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For Immediate Release  
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## Independent Study Shows Child Welfare Law Certification Improves Legal Representation

*At twenty-year mark of certification program, research demonstrates Child Welfare Law Specialists provide higher quality legal representation and see more career growth than non-certified attorneys.*

DENVER – Today, the Participatory Action Research Collective released the [results of a year-long evaluation](#) which demonstrates that certified Child Welfare Law Specialists outperform other attorneys in providing quality legal representation to children, parents, or child welfare agencies.

For two decades, the National Association of Counsel for Children has certified attorneys who pass a rigorous exam and meet other professional requirements as [Child Welfare Law Specialists](#). The nonprofit created the program in 2006 with a grant from the federal government. The U.S. Children’s Bureau, the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges, and the Conference of Chief Justices/Conference of State Court Administrators all endorse the certification program.

The study, designed in collaboration with people with lived experience in the child welfare system, examined the work of more than 300 child welfare professionals in its quantitative and qualitative analyses. It found Child Welfare Law Specialists score higher than non-certified attorneys on a majority of the nearly two-dozen indicators of quality legal work.

“Our research indicates there are several advantages of certification for attorneys and their clients,” said **Dr. Stef Sloan**, Principal Investigator of the Participatory Action Research Collective. “Child Welfare Law Specialists are more consistent in their practice and have stronger procedural and advocacy skills than non-certified peers.”

The evaluation also found that certification helps legal professionals advance their careers. Child Welfare Law Specialists are more likely to have more experience, specialize in representing a specific client population, receive a variety of training, and earn more on average than non-certified professionals. Additionally, a higher percentage are judges or judicial officers.

“NACC is glad to see this evaluation confirm what we have known for years: earning the Child Welfare Law Specialist certification helps lawyers and judges better pursue justice alongside kids and families,” said **Kim Dvorchak, JD**, CEO of the National Association of Counsel for Children. “Better training, more experience and consistency, and increased competence all lead to better representation of—and hopefully better outcomes for—people navigating the child welfare legal system.”

The group of Child Welfare Law Specialists the study examined was less racially diverse than the non-certified attorneys, indicating potential access barriers. The evaluation also recommended enhanced focus on communication skills with clients in the certification process.

“This gives us a roadmap to help build an even more inclusive, client-centered community of practice in the future,” Dvorchak added.

[Read the full evaluation and supporting documents.](#)

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Founded in 1977, the National Association of Counsel for Children is a non-profit professional membership and advocacy organization dedicated to advancing justice for children, youth, and families. NACC provides programs, training, certification, and resources that improve the quality of legal representation for children, parents, and

agencies; supports a community of dedicated professionals and helps attract diverse talent in the children's legal advocacy profession; and advocates for policies that advance children's rights, including the right to counsel. See [NACCchildlaw.org](http://NACCchildlaw.org).