EAST BAY CHILDREN'S LAW OFFICES®

2026 Impact Report



Children should be seen and heard.®

After foster care, what's next?

JANELLE SAMPANA, EBCLO BOARD PRESIDENT



We are sometimes so focused on surviving today that we cannot even imagine tomorrow. Too concerned about tonight to think about the future. Too worried to wonder: What's next?

The lawyers, social workers, and advocates of East Bay Children's Law Offices (EBCLO) have the privilege of helping youth navigate the labyrinth that is known as the legal system. At the heart of EBCLO's advocacy is the belief that every child should be seen and heard. That no child should be scared to ask: ***What's next?***

I will never forget what it was like to stand on one side of the courtroom; my parents on the other. As the hearing went on, the only thing that became clear to me was that I was not going back. By the end, there were still so many unanswered questions. How long will I be away? Can I eat after court? Do I have to transfer schools? I was afraid of what was next. But as the days, months, and years progressed, I was lucky to have a support system to remind me that I did not have to be afraid.

As the primary provider of court-appointed legal representation for Alameda County's youth in foster care, EBCLO is committed to vigorously representing the interests of children and youth. We stand by children during their darkest hour and work tirelessly to disrupt the stereotypes and trauma that the system too often inflicts on youth in foster care. We believe that there should always be a safe, fulfilling "next" for children.

What does EBCLO do to empower youth to reach "next"?

Over the last year, EBCLO advocated at 4,070 hearings for 1,534 clients. We did 1,913 home visits to meet with kids in their homes and communities, driving 65,195 miles to do so.

Most of our cases close each year because children are safely home with their parents. The EBCLO team often hear about important milestones or receive texts with kids' new school pictures from proud parents happy to keep us involved in their lives. Other clients enter a legal guardianship or are adopted, and EBCLO receives holiday cards from the new families. Others remain our client until adulthood, and our team helps them vote for the first time or writes them letters of recommendation for their first job.

What's next for EBCLO?

EBCLO works day and night to ensure that children are seen and heard. And we do not do it alone. We are fortunate to have many former EBCLO clients participating in our Youth Voices Group and a few who serve on our Board of Directors with me. You will hear more from some of them in the following pages, and we are thankful to each and every one of them. And we are thankful to you for taking the time to support EBCLO's mission. With your help, we will continue to advocate for youth today, tomorrow, and the next.

Our work over the last year



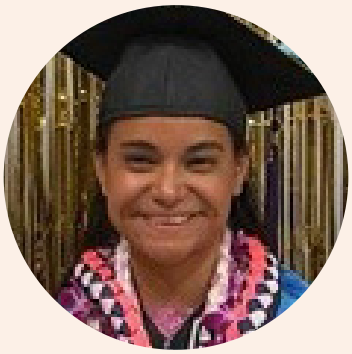
1,534
children served



1,913
visits at client's home or community



4,070
court appearances



65,195
miles driven to see clients



What came next for kids last year?

89
legal guardianships established

59
adoptions finalized

289
children safely home with parents

Paving the Way

42 clients attending college

30 clients navigating foster care and immigration systems

83 youth completed extended foster care

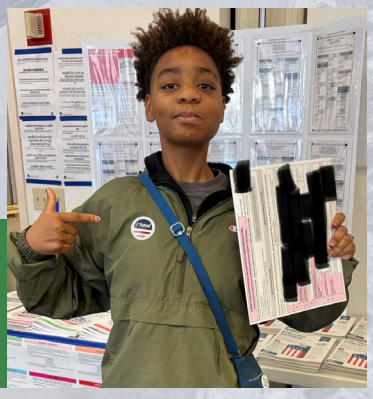
SB'S STORY

Sharing one's story can be difficult, but I am sharing mine in the hope that it can at least make one person in foster care feel less alone. It would have meant a lot to me to read a story like mine when I was younger. If I could use one word to describe my foster care journey, it would be "intersectionality." My journey navigating complex government systems and bureaucracies cultivated my passion to advocate. My childhood experiences with the child welfare system and immigration system have deeply shaped my desire to help others.

I was placed into foster care as a teenager and exited care this past summer. In high school, while my peers worried about prom, I worried about meetings with social workers and attorneys and court hearings. When I started applying to colleges my senior year of high school, I didn't realize the additional barriers my immigration status would create because I didn't qualify for federal financial aid. But through grants and scholarships, I made college a reality. I'm even considering going on to law school.

