

National Association
of Counsel for Children

Child Welfare Law Specialist Evaluation

Lived Expertise Data Report

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**Participatory Action
Research Collective**



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Executive Summary

The Lived Expertise Data Report is a supplemental, yet integral, component of the *NACC Child Welfare Law Specialist Evaluation*. (See that evaluation and the complementary *Methodological & Technical Report* for information about the history of the National Association of Counsel for Children’s (NACC’s) Child Welfare Law Specialist (CWLS) program, the purpose of the evaluation, and statistical findings regarding group differences between certified CWLS and non-certified attorneys.) Consistent with the Participatory Action Research (PAR) approach, individuals with lived expertise were engaged not only as study participants, but also as co-designers to help develop survey constructs and questions. The Lived Expertise component of the CWLS evaluation engaged a total of 416 youth and parents with child welfare lived expertise through surveys, qualitative interviews, and focus groups between May and October 2024.

- While lived expertise data could not be used to evaluate differences in experiences based on the certification status of participants’ attorneys, lived experience experts informed the development of survey instruments and provided fundamental insight related to experiences of legal representation quality.
- Individuals with lived expertise described the importance of their attorneys taking the time to meet with them, explaining what to expect, and helping address logistical barriers so that they could meaningfully participate in legal proceedings.

Communication and Client Engagement

- Most of the youth and parent survey participants indicated their attorneys took the time to meet with them before legal proceedings either virtually or in person.
- Youth and parent participants echoed the need to think about communication skills not as one broad skill, but as smaller micro-skills such as:
 - Perspective-taking
 - Shaping client expectations
 - Using accessible language
 - Checking for understanding
- Youth were less likely than parents to note the presence of quality communication skills in their attorney, indicating the need for more education on effective youth-centered communication strategies.
 - The skill of expectation-setting was more effectively used with parents than youth, which highlighted the need for different strategies to help youth comprehend the complexities of the legal process.
- Youth were less likely than parents to report that their priorities were acknowledged and to perceive their attorneys as sufficiently attentive to their needs and concerns.

Client-Centeredness

- Both youth and parents described difficulty addressing logistical barriers or meeting basic needs such as childcare or transportation so that they could effectively participate in their case.
- Less than 20% of youth indicated that their attorney referred to their parents by their names and less than half of parents reported that their attorney advocated for others to speak respectfully about them, which indicates a need for more strengths-based and family-centered approaches.
- Both youth and parents described a disconnect between communicated and internalized impressions of empathy, highlighting that while an attorney might possess skills for demonstrating empathy and

understanding, there is a need to apply more intentional and overt communication to articulate empathy and understanding for parents, siblings, and relatives.

- Only 41% of youth felt that their attorney advocated for contact with their parents that worked best for them, as compared to about 56% of parents. This finding, like many others, suggests that attorneys for children might have a harder time accurately understanding or articulating the wishes, needs, and perspectives of youth clients.

Cultural Humility

- Youth and parent survey responses indicated that half of the time or more, child welfare attorneys demonstrated cultural humility, yet focus group data suggested that practitioners do not consistently exhibit cultural humility.
 - There is a need for training to help child welfare attorneys see the importance of asking about culture and to promote communication skills (e.g., conversation starters, probing questions) for promoting cultural humility in legal practice.

Legal Advocacy

- Individuals with lived expertise indicated that there were many important skills and behaviors required of their attorneys during legal meetings, including:
 - Legal advocacy skills;
 - Advocating for client wishes;
 - Promoting strengths-based narratives of the client and family members in legal advocacy; and
 - Breaking down mental health evaluations and utilizing them within the case strategy.
- Parent participants noted that mental health evaluations were conducted in their cases, and, for many, had a detrimental impact.
 - Qualitative findings highlighted that youth and parents did not understand information presented in these evaluations, nor were they given the opportunity to refute them.
 - These findings highlight a need for more targeted training for child welfare attorneys pertaining to reading, discussing, and using mental health evaluations in legal advocacy, and more broadly in client communications.

Methods

Purpose

To properly explore the impact of the CWLS program required first, that definitions of quality representation were shaped by individuals with child welfare system lived expertise. Individuals with lived expertise engaged in survey co-design and as participants in unique data collection efforts. This report details findings from the following:

1. Engaging in co-design with individuals with lived expertise to inform constructs and definitions of child welfare law representation quality;
2. Testing potential questions for use with individuals with lived expertise to examine legal representation quality;
3. Examining the experiences of individuals with lived expertise in relation to these determined quality indicators; and

Using lived expertise survey data to lend context to law professional survey results and to anchor findings within the perspectives of those most impacted.

The evaluation approach initially aimed to use attorney certification status to analyze lived expertise survey data. However, due to the reliance upon a retrospective sample, there were not enough participants who could report the names or certification status of their attorneys. As such, significance testing and/or group-wise comparisons related to certification status were not used for lived expertise survey data. A future examination of the experiences of clients based on certification status (CWLS versus non-certified) is recommended.

Participatory Action Research (PAR) Approach

Participatory Action Research approaches prioritize the perspectives and experiences of individuals most impacted by the programs, services, and systems being examined. PAR methods are intended to promote equity and power-sharing among participants and collaborative meaning-making and framing of evaluation findings. The evaluation used a mixed-methods PAR approach, meaning that quantitative and qualitative data were used. Upon collection of all data types, the research team then synthesized, analyzed, and triangulated all quantitative, qualitative, and visual data. Data collection methods included:

- **Ripple Effects Mapping:** Ripple Effects Mapping (REM) is a participatory visual approach that was used to engage individuals with child welfare system lived expertise in a focus group setting. REM is intended to engage all individuals that experience a program, either directly or indirectly, to discuss benefits, insights, experiences, and challenges. REM yields convergent data that centers the experiences of those most impacted. See Appendix B for more information about this method.
- **Qualitative Interviews:** The evaluation used qualitative interviews to explore and address research questions, to examine and test emergent theories and hypotheses, and to examine and refine constructs alongside individuals with child welfare system lived expertise.
- **Survey Development and Participation:** Consistent with the PAR approach, individuals with lived expertise were engaged not only as study participants, but also as co-designers, to help develop survey constructs and questions.

PAR EVALUATION ACTIVITIES AND APPROACHES

FIGURE 1: PAR Evaluation Activities and Approaches

	EVALUATION ACTIVITY	APPROACH
1	Identify and determine key survey constructs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NACCLR focus group • Lived expertise focus group • Research team meetings with individuals with lived expertise
2	Determine wording for survey items	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lived expertise qualitative interviews • Research team meetings with individuals with lived expertise
3	Refinement of survey item wording	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lived expertise qualitative interviews • Research team meetings with individuals with lived expertise
4	Lived Expertise Survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deployed survey within populations of formerly involved youth and parents
5	Meaning making of, and building context for, emergent findings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lived expertise focus groups and qualitative interviews

More information about the research methods used, sampling, and analytic strategies can be found in the accompanying *Methodological & Technical Report*.

Lived Expertise Participants and Demographics

The lived expertise survey, focus groups, and interviews targeted the following populations:

1. Individuals who experienced the child welfare system as a youth and had legal representation at time of involvement; and
2. Individuals who experienced the child welfare system as a parent and had legal representation at time of involvement.

Individuals were also required to be at least 18 years old at the time of participation in this evaluation. The terms “youth participants,” “youth respondents,” etc., in this report refer to individuals at least 18 years old who experienced the child welfare system as a youth.

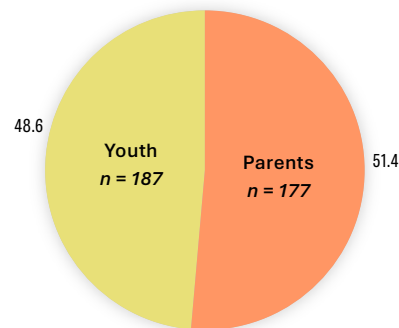
A total of 52 individuals with lived expertise were included in REM focus groups or qualitative interviews, and responses from 364 individuals were captured by the lived expertise survey.^{1,2} Inclusion criteria for participation in qualitative portions of the study were the same as survey inclusion criteria but also incorporated the perspectives of kinship caregivers. Participant characteristics are shown in the table and figure below:

LIVED EXPERTISE PARTICIPANTS

TABLE 1: Lived expertise participants

Method	Youth	Parent	Kinship Caregiver	Total by Type of Engagement
Focus Group	13	15	N/A	28
Interview	12	9	3	24
Survey	187	177	N/A	364
Total by Population	212	201	3	416

FIGURE 2: Lived expertise survey sample



The following table illustrates the average age at child welfare system involvement and average length of involvement for youth and parent populations, which were reported retrospectively. The youth participants reflected longer periods of time within the child welfare system as compared to the parent population.

