

EAST BAY
CHILDREN'S
LAW OFFICES®

Children
should be
seen and
heard.®



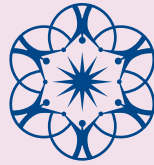
2025 Impact Report

1,566
children
served

82,682
miles driven
to see clients



1,926
visits with clients
in their home or
community over the
last year



EAST BAY
CHILDREN'S
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Why do it?

Kristin Mateer, Co-Founder/Executive Director

I am squarely in the *Just Do It* generation. And still, I appreciate the question WHY? *Why do it?*

What is EBCLO's why?

As lawyers and social workers, why do we sign up to bear witness to families' darkest hours? Why do we choose to listen to the details of horrific abuse or equally egregious government overreach into the lives of poor families?

Why do we think the simple act of listening works? Why do we think showing up over and over makes a difference in the life of a child?

Why do we file motions for things kids want and need? Why do we show up with cleaning supplies when a young adult client moves into their first apartment? Why do we cross-examine witnesses? Why do we bring crayons and paper when we need to talk with a client about hard stuff?

Because we also bear witness to stories of hope and joy. Because we believe in our clients, we believe in their families, and we believe in each other.

**Why do we do everything
we do at EBCLO...**

... because what if we didn't?

As the primary provider of court-appointed legal representation for Alameda County's youth experiencing foster care, our core team of twelve courtroom lawyers advocated at **4,239** hearings in three juvenile dependency courtrooms over the last year. The courtroom is where the most important decisions are made about children every day so we help children navigate the complicated process to make sure decisions aren't made about them without them.

If we didn't? Then **272** children would not have exited the foster care system safely at home with their parents. Another **71** children would not have found permanency through a legal guardianship with another caring adult. And **58** children would not have been adopted into families who have committed to them for the rest of their lives.

If we didn't? Then **259** young adults (age 18-21) would be without an advocate to help them take advantage of extended foster care services. Over the last year, **60** youth completed extended foster care moving successfully into independence.

Because if we didn't, children would not be seen and heard in the places it matters the most.



272
children's cases
closed because
children were safely
home with their
parents



58
adoptions
finalized



60
youth
completed
extended
foster care

71
legal guardianships
established

EBCLO's advocacy goes beyond the dependency courtroom as well. In the pages ahead, you will meet some special members of EBCLO's team whose what and how is outside of dependency court. Read on to learn about their *why*!

Why Strong Beginnings?

**Tatiana Smith, Youth Advocate
Social Worker**

Why do I screen dozens of 0–5 year old EBCLO clients for early childhood development issues every year? I do it because I would do it (and did do it!) for my own son. I do it because all our clients, including the littlest ones, deserve to thrive, and we know that early intervention makes a dramatic difference. With some simple tools, I empower parents and caregivers to know what to expect of their children developmentally and when to expect it. Together, we quickly identify whether the child has met particular developmental milestones.

When they haven't, EBCLO helps to identify the right services and put them in place to help. Having the right services in place early helps reduce our clients' needs for special education services down the line. Things like occupational therapy and speech therapy can address motor, communication, and problem-solving difficulties, boosting a child's overall potential and empowering families.

I do it because our baby and toddler clients depend on me, and what if I didn't? If I didn't, our clients might miss opportunities to address issues before they become problems. They might enter kindergarten without the skills they need to succeed and to thrive, and a rocky start in their educational journey might eventually cause them to dislike school. That's why you can always find me with a bag of blocks and cups and books and beads and all the everyday objects I need to help determine whether our young clients are doing just the things we expect them to.



105
child development
screenings identifying

63
children who fell
below the normal
developmental stage

**Delivered Ready
for Kindergarten
packets to**

83 rising TK
and Kindergarten
students

The Strong Beginnings Program ensures that young children (ages 0–5) receive vital services to address mental health, health, education and developmental challenges that can interfere with their social-emotional and educational development. Our objectives are to break the cradle-to-prison pipeline by meeting their needs as early as possible so our clients are more likely to succeed in school and in life.

Supported
36
babies born with
positive toxicology
screens

Why Education Advocacy?

Kristin Windley, Staff Attorney

I do this because “this” IS my why, my purpose, the thing that I have been doing since I began my career journey. Since the very first day I walked into Alameda

County Juvenile Hall, as an institutional officer, it was clear that something was off. Why did the faces of the youth look like a sea of melanin? The beauty of who they were stood in stark contrast to the stale white walls. Sadly, more defining to me was the sadness and despair in their eyes. My heart ached knowing that the system was failing them.

