

# New NACC Recommendations for Legal Representation of Children and Youth in Neglect and Abuse Proceedings

## Landmark re-envisioning of 2001 Recommendations emphasizes youth voice, equity, and high-quality legal representation.

### What are the NACC Recommendations?

The NACC Recommendations for Legal Representation of Children and Youth in Neglect and Abuse Proceedings detail the 10 primary duties of attorneys for children in neglect and abuse proceedings. They call upon attorneys and legal service delivery systems to anchor legal representation around the voice and interests of the children and youth they represent. These recommendations replace NACC's 2001 Recommendations, which are widely recognized by attorneys, judges, and policymakers as best practice standards.

### Why do they matter?

From the moment the child welfare system intervenes in a child's life, everything is at stake—their home, bonds with parents and siblings, education, community, belongings, and their future. Given the injustices of poverty and structural racism, the harm of negative foster care experiences, and the trauma of family separation, zealous legal representation is essential. Effective attorneys help youth navigate complex proceedings, advance their legal rights, ensure their voices are heard, and reach better outcomes. To do that, attorneys need specific guidance and training. To improve the child welfare system, courts, agencies, partner organizations, advocates, and policymakers can refer to these standards of best practice.

### Who designed them?

The National Association of Counsel for Children and members of its National Advisory Council on Children's Legal Representation (NACCLR) co-designed the recommendations. The Advisory Council is comprised of young professionals with lived expertise in the child welfare system. Rather than simply re-writing the 2001 Recommendations and asking people with lived experience to comment, NACC centered the priorities

and input of the NACCLR from the beginning to end of the process. NACC also incorporated input from interdisciplinary experts, NACC staff and board members, two comment periods, attorneys practicing in the child welfare law field, and key resources and publications.

### What's new?

The recommendations mark a milestone in NACC's journey to develop a youth-centered legal profession, advance the highest-quality legal representation, and assist jurisdictions seeking to establish and improve representation. They emphasize client-centered attorney practice with more time invested in communication and zealous advocacy, and explicitly endorse client-directed representation. They also reduce the recommended caseload cap per attorney from 100 down to a range of 40-60 clients to allow for robust engagement. Finally, they recommend attorneys be educated in several topics related to trauma, equity, and cultural competency, among others. These are just some highlights!



### How do I read them?

Click the image at left, or visit [NACCchildlaw.org](https://NACCchildlaw.org).



Click the logo to learn more about the [National Advisory Council on Children's Legal Representation](https://NACCchildlaw.org).



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