AVERAGE AGE AND LENGTH OF INVOLVEMENT

TABLE 2: Lived expertise survey sample average age and length of involvement

	Youth (n = 187)	Parents (n = 177)
Average age during child welfare system involvement	14.09 years (SD = 6.73)	25.73 years (SD = 9.38)
Average length of involvement	5.08 years (SD = 4.32)	3.02 years (SD = 3.45)

Survey participants were asked to specify the state in which their child welfare system involvement took place. Youth survey representation spanned 32 states and Washington DC, with the largest proportions from

1 Demographic data reflect the lived expertise survey only, as demographic data were not collected from interview and focus group participants.

2 Youth and parent survey samples are comprised of unique participants, and are not dyadic, meaning that the parents and youth survey respondents do not reflect individuals within the same family systems.

California (19.25%), New York (11.23%), Texas (11.23%), and Florida (10.16%). Parent survey representation encompassed 34 states, with the largest proportions from California (35.03%), Washington (8.56%), Florida (7.34%), and New York (5.88%).

STATE

TABLE 3: Lived expertise survey state representation

	Youth (n = 187)		Parents (n = 177)	
	(n)	%	(n)	%
Alabama	7	3.74	3	1.69
Alaska	2	1.07	0	0
Arizona	5	2.67	4	2.26
Arkansas	5	2.67	0	0
California	36	19.25	62	35.03
Colorado	4	2.14	6	3.21
Connecticut	0	0	1	0.56
Delaware	1	0.53	1	0.56
District of Columbia	3	1.6	0	0
Florida	19	10.16	13	7.34
Georgia	1	0.53	3	1.69
Hawaii	0	0	1	0.56
Idaho	0	0	0	0
Illinois	3	1.6	4	2.26
Indiana	1	0.53	4	2.26
Iowa	2	1.07	3	1.69
Kansas	1	0.53	0	0
Kentucky	2	1.07	0	0
Louisiana	2	1.07	2	0.85
Maine	0	0	0	0
Maryland	0	0	2	0.85
Massachusetts	4	2.14	1	0.56
Michigan	5	2.67	4	2.26
Minnesota	0	0	2	0.85
Mississippi	0	0	1	0.56
Missouri	4	2.14	6	3.21
Montana	0	0	0	0
Nebraska	0	0	1	0.56
Nevada	0	0	1	0.56
New Hampshire	0	0	0	0
New Jersey	2	1.07	0	0

	Youth (n = 187)		Parents (n = 177)	
	(n)	%	(n)	%
New Mexico	1	0.53	0	0
New York	21	11.23	11	5.88
North Carolina	2	1.07	2	0.85
North Dakota	0	0	0	0
Ohio	5	2.67	2	0.85
Oklahoma	3	1.6	1	0.56
Oregon	0	0	5	2.82
Pennsylvania	3	1.6	3	1.69
Rhode Island	2	1.07	2	0.85
Puerto Rico	0	0	0	0
South Carolina	1	0.53	0	0
South Dakota	0	0	0	0
Tennessee	2	1.07	2	0.85
Texas	21	11.23	5	2.82
Utah	0	0	1	0.56
Vermont	0	0	0	0
Virginia	1	0.53	1	0.56
Washington	5	2.67	16	8.56
West Virginia	1	0.53	0	0
Wisconsin	1	0.53	1	0.56
Wyoming	0	0	0	0
Missing	9	4.81	0	0

Race and ethnicity data for each group are reported below:³

RACE/ETHNICITY⁴

TABLE 4: Lived expertise survey race and ethnicity demographics

*Indicates write-in responses when “Another group” was selected

	Youth (n = 187)		Parents (n = 177)	
	(n)	%	(n)	%
Asian	1	0.53	1	0.56
Asian Indian	1	0.53	0	0
Chinese	0	0	1	0.56
Filipino	0	0	0	0
Japanese	0	0	0	0

3 Race and ethnicity categories and best practices used the approach utilized 2024 Federal Register grantee reporting guidelines.

4 Participants were able to select more than one category.

	Youth (n = 187)		Parents (n = 177)	
	(n)	%	(n)	%
Korean	0	0	0	0
Vietnamese	0	0	0	0
Black or African American	64	34.22	40	22.60
African American	58	31.02	39	22.03
Ethiopian	1	0.53	0	0
Haitian	0	0	0	0
Jamaican	4	2.14	2	0.85
Nigerian	6	3.21	0	0
Somali	0	0	0	0
Hispanic or Latin	12	6.42	29	16.38
Argentinian*	0	0	1	0.56
Cuban	1	0.53	1	0.56
Dominican	1	0.53	0	0
Guatemalan	0	0	0	0
Honduran*	1	0.53	1	0.56
Mexican	12	6.42	28	15.82
Puerto Rican	3	1.6	1	0.56
Salvadoran	1	0.53	0	0
Spanish/Spaniard*	1	0.53	0	0
Indigenous or Alaska Native	4	2.14	5	2.82
American Alaska*	0	0	1	0.56
Azteca*	0	0	1	0.56
Cherokee*	1	0.53	0	0
Indigenous American*	0	0	1	0.56
Eskimo*	0	0	1	0.56
Maya*	0	0	1	0.56
Navajo Nation (Diné)*	1	0.53	0	0
Navajo Nation*	0	0	1	0.56
Nome*	2	1.07	0	0
Middle Eastern or North African	2	1.07	0	0
Egyptian	0	0	0	0
Iranian	1	0.53	0	0
Iraqi	0	0	0	0
Israeli	1	0.53	0	0
Lebanese	0	0	0	0

	Youth (n = 187)		Parents (n = 177)	
	(n)	%	(n)	%
Palestinian	0	0	0	0
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	3	1.6	1	0.56
Chamorro	0	0	0	0
Fijian	0	0	0	0
Marshallese	0	0	0	0
Native Hawaiian	3	1.6	0	0
Samoan	1	0.53	1	0.56
Tongan	0	0	0	0
Indicated more than one race/ethnicity	53	28.34	41	23.16
White	86	45.99	95	53.67
English	3	1.60	0	0
German	6	3.21	11	6.21
Irish	2	1.07	4	2.26
Italian	1	0.53	6	3.39
Polish	0	0	0	0
Scottish	1	0.53	0	0
Prefer not to answer	1	0.53	2	0.85
Missing	9	4.81	4	2.26

While this evaluation used a retrospective sample, sample representativeness was considered by using the 2022 Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS) children in foster care data (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Administration on Children, Youth, and Families, 2023). The youth survey sample (2.14%) was proportional to national representation in foster care for American Indian/Alaska Native individuals (2%) and relatively proportional for White participants, with White youth survey participants comprising of 45.99% of the sample compared to 43% of the foster care population. Asian youth participants were slightly underrepresented in the survey sample (0.53%) compared to 1% of youth in care nationally. Hispanic/Latinx youth were considerably underrepresented in the survey sample (6.42%) as compared to 22% of youth in foster care nationally. Black/African American youth were overrepresented in the survey sample (34.22%) compared to 23% of total youth in care. The youth survey sample also contained more individuals identifying as Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander (1.6%) as compared to 0% reported in the 2022 AFCARS data.

Comparisons between the parent survey sample and national representation are not offered in this report due to a lack of quality data sources to serve as a comparison. However, when comparing the youth and parent survey samples, representation is relatively similar amongst American Indian/Alaska Native, Asian, and White populations in both groups. The youth sample contains greater representation of Black/African American individuals, Middle Eastern or North African, and Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander populations as compared to parent respondents. The parent survey population has nearly twice as many participants who identify as Hispanic/Latinx than the youth sample.

