achievement of foster care students. The role each agency plays will depend on the circumstance of the state, which is ultimately responsible for the children in its care. These agencies should be held accountable for ensuring that foster youth receive the supports, services, and opportunities necessary for them to achieve academically.

**The Need for Action Revisited**

The impending reauthorization of NCLB provides an important opportunity to ensure that foster youth are included in education system reforms. In order to achieve the best results for foster youth, legislative reforms should come in two forms. First, the law should require that states provide specific services such as increased school stability, educational liaisons, and supplemental educational services – all provisions of existing proposals to amend NCLB. Second, the law should hold states accountable for improving the academic achievement of foster youth while being given the flexibility to choose the best methods to do so – an approach modeled by the current structure of the NCLB. Congress could accomplish the second type of reform by including foster youth as a subgroup in the NCLB, and then holding state educational agencies and child welfare agencies, not schools, accountable for foster youth achievement. By embracing both approaches to educational reform, we can better ensure that foster youth will not be left behind.

**Jesse Hahnel** is a former middle and high school teacher. He was a summer 2007 law clerk at NCYL, working on foster youth education issues. He will graduate from Stanford Law School in spring 2008.

\textsuperscript{50} Id.

\textsuperscript{51} Braam Final Settlement, supra note 50, at 12.
Rainy Day

Nicholas Larus-Stone, 11
Mercer Island, Washington

I hear gravel crunch beneath my feet
Raindrops pelt my face
Leaves flitter to the ground
Our neighbor’s dog barks as he sniffs me
I see golden-red leaves contrasted against the green grass
My breath comes out like a frosty white cloud
I hear the rumble of approaching thunder
Birds fly for cover against the rain
In front of me there are skeletal trees reaching to the heavens
I see the mud piles give way to a river of rain
There is a gurgle of draining rainwater
Trudging home, the warmth invites me back.
Publications

BOOKS

Whose Best Interest? – A Fight to Save Two American Kids
By Rene Howitt
Tate Publishing and Enterprises, LLC, 2007
The true story of the author’s struggle to rescue two children from abuse and neglect. The book outlines how children are taken from their parents by child protective services, only to be returned to them time and time again. As a result of this chronic instability and trauma, many children are irreparably harmed. The book is available for purchase at www.tatepublishing.com/bookstore

REPORTS & RESEARCH

Income, Poverty, and Health Insurance Coverage in the United States, 2006
U.S. Census Bureau
In 2006, there were 36.5 million Americans living in poverty, and 47 million without health insurance. Available at: http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/poverty/poverty06.html

CHILD WELFARE/FOSTER CARE

A Community’s Concern
Child Welfare Watch, Volume 14 (Summer 2007)
By Fred Wulczyn, Chapin Hall Center for Children, University of Chicago
The New York City Administration for Children’s Services launched an initiative in 2007 to build coalitions of community organizations to improve outcomes for children served by the child welfare system. This essay suggests steps to monitor preventive services delivered by private providers. Available at: http://www.chapinhall.org/article_abstract.aspx?ar=1459

The Judges Page Newsletter
National CASA and National Council of Juvenile & Family Court Judges
An educational e-mail newsletter for judges who hear child welfare cases. Judges, attorneys and child advocates are all encouraged to subscribe for information on current case law, best practices, and nationally recognized dependency programs. Subscription is free. To subscribe, visit: http://www.nationalcasa.org/judgespage

Visitation with Infants and Toddlers: What Judges and Attorneys Need to Know
The ABA Center on Children and the Law
A practice and policy brief that explains why visitation is particularly important for very young children. The brief emphasizes the role of visitation in permanency planning, highlights key elements of successful visitation plans for infants and toddlers, suggests strategies for addressing barriers to visitation, reviews the judge’s role in supporting parent-child visits, and shares promising community approaches to visitation. Available at http://www.abanet.org/child/baby-health.shtml

African American Children in Foster Care: Additional Health and Human Services Assistance Needed to Help States Reduce the Proportion in Care
U.S. Government Accountability Office
African American children are twice as likely to enter foster care as white children, and remain in foster care longer than their peers, even though children of all races are equally likely to suffer from abuse and neglect. This Government Accountability Office report says poverty, racial bias in abuse and neglect reporting, and limited permanent placement options play a role. Available at: http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d07816.pdf

A Call to Action: An Integrated Approach to Youth Permanency and Preparation for Adulthood
Lauren Frey, Sarah Greenblatt, and Jim Brown
Casey Family Programs
Children who ‘age out’ of the child welfare system without a permanent family and/or adequate preparation for adulthood often do not have the supports needed to thrive independently. This report highlights efforts to ensure that youth currently in the foster care system benefit from the most strategic preparation and supports for entering adulthood. Available at http://www.aecf.org/KnowledgeCenter/Child Welfare Permanence.aspx

MENTAL HEALTH

Child and Youth Emergency Mental Health Care: A National Problem
National Center for Children in Poverty
Child mental health-related visits to hospital emergency rooms have risen significantly in the past 10 years. This report looks at why, and the policy changes that could improve care and expand community-based services for children with mental health needs. Available at: http://www.nccp.org/publications/pub_750.html
**JOB ANNOUNCEMENT**

**Attorney**

**Legal Advice Line**

**Bay Area Legal Aid, Oakland**

**Full-time**

Bay Area Legal Aid (BayLegal), the largest legal aid program in the Bay Area, is currently accepting applications for a Vietnamese-speaking, Russian-speaking, Cantonese-speaking, or Tagalong-speaking Attorney for its Legal Advice Line (LAL).

The **Organization**: Bay Legal (www.baylegal.org) is the largest legal services provider in the Bay Area, serving Alameda, Contra Costa, Marin, Napa, San Mateo, San Francisco and Santa Clara counties. Its mission is to provide high quality legal assistance to clients regardless of their location, language, or disability.

**Job Description**: LAL is seeking an energetic, confident, culturally sensitive advocate to provide direct legal services to low income persons throughout the bay area. The advocate will also assist in fostering relationships with other groups serving our client population and will work closely with our Pro Bono Director. The successful applicant will spend roughly 80% of their time on intake and advice, and 20% on other LAL functions. The advocate will work as part of a team in the intake, advice, and placement of clients.

**Requirements**: Excellent listening skills; oral and written communications skills; demonstrated ability to manage multiple projects and deadlines; and a commitment to serving vulnerable and diverse communities are required. All applicants must be comfortable interviewing clients exclusively over the phone in English and in Vietnamese, Russian, Cantonese, or Tagalong. Ability to read and write in one of those languages is also highly desirable. Preference will be given to applicants who are licensed attorneys in California with at least two (2) years of legal services experience and/or a demonstrated working knowledge of areas of law in which Bay Legal provides services.

**Compensation and Benefits**: Compensation based upon experience. Excellent benefits package and bilingual differentials.

Applications: Please email cover letter, resume, references and writing sample to Rose Marie Figueroa, Human Resources Manager, rfigueroa@baylegal.org. For more information: www.baylegal.org

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If you are interested in subscribing to *Youth Law News*, please call Communications Director Tracy Schroth at (510) 835-8098, x3013.
**Table of Contents**

- **p. 1** Former Foster Youth Take Charge of Their Lives
- **p. 1** VOICES: A Model of Support for and by Youth Aging Out of Foster Care
- **p. 5** Foster Youth: Left Behind by the No Child Left Behind Act?
- **p. 18** At The Center
- **p. 24** Highlights of NCYL’s Work

**www.youthlaw.org**

Derek Brown