

## Holistic Representation: Addressing the Collateral Issues of Dependent Youth

### QUICK TIPS

#### Quick Tips—Advocating for Clients with Disabilities

- **Comprehensive, Up-To Date Evaluations:** If your client has a disability make sure you have **evaluations that are up to date and comprehensive** so that you can use them to access services and benefits and ensure appropriate treatment. Ask the court to order them if you are facing barriers.
- **Registration with the County ID Agency or Bureau of Autism:** If your client has an intellectual disability, including autism, ensure that the youth is **registered with the county Intellectual Disability agency**. This can be done as soon as the youth is identified as having ID or autism. **DO NOT WAIT UNTIL AGE 18!!** Ask for this to be court ordered if you are facing barriers! If the youth is not registered, he or she is not in line for adult benefits and services through the waiver program.
- **Submit COMPLETE SSI Applications Timely:** Ensure that the child welfare agency prepares to submit an SSI application one year before planned discharge and make the application at least 6 months before discharge.
- **High Quality Transition Plan in the IEP:** If the youth has an IEP ensure that the transition plan in the IEP includes a high quality program and services that develops skills and includes employment and career related goals in addition to life skills. Ensure the youth understands the right to remain in high school until his or her 21<sup>st</sup> year.
- **Accommodations Plans for Post Secondary Education and Training:** Ensure that the youth has support to plan for higher education and training and that he or she has a 504 accommodations plan in their post secondary program of education or training (which will replace an IEP when a youth graduates).
- **Challenge Over-Use of Group Care:** Youth with disabilities have a right to live in family settings in the community, but often end up in group care where they have limited chance to prepare for adulthood or find permanency. Most youth with disabilities can thrive in the community with services and supports. Enlist your colleagues to determine how to support youth in the community and in family settings if you are hitting barriers.

## Quick Tips—Advocating for Clients with Justice System Involvement (Summaries, Juvenile or Criminal Justice)

- **Summary offenses have negative consequences:** Understand what summary offenses are, how they can result in a criminal record, or unpaid fines and fees that can result in grounds for delinquency.
- **Ensure representation or advocacy in summary proceedings:** Represent your clients in summary matters or find pro bono counsel for them to ensure that they do not end up with unmanageable fines and/or a record that will impact their future! There is no right to counsel in summary cases.
- **Expunge juvenile and summary records:** Assist your client or find assistance for them to expunge their juvenile records and any summary offenses if they are eligible. These records do have a negative impact on a youth's future and opportunities.
- **Protect connection to and services in the dependency system for youth who come into contact with the juvenile or criminal justice system.** Being involved in the juvenile or criminal justice system does not make a youth ineligible for dependency services, including extended foster care. Fight to make sure your client has access to these services, especially when they do not have a parent or family to advocate for them.

## Quick Tips—Advocating for Clients who are Pregnant or Parenting

- **Protect the parental rights of teen clients.** Ensure that the children of teens and young adults in care are not adjudicated dependent simply because the parent is in foster care and ensure that the parent has counsel to protect and represent her rights as a parent if a dependency petition is filed with respect to the teen's child.
- **Support the development of the parenting skills of teen parents.** Advocate that the case plan for youth who are parents include the full array of services and support that help develop parenting skills.
- **Access all benefits and supports for parents in and outside of the child welfare system.** Teen parents are likely to be eligible for child care, food assistance, and other health and parenting related services in addition to the services received through the child welfare system. These can increase the support and quality of care the parent and child received, but your clients may not get them unless a request is made.
- **Ensure that parent and child are placed together and that the placement is appropriate.** Challenge any separation of parent and child and advocate for age-appropriate placement rules and services that support the teen as a teen and as a parent.
- **Don't forget to protect the parental rights of your male clients!**