Sexual Orientation Gender Identity and Expression (SOGIE) data were collected using a combination of items and wording utilized by the Trevor Project⁵ and the Human Rights Campaign All Children, All Families program.⁶ Gender identity and sexual orientation are reported for each group in the tables below:

GENDER IDENTITY

TABLE 5: Lived expertise survey sample gender identity demographics

	Youth (n = 187)		Parent (n = 177)	
	(n)	%	(n)	%
Female/woman	77	41.18	80	45.20
Male/man	10	5.34	9	5.08
Nonbinary, genderqueer, or not exclusively male or female	8	4.28	4	2.26
Another gender	0	0	0	0
Prefer not to answer	0	0	0	0
Missing	2	1.07	0	0

Distributions amongst those who identify as female and male are relatively similar across youth and parent samples, with both groups reflecting slightly higher proportions of those who identify as men. The youth sample reports greater diversity for SOGIE demographics compared to the parent sample, which is consistent with national trends and generational shifts in how gender identity and sexual orientation is defined, labeled, and understood. There remains some level of SOGIE diversity within the parent population, highlighting the importance of ensuring that LGBTQ+ parents are not overlooked in service delivery or legal advocacy.

SEXUAL ORIENTATION

TABLE 6: Lived expertise survey sample sexual orientation demographics

	Youth (n = 187)		Parent (n = 177)	
	(n)	%	(n)	%
Straight/heterosexual	148	79.14	163	92.09
Lesbian or gay	16	8.56	0	0
Bisexual	13	6.95	9	5.08
Queer	2	1.07	4	2.26
Pansexual	3	1.60	0	0
Prefer to self-describe	0	0	0	0
Prefer not to answer	1	0.53	1	0.56
Missing	4	2.14	0	0

Disability status was gathered using a simple yes/no question, rather than using more standardized measures such as those put forth by the US Department of Health and Human Services. This approach is endorsed by

5 <https://www.thetrevorproject.org/>

6 <https://www.hrc.org/>

disability rights scholars and considered to more accurately capture the population (Hall et al., 2022).⁷ Roughly similar proportions (approximately 21%) of the youth and parent group self-identified as having a disability, which is less than the 28.7% of the general population that identifies as having a disability (CDC, 2024).

DISABILITY STATUS

TABLE 7: Lived expertise survey sample disability status demographics

	Youth (n = 187)		Parent (n = 177)	
	(n)	%	(n)	%
No	141	75.40	140	79.10
Yes	39	20.86	37	20.90
Prefer not to answer	3	1.6	0	0
Missing	3	1.6	0	0

7 Other methods of gathering disability status require respondents to choose from pre-selected categories, which can result in false negative responses due to the mismatch between the predetermined disability category and the ways in which the respondent classifies or describes one's disability.

Legal Representation Quality Survey Results

The following section outlines responses to survey and qualitative interview questions related to legal representation quality. Research on sampling bias, recruitment approaches, and question structure demonstrates that particularly for multiple choice questions, responses may be prone to over-represent positive and under-represent negative experiences (Wirth & Tchetgen, 2014). Given that over 50% of the survey sample was reached through an attorney (although the survey was distributed through other means such as advocacy organizations, listservs, etc., and constituted about 45% of the sample), the survey results reflect a more positive experience overall. Qualitative insights, particularly from lived expertise participants who articulated having negative experiences, are used to communicate a balanced perspective reflective of a spectrum of experiences.⁸

Communication Skills

Lived expertise participants routinely echoed that although communication skills were often considered as one broad skill, there were many smaller micro-skills that needed to be considered. For example, perspective-taking, youth-centered engagement, and the shaping of expectations were frequently mentioned by focus group and interview participants. Lived expertise survey respondents were asked to indicate which of the following was true about their communication experiences with their attorney. For both youth and parent groups, responses are reported in order of most to least endorsed.⁹

COMMUNICATION SKILLS

TABLE 8: Lived expertise survey results- experiences with attorney

Youth Items (n = 187)	(n)	%	Parent Items (n = 177)	(n)	%
Spoke to me with a calm and friendly voice	124	66.31	Spoke to me with a calm and friendly voice	135	76.27
Was a good listener	103	55.08	Was a good listener	115	64.97
Listened to what I had to say without interrupting	89	47.60	Was able to see my perspective	102	57.63
Explained my options to me	72	38.50	Gave me the chance to ask questions	102	57.63
Was able to see my perspective	68	36.36	Helped me make informed choices	101	57.06
Cared about my priorities	68	36.36	Cared about my priorities	100	56.50
Used humor or play to help me feel more comfortable	66	35.29	Explained my options to me	100	56.50
Helped me make informed decisions	64	34.22	Helped me have realistic expectations of the legal process	84	47.46
Gave me the chance to ask questions	63	33.69			
Used activities during our meetings	62	33.16			
Allowed me to choose where we would meet	61	32.62			
Helped me have realistic expectations of the legal process	53	28.34			

8 Many participants articulated a mixture of positive and negative experiences. For the purposes of presenting the data, results are reported using a dichotomous and categorical approach of generally positive versus negative.

9 Endorsed, in this context, means that the survey participant selected the item as having been present or demonstrated by their attorney.

For both youth and parents, the most endorsed item was “*Spoke to me with a calm and friendly voice*”, with 66.31% of youth, and 76.27% of parents indicating this skill as having been demonstrated by their child welfare attorney. This suggests that about one third of youth clients did not perceive this quality in their attorney, potentially indicating room for improvement. A higher percentage of parents, 76.3%, reported that their attorneys demonstrated this quality, which indicates that attorneys are more likely to meet parental expectations for calm and friendly communications as compared to youth. The difference between parent and youth endorsement rates (~10%) highlights a potential generational or situational gap in how attorneys approach communication with these groups, or differences in how these qualities are perceived by youth versus parents.

“I don’t want to just be heard. I want to feel heard. It’s not the same.” — YOUTH PARTICIPANT

The least endorsed item for both groups was “*Helped me have realistic expectations of the legal process*”. Only 28.34% of youth and 47.46% of parents reported that their attorney assisted in setting realistic expectations, indicating that this skill was missing for the majority of each group. The significant gap (~19%) between youth and parent endorsement rates suggests that attorneys may prioritize clarity and expectation-setting more effectively with parents, or that youth may require different approaches to fully grasp the complexities of the legal process. For attorneys representing children, the age of their client might make this task considerably more difficult.

“We want to be heard because no one has listened.” — PARENT PARTICIPANT

Approximately 36.36% of youth respondents indicated that their child welfare attorney cared about their priorities. This suggests that while some youth felt their priorities were acknowledged, a significant majority did not perceive their attorneys as sufficiently attentive to their needs and concerns. A higher percentage, 56.5%, of parent respondents endorsed this item. The lower youth endorsement rate suggests a potential disconnect in how attorneys engage with younger clients, as youth may feel their voices are not being heard or prioritized in the legal process.

“My experience with my attorney when I was 8 and involved with the legal welfare system in [jurisdiction] is something I still think about. At that age, everything was confusing and intimidating. My attorney was like a bridge between me and a world I didn’t understand. They were kind and patient, taking the time to explain what was happening in ways that made sense to a child. They always made sure my voice was heard, even when I didn’t fully grasp the complexities of the situation. Looking back, I realize how important it was to have someone who genuinely cared about my well-being and fought to ensure I was treated fairly. Their support during such a turbulent time left a lasting impression on me.” — YOUTH PARTICIPANT

The high frequency of positive communication and empathy-related responses reflects that youth perceive their attorneys’ efforts to establish rapport. Yet lower endorsements of survey items that reflect setting realistic expectations or engaging in practical preparation (e.g., using activities) suggest opportunities to improve in educating child welfare attorneys on how to speak to youth about the legal process in a relatable and actionable way, and check for youth’s understanding of those discussions.

“My lawyer explained the different placement options, like foster care or group homes. It was a lot to consider.” — YOUTH PARTICIPANT

Trends across all communication-related survey items reflect similar group differences, with parents endorsing each item at a higher rate. The developmental age and stage of youth clients would certainly impact their ability to internalize efforts on behalf of their attorney, yet the lower endorsements on items that reflect effective strategies for communicating with children (e.g., used humor or play, used activities during our meetings), demonstrate a lack of child-centered communication strategies as a potential catalyst of negative youth perceptions on these quality items.

Before Legal Meetings

During focus groups and interviews, individuals with lived expertise described the importance of their attorney taking the time to meet with them, explaining what to expect, and helping address logistical barriers so that they could meaningfully participate in legal meetings (court proceedings, case management meetings, etc.). Survey items were then devised to identify the prevalence of such actions and behaviors from their attorney prior to legal meetings. The following responses indicate items that were reflective of survey participants' experience with their attorney, listed from most frequently to least endorsed.

