Grant Helps Child Advocacy Clinic Assist Child Immigrants

The Child Advocacy Clinic (CAC) received a two-year grant to develop effective representation and policy advocacy on behalf of undocumented youths in foster care seeking lawful permanent residence from the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (CIS). The children are those of undocumented immigrants or are without any parents in this country. They are in foster care because they have been maltreated, their parents are unable to care for them, or they are destitute. (The grant, from the Ira W. DeCamp Foundation, is for children in foster care who are unable to return to their parents for a variety of reasons.)

CAC students engage in direct representation of undocumented youths seeking “greencards” or “lawful permanent residences,” as well as policy advocacy on behalf of undocumented youths within the federal immigration system and the state and local child welfare systems. Students also advocate for CIS to develop and maintain more efficient and fair application processing and to challenge federal regulations inconsistent with federal immigration law. They also work towards better training for Family Court judges, lawyers, and child welfare agency staff to identify undocumented youths more promptly and effectively. Students attempt to bridge the gap between child welfare and immigration practice to ensure more effective advocacy on behalf of undocumented youths by both areas of law practice. These include the use of web-based technology and greater integration of the two groups through existing networks.

Spearheading this new component of the clinic is Ragini Shah, who joined CAC in July 2004 to work with Professor and Clinic Director Jane Spinak. Most recently, Ms. Shah worked as a staff attorney at the Door’s Legal Services Center, where she specialized in representing undocumented young people in applications for Special Immigrant Juvenile Status. A graduate of Northeastern Law School, she has taught at Rutgers University and has been actively involved in immigration rights issues in New York.

Crimson Tied No More

The Graduate Legal Studies Program at Columbia Law School was ranked first among the 86 LL.M. programs in the United States. The competitive ranking, published by the American Universities Admission Program (AUAP) in 2004, is compiled annually by university professors and a panel of international law offices. While Harvard Law School tied with Columbia for first place in 2003, the country’s oldest law school fell to second this past year.

The AUAP was established in 1995 and provides foreign students with comprehensive assistance on admission to U.S. universities.