2022 Impact Report

CHILDREN SHOULD BE SEEN & HEARD

EAST BAY CHILDREN'S LAW OFFICES®
What does it mean to represent a child?

It’s obvious right? Our cool t-shirts sum it up. Children should be seen and heard. We simply make sure everyone hears what our clients have to say, right? It’s rarely that simple. Children exist within a family. And their family is part of a larger community, neighborhood, race and culture. And children, like their parents, have a right to family integrity.

What happens when a child wants something different than their parents? Navigating the nuances of advocating for individual clients—whose voices, as children, are often devalued—in a system that disproportionately affects Black and Brown families is not nearly as easy as our t-shirts make it sound.

The American Bar Association recently adopted a formal resolution calling upon lawyers, courts and government agencies to examine their roles in a system rooted in systemic racism that has specifically devalued Black families from the start. It calls upon all of us to, among other things, “respect the value of Black children and families’ racial, cultural, and ethnic identities and the connections, needs and strengths that arise from those identities.”

At East Bay Children’s Law Offices, we accept the challenge and embrace the call to action. We are committed to better serving all of our clients by refining our legal and social work practices and understanding our role in a system that has caused great harm to Black and Brown families throughout history. We are committed to thinking about our clients’ wishes in the context of their family, community and culture. One key strategy is listening to current and former clients—those whose lived experiences can best inform how we deliver our services. In 2022-23, we are launching a comprehensive survey of our 14-20 year old clients. We also continue to expand our Youth Voices Group where former clients are committed to holding focus groups and sharing their own experiences to identify what is most important to youth. We acknowledge that thinking we know what youth want and need without regularly and systemically asking them makes us part of the problem. We will not play a role in a system of disenfranchisement, oppression and policing of Black and Brown families; rather we are committed to affecting positive change in the communities we serve.

All the while, we continue the hard work each day advocating for the thousands of children who experience the system each year. Their stories are as different as each of them. And we share them with you . . .
SOPHIA’S TEAM

Sophia was three years old when she entered foster care. The foster mothers who took her in were prepared to adopt her if necessary, but they believed in Sophia’s mom. After volunteering for Family Treatment Court, Sophia’s mom began to believe in herself too. Sophia was old enough to miss her mom desperately and talk about her daily. And she was young enough to absorb all of the positive and cooperative energy surrounding the common goal that she reunify with her mom. She never seemed to doubt that she would, of course, go home. Sophia's mom did the hard work including participating in dyadic therapy with Sophia so she could make sense of this difficult period of her own life through the eyes of her young daughter. In the summer of 2021, Sophia went home. And her mother, recognizing the important role Sophia's foster mothers had played in Sophia’s life for over a year, has welcomed their continued relationship ever since. Sophia’s case was closed this spring. In a system that often feels broken, sometimes everything works just like it should.

285 kids’ cases closed because safely home
FROM SAN FRANCISCO TO THE CENTRAL VALLEY AND BEYOND

Did you know that nearly half of our clients live outside of Alameda County? Either because that’s where children’s relatives live or because that’s where the available foster homes are, hundreds of our clients do not live right here in the county even though their “case” and court hearings remain here. Some of our older clients end up coming back when they graduate from high school—others don’t. We even have a dozen clients out of state! The importance of meeting with youth in their own homes and environments and understanding services available to them where they live cannot be underestimated. That’s why our team drove 72,141 miles (and a few of us took to the air!) over the last year to visit clients where they live.
IT’S OFFICIAL!

Naw came to the United States from Burma when she was 6 years old with her aunt and uncle. Ten years later, the abusive home they were providing became too much, and Naw entered foster care. Just as important as the work EBCLO does in juvenile court making sure children are seen and heard is the work they do outside of court to support our clients’ other legal needs. For Naw, that meant working with her immigration team to help her complete the process of becoming a naturalized citizen which became particularly complicated, and included a deportation order, because Naw’s aunt had identified herself as Naw’s mother upon their arrival. Needless to say, the day Naw finally took her citizenship oath, she texted her EBCLO lawyer—full of pride and joy and gratitude! Naw emancipated this year with a high school diploma, some college credits under her belt, her Certificate of Naturalization and a lasting relationship with her lawyer.

4,821 hearings in the last year
SAFELY SURRENDERED

Have you ever wondered what happens when a baby is “safely surrendered”? In Alameda County, they become our clients. It happens a handful of times each year, and an adoptive family takes our clients in with little to no health history about the child they will now raise. Luckily that did not dissuade Reiko and Raymond from taking in Crystal even though they got the call just four months into the pandemic and right when they were in the middle of moving to a new home. Now two years old, Crystal is curious about the world around her, skeptical of strangers and a big fan of Minnie Mouse!

83 adoptions in the last year
Dependency Advocacy Program
EBCLO is the primary provider of court appointed legal representation for Alameda County’s foster youth. When a family is brought into juvenile court with allegations of abuse, neglect or abandonment, EBCLO is appointed. We help children navigate the juvenile court system and relentlessly advocate on their behalf. Our goal is to support children in safely returning to their homes.

Probate Guardianship Counsel for Children Program
When someone who is not a parent seeks custody of a child, an extensive process through the Probate Court ensues. EBCLO is appointed by the court in the most complicated probate guardianship cases for its expertise in providing vigorous and holistic representation to children and connecting children and their caregivers to community resources.

Community-based Advocacy for Resources and Education (CARE)
Children and youth who become involved in the court system often have a wide variety of needs, including outside of court. CARE encapsulates EBCLO’s specialty legal services as well as its advocacy beyond the courtroom including education advocacy, early childhood advocacy, cross-over youth advocacy and mental health advocacy.
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38 probate guardianships in 2021
200 education consults in 2021
57 early childhood development screenings completed
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2021 FINANCIALS

Support & Revenue: $3,957,273

- Government Contracts: $2,878,060
- Foundation Grants: $417,400
- Individual & Corporate Contributions: $213,155
- Fees for Services: $200,104
- Other Income: $248,553

Expenses: $3,452,499

- Program Expenses: $3,144,538
- General & Administrative Expenses: $239,990
- Fundraising: $67,971
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