BEFORE LEGAL MEETINGS SURVEY RESPONSES

TABLE 9: Lived expertise survey — before legal meetings responses

Youth Items (n = 187)	(n)	%	Parent Items (n = 177)	(n)	%
Prepared me for what to expect from the legal process	106	56.68	Met with me in person	128	72.32
Met with me in person	101	54.01	Explained their role to me in plain language	97	54.80
Explained what an attorney/lawyer was and what they do	92	48.13	Told me the truth about my case	93	52.54
Explained legal words and concepts in a way that I could understand	85	45.45	Met with me virtually or over the phone	83	46.89
Told me the truth about my case	74	39.57	Helped me think about different solutions	79	44.63
Met with me virtually or over the phone	63	33.69	Explained legal words and concepts in a way that I could understand	72	40.68
Gave me reminders about meetings ahead of time	59	31.55	Prepared me for what to expect from the legal process	70	39.55
Helped me think about different solutions	51	27.27	Helped me find childcare or transportation so that I could attend legal meetings	67	37.85
Helped me solve problems (transportation, getting permission to leave school, etc.) so that I could attend legal meetings	42	22.46	Helped me access resources that could help me and my family, such as accessing benefits, housing, childcare, or other basic needs	64	36.16
Seemed like they weren't telling me everything I need to know	38	20.32	Gave me reminders about meetings ahead of time	61	34.46
			Helped me decide whether to attend court	53	29.94
			Hid important details from me about my case	29	16.38

Youth and parents both described the importance of their attorney preparing them for what to expect from the legal process, particularly in advance of legal meetings. For both groups, at least half of the survey sample indicated that their attorney met with them either in person or over the phone prior to legal proceedings, which indicated that attorneys were, in many cases, setting the stage for what to expect.

“My attorney met with me sporadically before hearings but would not explain or meet with me after hearings. I often felt like he had a template to advocate from and did not advocate for my wishes.” — PARENT PARTICIPANT

Another key skill articulated by individuals with lived expertise was the need to speak to the client in plain language that they could understand. Under half, or about 45% of youth and about 40% of parents endorsed this item. Additionally, youth survey participants indicated that less than half of the time their attorney explained what a lawyer was and what they do — meaning, over half the time, the skill of using accessible language was either deficient or missing entirely.

“I think he tried to tell me what was going on but I just didn’t get it. Legal people think they are making it clear but they still aren’t. He was in such a hurry so that didn’t help.” — YOUTH PARTICIPANT

In focus groups and interviews, individuals with lived expertise often noted the importance of telling them the truth, and articulated harm done when the attorney was not fully transparent. This was borne out in the survey data where about 40% of youth participants indicated that they felt their attorney did not tell them the truth about their case. Further, when asked a similar question using negative phrasing, a little over 20% of youth stated that they felt that they weren’t being told all of the information about their case that they needed to know. For parents, 52.54% indicated that their attorney told them the truth about their case. To glean more insight about the level of attorney transparency, parent survey participants were asked an additional question using the negative phrasing of *“[My attorney] hid important details from me about my case.”* About 16% of parents stated they felt important details about their case were hidden from them. These findings could indicate that while parents may not feel that they were always being given the most forthright truth about their case, they did not feel their attorneys were explicitly hiding details. Discrepancies in these two questions for parents could highlight the need for more clear and direct communication. Group differences between youth and parents on questions about transparency could be explained by the differences in which the survey question was posed, or it could indicate that youth are more likely to feel left out of important details, possibly in attempt to shield the youth from what the attorney might perceive as age-inappropriate information.

This pattern was also evident with the item *“Helped me think through different solutions”* that was posed to both youth and parent survey participants. Almost 45% of parent participants indicated that their attorneys helped them think through different solutions to problems prior to legal meetings, whereas only 27% of youth noted this skill as present. In the survey development process, individuals with lived expertise often described the logistical issues that prevented them from being able to participate as fully as they would have liked. Barriers to transportation, childcare, or simply having someone who could remind them of court dates, were indicated by youth and parents with lived expertise. For youth in particular, they struggled to get permission to leave school for court dates. Parents, on the other hand, described the desire to have their attorney assist them with meeting their basic needs prior to court dates, to be able to demonstrate progress and effort toward their case plan.

“They [the child welfare system] would fault me for not having the things I needed. I just needed help. I needed someone to help me get access because I wasn’t getting nowhere with anyone else. My lawyer had people in his office who could help me with all that so by the time I had court I could show all the things I improved. This helped me win my case I think.” — PARENT PARTICIPANT

Overall, 37.9% of parent respondents indicated that their attorney helped them find childcare, transportation, etc., while a lower percentage of youth (23%) indicated that their attorney helped them solve logistical barriers. Response trends indicate this is a high-need area. The responsibility for providing transportation and facilitating leave from school also typically falls within the scope of the child welfare agency, yet participants reported that this was not always coordinated. Individuals with lived experience, youth and parents alike, expressed the hopes that their attorneys would help navigate, advocate for, and plan to ensure these supports were provided.

“I think that my attorney could’ve told me more about the resources that CPS had for me that they did not provide.” — PARENT PARTICIPANT

During Legal Meetings

Individuals with lived expertise indicated that there were a number of important skills and behaviors demonstrated by their attorneys during legal meetings such as court hearings as well as out-of-court meetings, including advocacy skills, communicating client preferences, and promoting strengths-based narratives of the client and family members.

DURING LEGAL MEETINGS SURVEY RESPONSES

TABLE 10: Lived expertise sample — During Legal Meetings responses

Youth Items (n = 187)	(n)	%	Parent Items (n = 177)	(n)	%
Advocated for what was most important to me	111	59.36	Advocated for what was most important to me	110	62.15
Helped make sure I felt included during legal proceedings	105	56.15	Helped communicate my needs and priorities	108	61.02
Helped communicate my needs and priorities	99	52.94	Made sure that my case continued to move forward	102	57.63
Made sure other adults understood my perspective	90	48.13	Helped make sure I felt included during legal meetings	96	54.24
Advocated for things that worked best for me	83	44.39	Helped others understand my perspective	89	50.28
Referred to my parent(s) by their names	37	19.79	Advocated for others to speak respectfully to me, and about me	85	48.02
			Spoke up in court	80	45.20

“He tried but it seemed like the other attorney had an in with the judge. We got to court and the other attorney was having a one-on-one and laughing and smiling with the judge and they wouldn’t listen to me. My attorney just seemed to give in.” — PARENT PARTICIPANT

Overall, for youth and parents, most survey items were all endorsed at around half of the time or just below. Almost 60% of the youth survey sample indicated that they felt their attorney advocated for what was most important to them, and over half stated their attorney made sure they felt included and helped communicate their needs and priorities. For parents, similar to youth, the most frequently endorsed item was “*Advocated for what was most important to me*” (62.15%), with the second most endorsed item signifying that their attorney helped communicate their needs and priorities (61.02%). Parents were slightly more likely to feel that their attorneys effectively communicated their needs, reflecting a potential gap in how youth perceive their

attorneys' communication efforts, or perhaps a skill gap in effectively soliciting the wishes and preferences of youth clients.

“My attorney asked me what I wanted but didn’t seem to understand why I wanted it.

She acted like that because I was a kid I wouldn’t have good reasons.” — YOUTH PARTICIPANT

Notably, the topic of how to refer to parents as an attorney for the child came up frequently in focus groups and qualitative interviews, which reflects an opportunity for education and training. Less than 20% of youth indicated that their attorneys referred to their parents by their parents' names. For parents, the least frequently endorsed item was *“Spoke up in court,”* at 45%. Viewed in conjunction with a minority of parent respondents stating that their attorney advocated for others to speak respectfully about them, a theme emerged: parents expressing a lack of positive narrative facilitated by their attorney, or experiencing complacency by their attorney during court.

