



# Volunteer Lawyers Program

*A division of Community Legal Services in partnership with the Maricopa County Bar Association*

## CHILDREN'S LAW CENTER

In October of 1998, the Volunteer Lawyers Program (VLP), co-sponsored by the Maricopa County Bar Association and Community Legal Services, established the Children's Law Center in order to address unmet legal needs of children. The Volunteer Lawyers Program increases access to our civil justice system to low-income persons by recruiting, training and mentoring private volunteer attorneys. The Children's Law Center was created in order to increase services to children. Over 175 attorneys volunteer with the Children's Law Center per year. Current programs include Free Advice Clinics for Teens, Court Advisor Project, Guardianship Project, Guardianship Workshops, Teens at Work, Adoption Project, Medical Legal Partnership, Consumer Clinics, Special Education, Wills for Families and Juvenile Law Clinic. These projects fill gaps in legal assistance for children of diverse ethnic, racial and economic backgrounds. These programs were developed in collaboration with numerous agencies and organizations that provide children's services within the community and currently receive financial support from Maricopa County Bar Association, Maricopa County Bar Foundation, Executive Council Charities, Kinderhook Industries and the Arizona Foundation for Legal Services and Education.

**FACT - Free advice clinic for teens** provides youth with the opportunity to consult with an attorney and get professional help resolving legal problems through outreach to youth organizations.

**The Court Advisor Project** provides protection for the best interests of children when their parents are going through high conflict custody cases in Family Court. The court and many child advocates were concerned these children's fates were being decided without anyone speaking on their behalf. The Family Court Judge makes referral and the Center arranges and supports pro bono attorneys who serve as Court Appointed Advisors.

**The Guardianship Project** assists vulnerable children whose parents are not able or willing to provide appropriate care for them. Many grandparents, other relatives and non-relatives are taking care of children who cannot live with their parents. Although caretakers have physical custody of the children, they often have no legal authority to access health care for the children, enroll them in school or obtain other needed services. The Children's Law Center arranges volunteer attorneys to represent caretakers in obtaining guardianship and providing protection and stability for the children.

**Guardianship Workshop** allows us to reach more low income families and offer assistance to those families in need of guardianships to care for their grandchildren.

**Teens at Work-101 and 201** is an outreach program designed to teach teens about their rights and responsibilities on the job. Through the high schools, we are able to reach hundreds of teens a month.

**Adoption Project** assists underprivileged children achieve the stability, security and permanency that severance and adoption can provide.

**Medical Legal Partnership** collaborates with the medical profession to assist low income families with legal issues.

**Consumer Outreach to Teens and Young Adults** arranges presentations and meetings with teens and young adults to increase awareness with regard to consumer issues.

**Wills for Families** offers free will drafting for client grandparents and relatives raising children, to have a permanency plan set in place.

**Special Education Cases** assisting parents in making sure their children receive the services they need to succeed.

**Juvenile Law Walk-in Clinic** brief advice for unrepresented applicants in Juvenile Court.

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