I am so grateful to EBCLO for supporting me through my time in foster care, especially given the instability that came with the foster care system. I was fortunate to have the same assigned attorney for most of my foster care experience. She truly cared, took my concerns seriously, and advocated for me in court. This mattered to me because it often feels like you have no say in a lot of decisions made about you when you are in foster care, so it is so important to have someone advocate for you and make your voice heard. My journey hasn't been easy, but it has shaped who I am today.

** Name and identifying details withheld to protect SB's privacy and safety.*



An EBCLO client casts his first ballot in 2026!

Programs

Dependency Advocacy Program

EBCLO is the primary provider of court-appointed legal representation for Alameda County's youth experiencing foster care. 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.

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. The court appoints EBCLO based on our expertise in providing vigorous and holistic representation to children through our ability to connect children and their caregivers to community resources.

Community-based Advocacy for Resources and Education (CARE) Program

CARE uses a trauma-informed approach to address the needs of children and youth beyond the four walls of the courtroom. CARE provides intensive and individualized client support through specialist attorneys and social workers to maximize positive outcomes for our clients. CARE includes:

- **Education Advocacy Program** is designed to reduce the educational achievement gap often experienced by youth in foster care, with a program goal to disrupt the school-to-prison pipeline.
- **Crossover Youth Advocacy Program** encompasses direct services and policy advocacy for populations of youth experiencing both the foster care and juvenile justice system.
- **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.

Conducted
126
child development screenings

Delivered
61
Ready for Kindergarten packets

Supported
45
youth and
10
young adults who were arrested

Supported
45
students and attended
41
Individualized Education Program meetings

Trained
94
other trusted adults to assist clients with school-based advocacy

EBCLO Board Members

Paying It Forward Through Mentorship, Coaching, and Service

The impact of mentorship often extends far beyond a single relationship. When someone takes the time to listen, encourage, and invest in another person, that support can create a ripple effect that lasts for generations. In a world marked by uncertainty and division, those connections matter more than ever. For young people navigating foster care, having someone who consistently shows up, listens, and believes in their potential can make all the difference.

> Paying it forward isn't a single act, but a continuing commitment to one another and to the generations that follow.

As three former foster youth who now serve on EBCLO's Board of Directors, we know the power of that support firsthand. For us, paying it forward is more than an act of service. It's an opportunity to transform our lived experiences into meaningful connections, advocate for others navigating similar challenges, and help build a future where every young person feels seen, heard, and supported.

PATRICK BURNS



As someone who spent part of my adolescence in foster care, I understand firsthand how transformative it can be when an adult takes the time to listen, encourage, and believe in a young person. Throughout my career as an artist, educator, and advocate, I've tried to pay that forward by creating opportunities for young people to discover their voices and recognize their own potential. Whether I'm teaching musical theatre, mentoring emerging artists, or working alongside foster youth through EBCLO's Youth Voices program, my approach begins with listening and understanding. Mentorship isn't about telling young people who they should become. It's about recognizing their expertise in their own lives and ensuring they have a meaningful voice in the decisions that shape their futures.

SAMUEL CARTER





Fifteen years ago, my lawyer believed in me when I was a client of EBCLO. Her support showed me how much it matters to have someone believe in your future. Today, I carry that experience into how I support others. As a father, educator, and community leader in Oakland, I see paying it forward as a responsibility. Mentorship means sharing what I've learned, including lessons that came through hardship. Coaching means helping others recognize their strengths, set goals, and take meaningful steps forward. Service means listening, following through, and responding to real needs. My purpose is to inspire young people and families to build confidence, access opportunities, and shape their own futures. I want those I support to know that their voices matter and their potential deserves investment. Someone believed in my future. I pay it forward by believing in someone else's.

> When young people are empowered to shape their own futures, the impact reaches far beyond any one life.



JESSICA MI

Navigating foster care as a teenager and young adult was challenging and often lonely. I was fortunate to have teachers, coaches, friends, and extended family who offered guidance and encouragement, helping me navigate grief and trauma while staying focused on my goals.

Now, five years into my career and with two degrees from Stanford, I've become increasingly involved in youth advocacy. Through serving on EBCLO's Board of Directors and volunteering as a court-appointed special advocate (CASA) with SFCASA, I'm able to make an impact both at the organizational level and through direct work with young people. For me, paying it forward means leading with empathy, listening with compassion, and showing up consistently. Above all, it means being an effective advocate and dependable supporter, just as others were for me when I needed it most.