“I don’t remember things being explained to me, and I specifically remember feeling like I wasn’t given choices or explanations towards the beginning. I do not recall if my attorney ever came to meetings outside of court, either. When I made progress in my case and was near the end of trial though, I specifically remember my attorney stepping up for me in court. The 6-month period was up, and the GAL was recommending my case stay open further. I believe the department also had this recommendation. My attorney argued on my behalf that it be done, and his argument was successful. My case dismissed that day.” — PARENT PARTICIPANT

Additional Quality Questions

Additional survey questions were asked to better understand specific experiences related to empathy, consideration of client input, cultural humility, and gender-affirming competencies, and other skills. The following section highlights responses from each of those survey questions, in which respondents were asked to indicate whether certain statements were true of their experience, not true, or if they were not sure.¹⁰ Some items offered a response option for indicating when a particular question was not applicable (e.g., the question about gender-affirming supports). Given the multiple-choice format of these questions, both youth and parent responses have a positive skew with less variability than survey questions posed in other formats. One possible explanation for the positive skew could be related to survey fatigue, as these particular quality questions were presented later in the survey. It is also possible that the question format shift, moving from a matrix-style to a multiple-choice format, yielded less variance in responses, more ambivalence, or less attention to the response. Results of this section are interpreted with these factors in mind.

Empathy for the Client and Others

Throughout the survey development process, individuals with lived expertise routinely described an attorney's empathy for themselves as the client as well as for others as essential to quality child welfare legal representation. Youth and parents with lived expertise described the importance of child welfare attorneys not only demonstrating empathy for the circumstances of their assigned client, but also for all members of the family system. Both youth and parent survey participants were asked to respond to the statement *“My attorney showed empathy and understanding for me”* by indicating yes, no, or not sure.

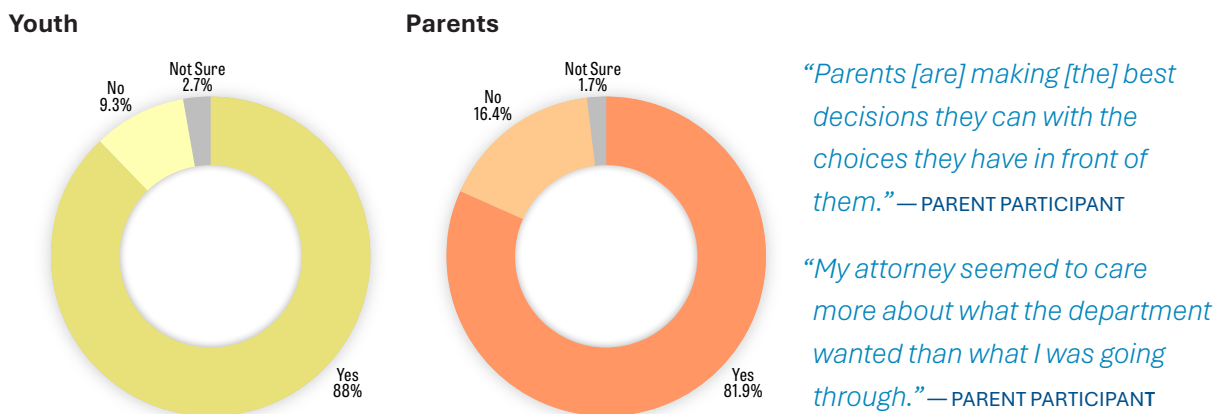
¹⁰ The difference in presentation of these responses reflect differences in how the question was asked. Survey questions that were posed in matrix-style questions lead to presenting findings in table format. Multiple choice questions are presented to show the distributions of options selected for each question.

Empathy for the Client

As shown in the chart below, 88% of the youth and approximately 82% of parents indicated that their attorney showed empathy and understanding for them. Slightly higher rates of youth stated that their attorneys showed empathy and understanding for them, as compared to parent clients, although the vast majority of both groups indicated that their attorneys demonstrated this quality.

MY ATTORNEY SHOWED EMPATHY AND UNDERSTANDING FOR ME

FIGURE 3: Lived expertise survey responses to “My attorney showed empathy and understanding for me”



Empathy for Family Members

Youth specifically were asked if their attorney showed empathy and understanding for their parents, siblings, and relatives. Responses from this question yielded slightly more variation, with higher percentages of youth selecting “no” or “not sure.” Responses indicate that while an overwhelming majority of youth felt that their attorney was empathetic to, and understanding of them, individually, they perceived less empathy or understanding from the attorney toward others in their family system.

“My lawyer cared about me, my parents, and my siblings and it meant so much to me.

He was my lawyer but he knew that we were all struggling because of this and I was able to tell that he was fighting for me.” — YOUTH PARTICIPANT

Higher rates of “not sure” responses also indicate that it might be more difficult to discern whether the attorney is showing empathy towards relatives due to the attorney’s status as a representative of the youth themselves. These responses also indicate that while an attorney might possess empathy and understanding, attorneys might have to apply more intentional and overt communication to articulate that empathy and understanding for parents, siblings, and relatives.

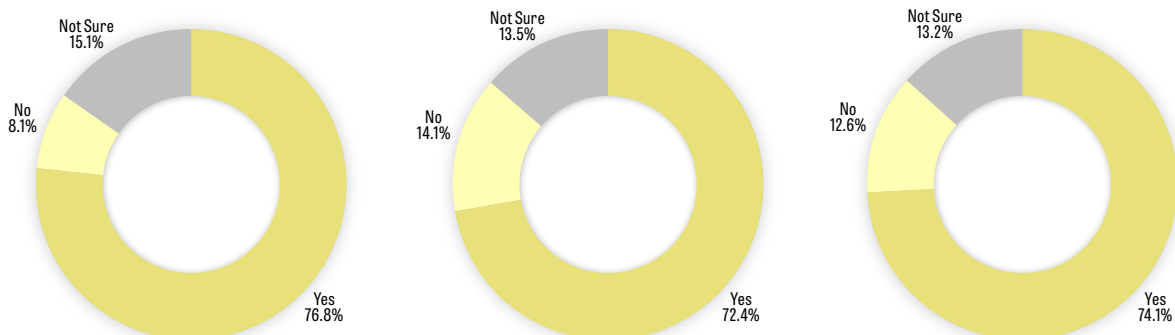
YOUTH RESPONSES — MY ATTORNEY SHOWED EMPATHY AND UNDERSTANDING...

FOR MY PARENTS

FOR MY SIBLINGS

FOR MY RELATIVES

FIGURE 4: Youth survey responses to “My attorney showed empathy and understanding for my parents,” “... for my siblings,” and “... for my relatives”



“They never advocated for our whole family, they only listened to what DCS wanted.” — YOUTH PARTICIPANT

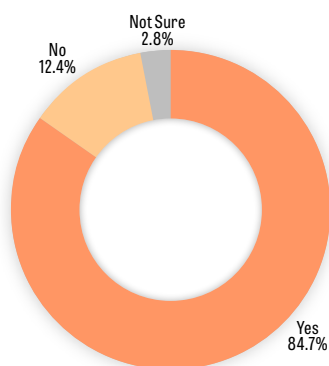
“My attorney was with me for 17 years. And waited until my sister aged out, 2 years later, to retire.” — YOUTH PARTICIPANT

Parent survey respondents were asked to indicate whether their attorney showed empathy for their children, with the vast majority of participants indicating the presence of this quality. A small minority of participants stated their attorney did not show empathy and understanding for their children, or that they were unsure as to the presence of this quality.

PARENT RESPONSES — MY ATTORNEY SHOWED EMPATHY AND UNDERSTANDING FOR MY CHILD(REN)

FIGURE 5: Parent survey responses to “My attorney showed empathy and understanding for my child(ren)”

Parents



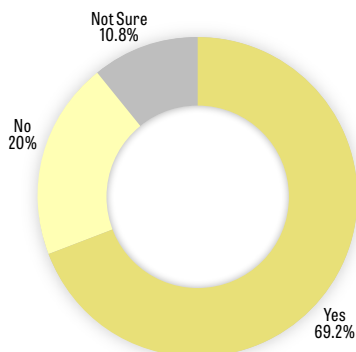
“My attorney showed up to court, talked to me for a few minutes prior to the hearing, and more advocated for what he assumed was the next/right thing for whomever, not myself and my children specifically.” — PARENT PARTICIPANT

Focus group and qualitative interview participants highlighted the need for child welfare attorneys to be sensitive to, and incorporate into discourse, the ways in which youth referred to their family members, the names they used to describe family members, and the diverse ways in which youth defined family and kin. The majority of youth (69.2%) and parents (72.9%) indicated that their attorney referred to their family using the same terms they used. This response is also similar to the proportions of those who indicated that their attorney applied empathy and understanding for their siblings, parents, and family.