After more than a handful of years there and surviving an injury that could have been life altering, I decided to take things to the next level and pursue a law degree. From that moment, I never wavered on my decision to advocate for youth and make sure that they have access to education and supports that would charter the course for the rest of their lives. Study after study shows that early education is the catalyst to a full and rich life, one where the sky is truly the limit. So, I will continue to make sure that life circumstances, many of which our clients have no control over, do not prevent them from being exactly who they are meant to be!

Maintained a
100%
expulsion
prevention rate

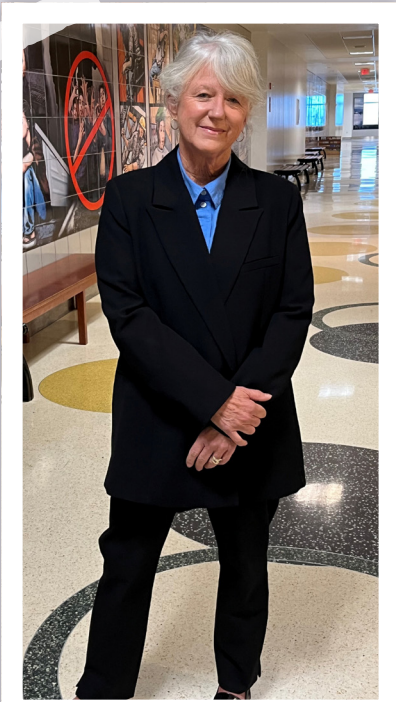


Attended **52**
Individualized
Education Program
meetings and
24 other school
meetings



The Education Advocacy Program is designed to reduce the educational achievement gap often experienced by youth in foster care. In addition to EBCLO's direct advocacy amplifying youth's voices in school, we recruit and train other trusted adults to hold educational rights for clients whose parents or foster parents cannot. The program prioritizes school stability, access to special education, school discipline defense and high school graduation.

Trained **72**
other adults
(CASA volunteers, child
welfare workers and
Berkeley Law students)
to support our
clients at school



Why Advocacy for Juvenile Justice?

Kim Rhody, Senior Staff Attorney

I love teenagers. They're funny. They're hopeful. And sometimes they're in trouble. That's when I'm there to listen to them more intently than ever because at that point, they often feel like everyone else is against them. The words they hear to describe their mistakes or bad decisions or even their victimization can sound harsh, unforgiving and judgmental. It's my job to stand with them in court and be the constant reminder that with enough information, all behavior makes sense. Often, I am the one at the

table who has known the youth the longest, and who knows and understands that it was adults' actions that first brought them into the child welfare system. Actions that have lasting impacts on our clients.

I don't always have the answers; in fact, I think I learn more than I teach. My goal is to create stepping stones that clients can reach for when they're ready—maybe today, maybe tomorrow. Sometimes it's very practical—a ride to an important appointment or guidance in completing community service hours. Other times, it's creating a meaningful partnership that allows our clients to have some agency in what happens next. Always, it's so they know we care.

What if I didn't? Then I'd be amongst those who gave up on a client, and our clients would be one step closer to a life forever impacted by the criminal justice system.

"I would not have [completed probation] without you. You always believed in me."

—FORMER JUVENILE JUSTICE CLIENT

The Advocacy for Juvenile Justice Program encompasses direct services and policy advocacy for youth experiencing both the foster care and juvenile or criminal justice systems. Since 2013, EBCLO has provided specialty advocacy to prevent youth from "crossing over" from foster care into the justice system. EBCLO also advocates for youth who have been subject to human trafficking or sexual exploitation.

16

clients successfully completed informal probation and had their records sealed

31

visits to young clients in custody

Supported **54** youth and

10 young adult clients who were arrested—

8 avoided charges

6 had charges reduced

Supported

11

clients as witnesses or victims

Why Probate Court?

Roxanne Romell,
Senior Staff Attorney

Abigail Williams,
Youth Advocate Social Worker

Some people call probate court the “hidden foster care” system. We call it families being families. Sometimes families fight about things, including kids. Big feelings are involved.

Probate Court isn’t family court because it’s not parents arguing about custody of their children with each other—there’s someone else wanting custody like a relative or a family friend.