What's next for us?



We're sisters; we're Oglala Sioux; and our family comes from the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota. We grew up in the Bay Area and entered foster care when we were 12 and 11. We both eventually aged out of foster care, and while we shared a lot of the same experiences growing up, we've taken pretty different paths since then. Even though we now live across the country from each other, we are both excited to be joining EBCLO's Youth Voices Group. We believe that sharing our lived experiences will help EBCLO's team ensure young people feel comfortable speaking up for themselves in a system that has historically oppressed their voices and autonomy. For us, creating opportunities for young people so they can thrive while they are in foster care and after foster care is what's next.

Lakota's Next



Lakota pictured above (6th from left) with NACC staff and members of the National Advisory Council on Children's Legal Representation.

I now work in the publishing industry as an executive assistant while pursuing my BA in Communications at Cal State LA. Since high school, I've wanted to go to law school, and I'm already presenting to lawyers as part of the National Advisory Council on Children's Legal Representation as a Lived Experience Expert. I presented at the National Association of Counsel for Children annual conference about the importance of keeping Native children connected to their culture and communities, and I hope to pursue tribal law in law school. In my years working in nonprofits, I worked with and learned from so many different communities which made me think a lot about whose experiences are considered when we create laws and policies, and whose aren't.

Autumn's Next

I recently finished my master's in International Education Management and Leadership in New York, and I'm currently working at a nonprofit agency that supports youth in foster care. I love traveling and experiencing new places and cultures, and that's something I really want to encourage other young people in foster care to do too. There are so many opportunities out there, and I want youth to know that those experiences are possible for them, even if it might not always feel that way. It's so important to have people who support you and encourage you to try new things.



Autumn in Osaka, Japan.



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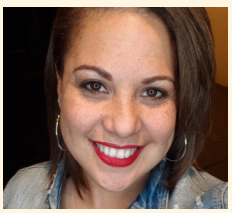
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Thank you! So much is possible because you give.

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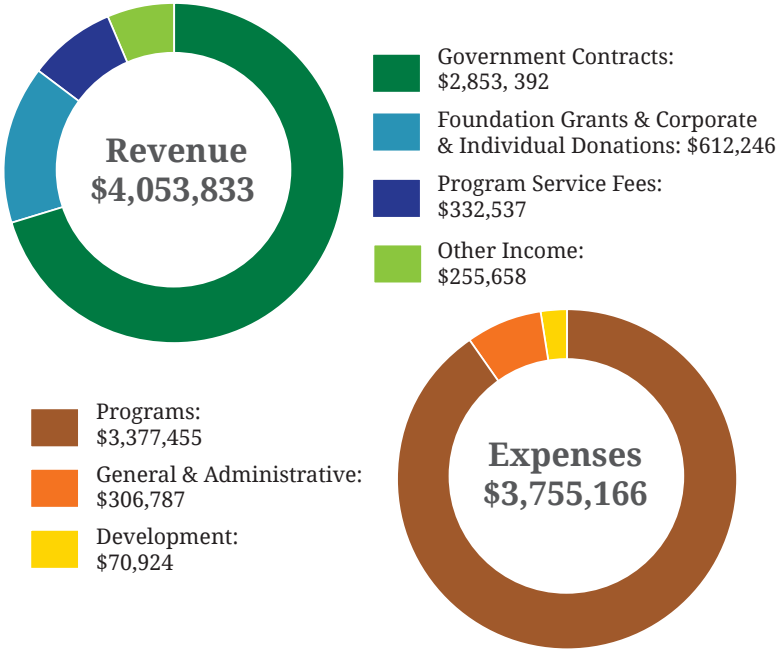


"We probably had six different county social workers, but our daughter's lawyer was always the same. She spent time with her and with us and really got to know us. That mattered when decisions were being made."

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Envisioning What's Next

EBCLO 's vision is a community where every child is supported, loved, and raised within their family and culture, where each child has a voice, and where all children have what they need to thrive.

SCAN HERE TO
MAKE A DONATION

EBCLO listens to children and youth, advocates for their needs, and empowers their voices in and beyond the courtroom. We strengthen children's networks of support and promote resiliency through intentional interdisciplinary collaboration delivering compassionate legal advocacy and dedicated social work to help young people achieve safety, stability and well-being.

ebclo.org