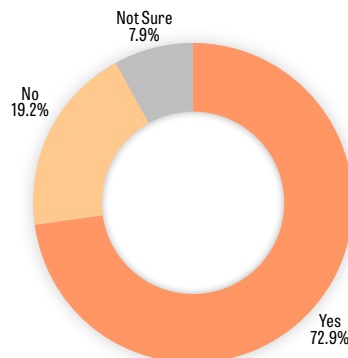
MY ATTORNEY REFERRED TO MY FAMILY USING THE SAME TERMS I USE

FIGURE 6: Lived expertise survey responses to “My attorney referred to my family members using the same terms I use”

Youth



Parents



Centering the Client Perspective

Additional survey items were used to capture and understand the ways in which attorneys made time to inquire about how the client felt, including debriefing after court, asking the client’s opinion, and considering the client’s wishes.

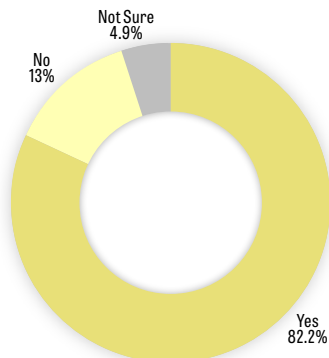
After Court

Eighty-two percent of youth and 80% of parents indicated that their attorney spoke with them after court proceedings about how it went. This percentage is consistent with the overall proportion of youth and parents who indicated that their attorney met with them prior to court proceedings in person or virtually/by phone. What is clear from both youth and parent survey responses is that attorneys are by and large taking the time to meet with their clients.

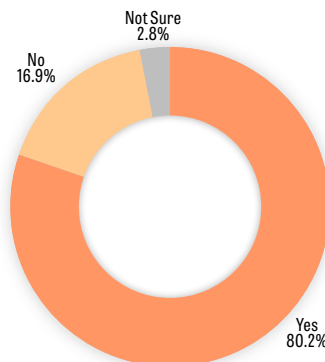
MY ATTORNEY TALKED TO ME AFTER COURT ABOUT HOW IT WENT

FIGURE 7: Lived expertise survey responses to “My attorney talked to me after court about how it went”

Youth



Parents



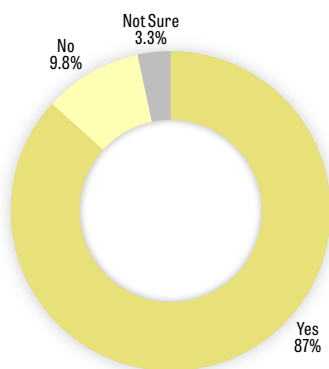
Feeling Heard and Understood

Despite this, meeting with the client does not always translate to a perceived and felt sense of being heard and understood. Although 87% of youth participants indicated that their attorney asked them about how they felt, other survey items suggested a discrepancy in time spent helping them to feel as though their voices mattered. For instance, in comparison to other related skills captured in survey items such as “Cared about my priorities” and “Was able to see my perspective,” both items were endorsed as true by only about 36% of youth.

MY ATTORNEY ASKED ME HOW I FELT ABOUT CERTAIN THINGS

FIGURE 8: Youth survey responses for “My attorney asked about how I felt about certain things”

Youth



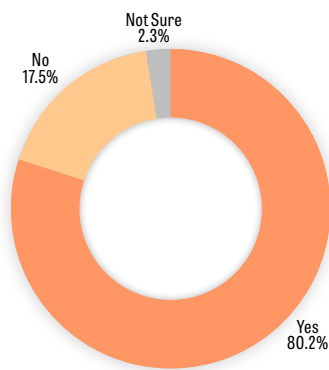
“My attorney often misrepresented my needs to the court. In her files it that said I didn’t miss my parents, which wasn’t true.” — YOUTH PARTICIPANT

A similar pattern was evident with parent survey respondents, where about 80% noted that their attorney solicited their opinion throughout their case, but only 56.5% reported that their attorneys cared about their priorities and 57.6% stated their attorney was able to see their perspective. Parents, as compared to youth, endorsed at higher percentages overall, suggesting that attorneys are more easily able to glean and apply wishes of adult clients than youth clients. As with youth responses, however, there remains a disconnect for parent clients when it comes to being asked their opinion versus feeling their wishes and perspectives were being incorporated into legal advocacy.

MY ATTORNEY ASKED ME MY OPINION THROUGHOUT MY CASE

FIGURE 9: Parent survey responses to “My attorney asked me my opinion throughout my case”

Parents



“I didn’t have a really good outcome of my case. I didn’t have anyone in my corner.” — PARENT PARTICIPANT

Cultural Humility

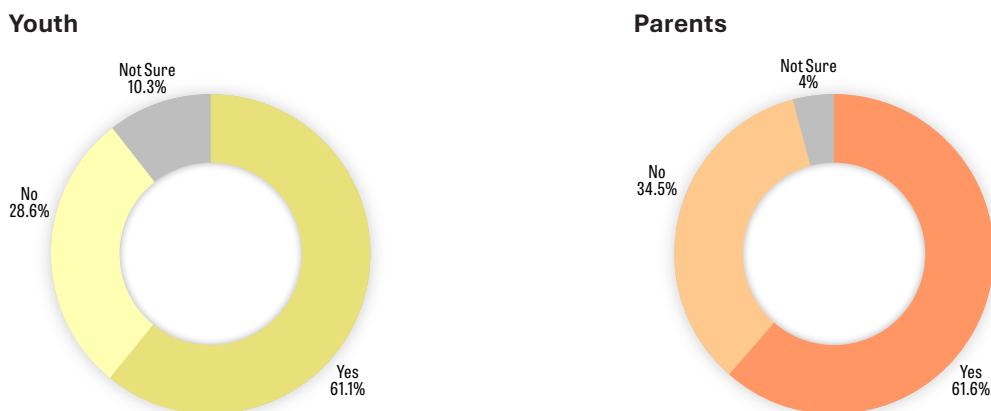
Youth and parent survey participants were asked to indicate whether their attorneys inquired about their culture, incorporated cultural needs into legal advocacy, and used the client's chosen name when communicating. Additional questions were asked of youth, particularly related to inquiring about ensuring access to gender-affirming care. While these items may be relevant to parent clients as well, they were more pertinent to the youth population since gender-expansive individuals are over-represented in both the foster care system and the study population.

Asking about Culture

Both youth and parent survey participants noted that about 61% of the time, their attorneys inquired about their culture. Interestingly, about 10% of youth were not sure whether their attorney asked them about their culture, which indicates that attorneys might have difficulty approaching or having clear conversations with younger clients.

MY ATTORNEY ASKED ME ABOUT MY CULTURE

FIGURE 10: Lived expertise survey responses to "My attorney asked me about my culture"

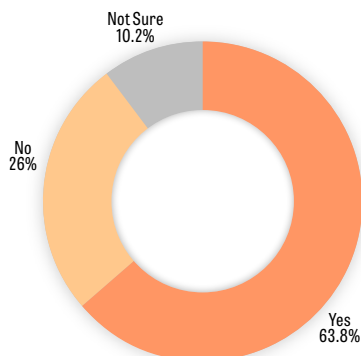


Only parent survey participants were asked whether their attorney advocated for parenting time to include cultural traditions. About 63% of parents stated that their attorney did make this effort, similar to the proportion of those who indicated being asked about their culture. While over half of parents indicated having received some attention to cultural factors by their attorney, just under half of participants indicated a lack of attention to culture or expressed being unsure. Further, many qualitative interview and focus group participants stated that their attorney wanted to avoid the topic of culture and religion and seemed afraid of bringing it up in legal advocacy. Some parent participants described that religion and culture were directly related to the claims made against them in their child welfare case, yet their attorney was apprehensive to address cultural matters with the client. These results indicate a need for cultural humility training, to help child welfare attorneys see the importance of asking about culture and to promote communication skills related to these inquiries. Attorneys may need more specific training on communication best practices (e.g., conversation starters, probing questions) for promoting cultural humility in legal practice.