But because Child Protective Services isn’t involved, it’s not Juvenile Court either. That means probate court is kind of everything in between but without the resources, lawyers, and social workers you’d expect. Mostly, it’s just us. Why do we want to be right in the middle? Because with our help, families remember that the kids are at the center of it all. Then courts do the right things for kids.

We are not appointed to represent every child who

comes through the probate court system; rather, the court seems to know just which families need a little extra support, and that’s when they call us.

Sometimes we are able to help a parent be a parent again, and their children come home to them. Other times, we are able to figure out who the next best person for the parenting job should be. It’s a special opportunity to stand beside kids and their families to figure out the best path forward and to make sure everyone has the resources they need to help the kids thrive.

If we didn’t do it . . . no one would.



10
children
reunited with
their parents

69
children
served

16
legal
guardianships
established



Why this team?

Because they go above and beyond their duties to our clients to be part of the community. Whether it's coaching mock trial, participating on career panels, recruiting resource families or joining community coalitions (and so much more!), our team's presence in the community is heartfelt and impactful.

Staff



Stephanie Aguayo



Carol Barnett



Regan Bradley-Brown



CJ Connolly



Larita Cortez



Christie De Guzman



Bri Fluhrer



Lovena Henry



Amanda Kennedy



Ashley Lotti



Kristin Mateer



Sarah McElhinney



Lynnā
McPhatter-Harris



Angelina Nilssen



Kim Rhody



Anthony Rodriguez



Roxanne Romell



Nayelit Sanchez



Tatiana Smith



Amy Spierling



Alix Vadot



Abby Williams



Kristin Windley



Emily Zia

Board of Directors



Kristin Mateer
Executive Director



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James Isbester



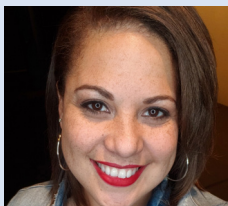
Reichi Lee



Greg Roberts



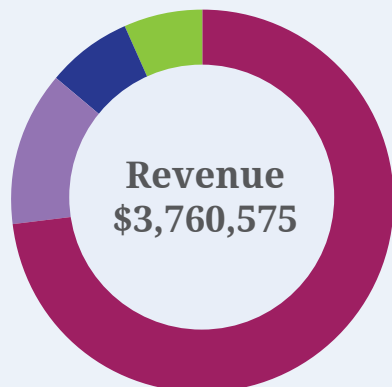
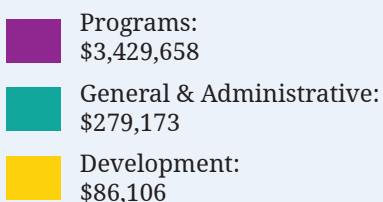
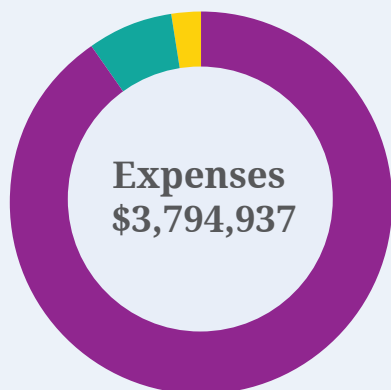
Janelle Sampana



Katherine Steadwell



Sarah Van Culin



EBCLO received just over \$600,000 in federal funding last year. Help protect our work in uncertain times.

Thank you! So much is possible because you give.

Donations received October 1, 2024, through September 30, 2025

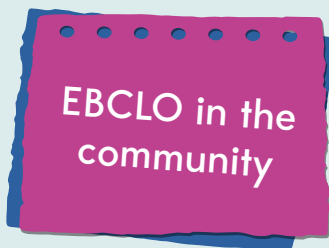
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Oakland, CA 94621

Why now?

Our request this year is urgent.

All around us, valuable federally funded programs are suffering. Will we be the next NPR? EBCLO received just over \$600,000 in federal funding last year. Without it, we could not provide the high quality legal services to children that we do. We cannot wait until it happens to fill the gap.

Help protect our work in uncertain times.



Scan here to make
a donation



The mission of East Bay Children's Law Offices is to protect and defend the rights of children and youth through holistic, vigorous and compassionate legal advocacy. EBCLO strives to provide a voice for children in and out of the courtroom and to promote positive outcomes for our clients.

ebclo.org

