

From local reforms to statewide education solutions...

HOW PUBLIC COUNSEL FIGHTS FOR CALIFORNIA STUDENTS

California students face enormous challenges to educational success.

- **Too many foster youth fall through the cracks**, moving from school to school without ever moving ahead.
- **Too many youth lose out on an education** when they wind up in the juvenile justice system.
- **Too many students with disabilities miss out** on a quality education.
- **Too many students find prison, not promise**, at the end of their educational journey.



- **Too many youth are pushed out of school** by zero-tolerance discipline policies.
- **Too many schools fail to deliver** on the promise of educational opportunity for all including quality teachers and stable, well-funded schools.

We unite litigation, legislative and policy change, direct service and community partnerships to create a **model for education reform** across California.

WHAT WE BELIEVE

Public Counsel believes schools need to create opportunity, foster equality, and promote success for all students. Here are our focus areas:

- ▶ **Guiding foster youth to success:** Longtime foster youth need extra help to make it as adults. Public Counsel is expanding its ability to protect and expand legislative protections in Sacramento for foster youth in our schools and ensure that statewide policy reflects best practices for supporting their success.
- ▶ **Putting students on a path to graduation, not prison:** Police and courts, not teachers and parents,

control the educational future of too many of California's students. For them the "school to prison pipeline" isn't a metaphor, it's an everyday reality. Public Counsel is advocating for effective reforms that keep kids in class and out of the courtroom and to expand research-based alternatives with a proven track record of reducing out-of-school suspensions, and increasing learning and student graduation.

- ▶ **Expanding educational opportunity for children:** Public Counsel works through education, litigation, and direct representation to ensure that children and their parents receive the supports they need to succeed.
- ▶ **Reforming education for youth who are incarcerated:** Students in the juvenile justice system deserve an

education and a second chance after they are released. Public Counsel's work at Camp Challenger in Los Angeles County is aimed at creating a statewide model for education reform in the juvenile justice system.

- ▶ **Winning our students' educational future:** California's public schools should be engines of equality and opportunity. Public Counsel is expanding protections for students in struggling schools won through *Reed vs. State*, and pursuing litigation, legislation and policy change to restore the California dream for all California youth.



OUR RECORD

Public Counsel uses all the tools at its disposal to create opportunity for California students.

IMPACT LITIGATION

Won reforms to protect the rights of foster youth, who had been illegally labeled disabled and segregated from their peers, to attend a comprehensive public school

Won reforms at Los Angeles County's Challenger Memorial Youth Camp, one of the state's largest and most troubled educational systems, that will give incarcerated youth a second chance at an education

Rolled back Gov. Schwarzenegger's elimination of educationally-related mental health services to protect the rights of 25,000 students statewide

Protected more than 75,000 Los Angeles students annually from the negative impact of budget-based teacher layoffs in *Reed v. State*.

POLICY CHANGE AND COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

In partnership with parents, students' and civil rights groups and civic leaders, **led reform effort to change police department policies and a Los Angeles law that had led to 47,000 curfew tickets** over five years, many for students traveling on their way to school, and thousands of arrests for

OUR TEAM

Public Counsel's education team includes 9 attorneys and 2 social workers with experience in impact litigation, special education rights, and foster youth advocacy.



Laura Faer
Education Rights Director

Named California Lawyer of the Year in 2011 for her recent work on *Casey A. v.*

Jon R. Gundry et al. reforming education conditions at Los Angeles' Challenger Youth Camp, Ms. Faer has focused her career on fighting for the education rights of students in her capacity as a litigator, organizer, and policy and legislative advocate.

mostly African American and Latino students.

Released a breakthrough report with partners on Los Angeles Unified School District's positive behavior support and intervention policy and helped implement policies to keep students on track in school and reduce out of school suspensions.

Helped roll back layoffs for hundreds of California teachers in the hardest hit schools.

LEGISLATION

Sponsored, drafted and/or supported 5 new laws in 2010 and 2011 that remove barriers for children and youth in foster care and help secure educational stability, ensure foster youth can enroll in school and get credit toward graduation requirements for work they have completed and started, and establish enrollment criteria that prevents discrimination against students of immigrant families or families who are struggling in these hard economic times.

DIRECT SERVICES

Provides special education advocacy for children and teens, including those with serious emotional and behavioral challenges.

Helps transition-age foster youth to reach their educational goals through legal advocacy and partnerships at schools in South and East Los Angeles and across the county.



TAKING STUDENTS OFF THE 'JAILHOUSE TRACK'

Los Angeles Unified School District has one of the country's lowest graduation rates, and Public Counsel has tackled two major issues that contribute to the crisis: a rash of truancy tickets for students on their way to school and harsh discipline policies that put students behind.

Before we got involved, students who were late to school faced \$1,000 tickets and often stayed home as a result. We helped change the way police and courts approach students and worked with the City of Los Angeles to fix its daytime curfew law. "This is a common sense solution," Public Counsel's Laura Faer told the Associated Press after the City Council's 14-0 vote. "Students won't be put on the jailhouse track."

Public Counsel is also helping LAUSD to fully implement positive behavioral interventions and supports, a research-based model that reduces disciplinary problems and suspensions by as much as 60%.



Catherine Lhamon
Impact Litigation Director

One of the lead counsel on *Reed v. State*, which led to a landmark settlement that

protects Los Angeles students from the negative impact of budget based layoffs and sparked a national story about how to ensure students' civil rights in the classroom. As co-lead counsel on *Williams v. California*, Ms. Lhamon helped win a \$1 billion agreement to rebuild crumbling schools and provide textbooks and other materials critical to learning.



Martha Matthews
Children's Rights Director

Has focused on issues affecting youth for 20 years. She specializes in litigation

and other advocacy to improve foster care, welfare, and other government programs affecting low-income families, children, and youth.