MY ATTORNEY ADVOCATED FOR CHILD CONTACT TO INCLUDE CULTURAL TRADITIONS

FIGURE 11: Parent survey responses to “My attorney advocated for child contact to include cultural traditions such as attending religious gatherings, having access to certain foods, or finding time and space to observe/practice”

Parents



“They didn’t understand my culture or religion, but it was part of what my case was about. [My attorney] was only annoyed when I brought it up instead and said it would make more trouble for me to talk about it in court.” — PARENT PARTICIPANT

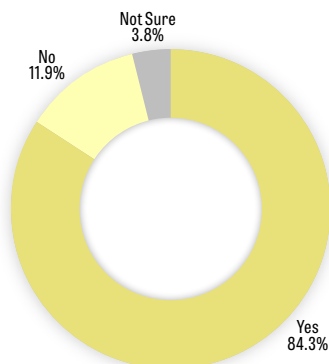
Gender-Affirming Practices

When inquiring about gender-affirming attorney behaviors, 84.3% of youth survey participants indicated that their attorney referred to them by the name they liked to be called. A lower percentage of youth (58%) and parents (53%) indicated that their attorneys asked about chosen pronouns. While over half of survey participants noted this practice took place, there is an opportunity to increase training and understanding about the importance of using chosen pronouns in addition to chosen names as a protective factor for gender-expansive individuals involved in the child welfare system.

MY ATTORNEY REFERRED TO ME BY THE NAME I LIKE TO BE CALLED

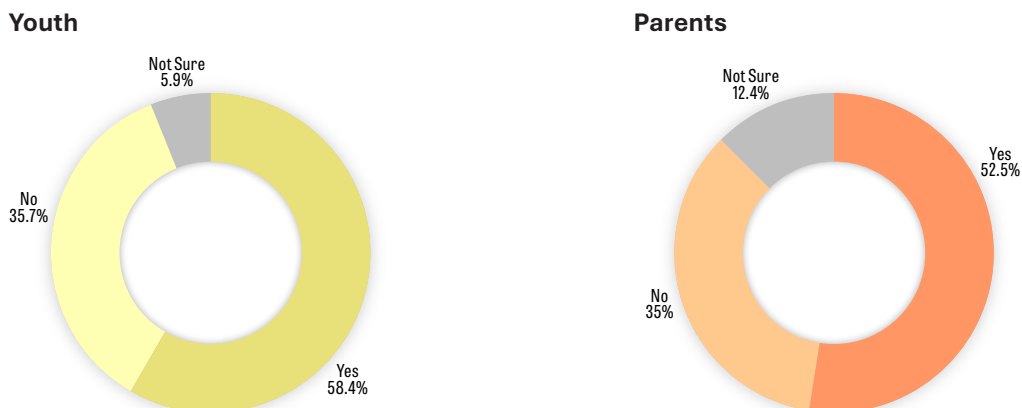
FIGURE 12: Youth survey responses to “My attorney referred to me by the name I like to be called”

Youth



MY ATTORNEY ASKED ME ABOUT MY PRONOUNS

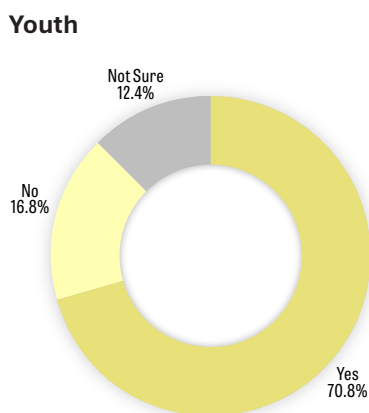
FIGURE 13: Lived expertise survey responses to “My attorney asked me about my pronouns”



Youth survey participants were asked about whether their attorney advocated for access to gender-affirming needs (e.g., clothing, access to peer spaces, mental or physical health care, educational support), however responses indicated that this question might not have been interpreted correctly. Although transgender and gender-expansive youth made up a small portion of the sample ($n = 17$; 9.1%), 131 (70.05%) of participants indicated that their attorney advocated for access to gender-affirming needs. The most likely explanation is that this question was misinterpreted or misunderstood, given that it is context-specific and may not be familiar terminology for cisgender individuals. The interpretation error could be remedied in the future by including survey logic that displays the question only if transgender or gender-expansive identities are disclosed, which would increase reliability and generalizability.

MY ATTORNEY ADVOCATED FOR ACCESS TO GENDER-AFFIRMING NEEDS

FIGURE 14: Youth responses to “My attorney advocated for access to gender-affirming needs (for example, clothing, access to peer spaces, mental or physical health care, educational support)”



Supporting Client Needs

Throughout the survey development process particularly in focus groups, youth participants articulated that it was difficult to get their needs met throughout the course of their child welfare case. Those needs ranged from ensuring safe foster care placements to accessing mental and physical health care. While there was some acknowledgement that their child welfare case worker should have played a role in meeting their needs,

youth also described the opportunity their attorney had to use legal proceedings as a pathway for, or source of accountability in, meeting their needs.

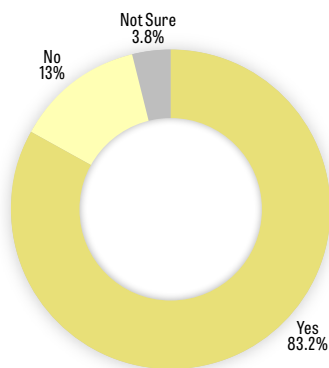
Meeting Needs

Although an overwhelming majority of youth survey participants indicated that their attorney did use the legal process as a way of ensuring that their needs were met, those who participated in focus groups and interviews often described confusion about who should be meeting their needs (e.g., the child welfare agency, the foster care placement, the attorney) and a lack of consideration of their needs throughout the legal process.

MY ATTORNEY HELPED MAKE SURE MY NEEDS WERE MET

FIGURE 15: Youth survey responses to “My attorney helped make sure my needs were met”

Youth



“I was put in a mental hospital because they had no foster homes available, my lawyer did little to get me out of that space. There were several foster homes where parents were acting inappropriately, and she said I was making it up.”

— YOUTH PARTICIPANT

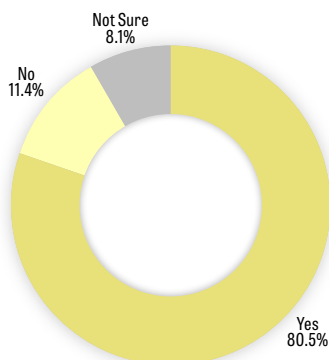
Mental and Physical Health Care

Some persistent unmet needs described by youth focus group and interview participants included securing access to mental health supports, maintaining consistency with health care providers post-removal, and gaining access to Individualized Education Plan (IEP) accommodations and other school supports. Eighty percent of youth survey participants indicated that their attorney advocated for access to mental or physical health care. In light of qualitative findings that pointed to significant access barriers and confusion about who was responsible for facilitating access, there could be a discrepancy between the attorney advocating for access, and the client being provided access. There was some qualitative evidence to suggest that when an attorney advocated for access, there was a greater degree of child welfare agency follow-through and accountability for providing supports. Yet, some participants noted that access barriers persisted regardless, due to other systemic barriers such as insurance coverage and practitioner availability.

MY ATTORNEY ADVOCATED FOR ACCESS TO MENTAL OR PHYSICAL HEALTH CARE

FIGURE 16: Youth survey responses to “My attorney advocated for access to mental or physical health care”

Youth



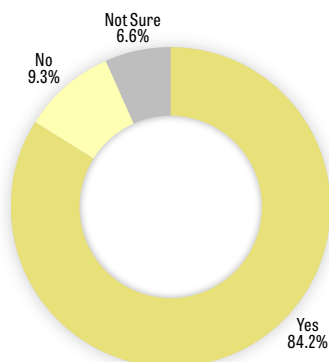
Educational Needs

Similar to the prior question, about 84% of youth survey participants indicated that their attorney helped advocate for their educational needs. Similar to qualitative findings related to access to mental and physical health care, however, focus group participants expressed less positive views regarding their attorney’s efforts to effectively use legal proceedings to ensure access to educational supports.

MY ATTORNEY HELPED ADVOCATE FOR MY EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

FIGURE 17: Lived expertise survey youth responses to “My attorney helped advocate for my educational needs”

Youth



“When I had to move schools, it was harder to get them to follow my IEP. My attorney was able to make sure the school provided me what I needed.”

— YOUTH PARTICIPANT

Other Legal Advocacy Skills

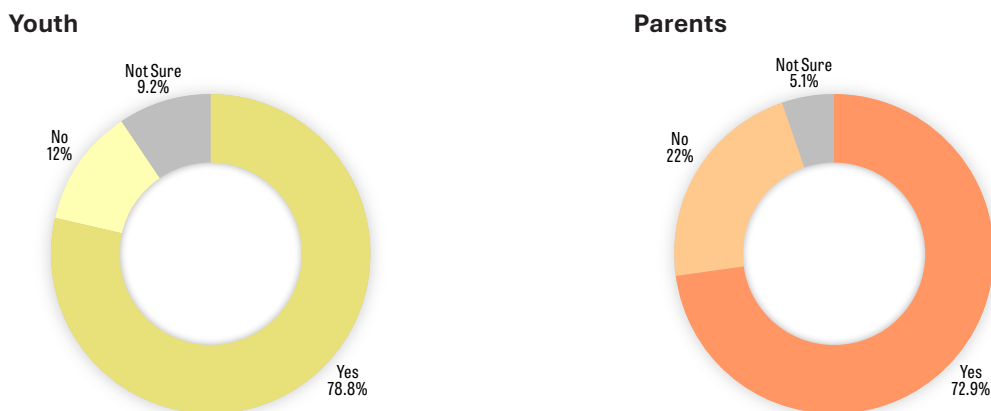
Across interviews and focus groups, individuals with lived expertise discussed their experiences with mental health evaluations, which included risk assessments, personality tests, bonding assessments, and more.

Mental Health Evaluations

Nearly 79% of youth and 73% of parent survey participants stated that their attorneys helped them understand mental health evaluations conducted as part of their child welfare case. Qualitatively, parents, in particular, noted that mental health evaluations were conducted in their cases, and, for many, had a detrimental impact. Further, qualitative findings highlighted that youth and parents did not understand information presented in the evaluations, nor were they given the opportunity to refute them.

MY ATTORNEY HELPED ME UNDERSTAND MENTAL HEALTH EVALUATIONS THAT WERE DONE IN MY CASE

FIGURE 18: Lived expertise survey responses to “My attorney helped me understand mental health evaluations that were done in my case”



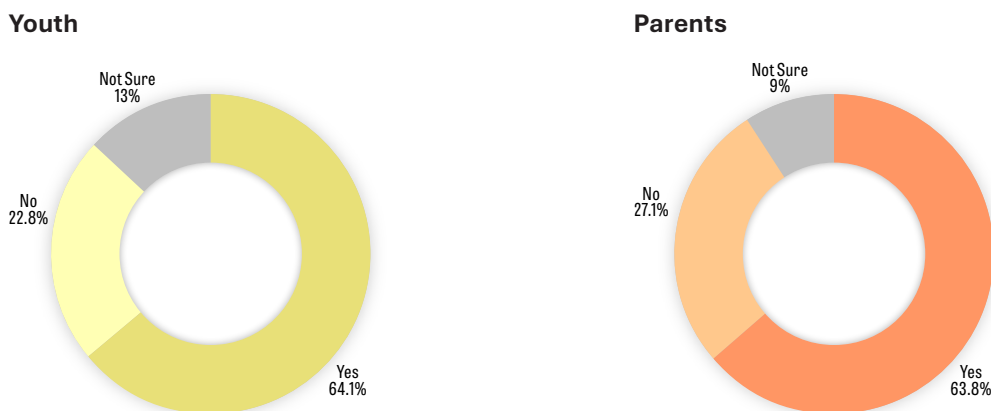
“[The mental health evaluation] basically said I was still using even though I wasn’t and also said I had no hope of ever staying clean. It also said all kinds of things that weren’t true like that I refused to attend services. I had been going to my meetings and staying in therapy and I had done all of the things I was told to do. The woman basically sat down with me for 15 minutes, asked me some questions, and then wrote pages and pages about me. It was really hard to come back from.” — PARENT PARTICIPANT

Use of Legal Authority

The survey also probed for another quality indicator raised by individuals with lived expertise: the strategic use of legal authority within their attorneys’ courtroom arguments. Qualitative interview and focus group feedback suggested that even though case law might be unfamiliar discourse for system-involved youth and parents, it was still possible to detect and identify formal and technical language indicative of an attorney citing names of cases or laws. Approximately 64% of youth and parent survey participants indicated that they heard their attorney mention specific cases or names of law when speaking in court. Herein lies another attorney training opportunity: for attorneys help their clients develop more awareness of their legal strategy, particularly while explaining their role as an attorney, what to expect from legal proceedings, and what to reasonably expect of the legal process.

I HEARD MY ATTORNEY MENTION THE TITLES OF OTHER SPECIFIC COURT CASES OR NAMES OF LAWS WHEN THEY WERE SPEAKING IN COURT

FIGURE 19: Lived expertise survey responses to “I heard my attorney mention the titles of other specific court cases or names of laws when they were speaking in court”



Family Considerations

Both youth and parents with lived expertise described the importance of attorneys to advocate for individualized plans that incorporated the unique needs of their families. About 66% of youth and 72% of parents indicated that their attorneys advocated for child-parent contact that reflected their unique needs. Other trends across the data are similar for youth and parents, yet with more substantial differences between experiences of youth and parents related to contact that worked best for them. Only 41% of youth felt that their attorney advocated for contact with their parent that worked best for the youth, as compared to about 56% of parents. This finding, like many others, suggests that attorneys for children might have a harder time accurately understanding or articulating the wishes, needs, and perspectives of youth clients. The following items are reflective of this line of inquiry and are reported in the order of most to least endorsed.

FAMILY CONSIDERATIONS IN LEGAL ADVOCACY SURVEY RESPONSES

TABLE 11: Lived expertise survey responses to items related to family consideration in legal advocacy

Youth Items (n = 187)	(n)	%	Parent Items (n = 177)	(n)	%
Advocated for spending time with my parent(s) and sibling(s) doing activities we like to do together	123	65.78	Advocated for spending time with my child(ren) doing activities we like to do together	128	72.32
Understood the unique needs of me and my family	114	60.96	Understood the unique needs of my family	101	57.06
Advocated for contact with my parent(s) that worked best for me	77	41.18	Advocated for contact with my child(ren) that worked best for our family	99	55.93
Used harsh or disrespectful language when speaking about my parent(s)	36	19.25	Used harsh or disrespectful language when speaking about me	38	21.47

“They always wanted our visits to be at the worst times. Like, they didn’t even care that I would be doing stuff after school like work or basketball practice. I just wanted to live my life and not have all these interruptions.” — YOUTH PARTICIPANT

The least endorsed item for both youth and parents pertained to the use of harsh language, and was inversely worded for the purpose of functioning as a reliability check. Survey fatigue, particularly for questions at the end of a survey, can impact the reliability of response patterns, leading participants to fall into a monotonous pattern of selecting items without reading the question carefully. As such, this question was inserted to assess for response pattern reliability. The low endorsement of that item suggests reliability of responses at later stages of the survey and is also indicates that most youth respondents did not experience court professionals speaking harshly about their parents. That said, 19% of youth respondents indicated that they did experience harsh language spoken about their parents, and 21% of parents experienced their attorney speaking disrespectfully and harshly about them.

Recommendations for Legal Practice

This report repeatedly emphasizes the importance of client communication and client-centeredness. In synthesizing the findings from this report, a recurring theme emerged: child welfare attorneys could benefit from targeted education and training on *how* advocacy efforts and legal strategy are discussed with clients and *why* client-centeredness matters throughout the process. While enhanced skills in these areas may not necessarily change the *outcome* of a case in the same way that enhanced trial skills or legal writing skills might, client communication and client-centeredness are equally important in ensuring high-quality child welfare legal representation for all clients.

In particular, it is recommended that training and education on communication and client-centeredness emphasize:

Using accessible language and checking for understanding, with particular focus on explaining the role of an attorney and setting realistic expectations about the process and outcomes. Lived experience participants highlighted that while “client communication” may be considered a singular skill, there are actually a series of independent micro-skills involved in effective communication. Those skills include perspective-taking, helping clients feel their voices matter and that they have been understood, and checking back with clients to ensure they understand information being discussed. Training and education should include knowledge of child development and how trauma impacts the way information is heard and interpreted.

Engaging clients in devising solutions, understanding their options, and building their awareness of legal strategy. While both youth and parents indicated that attorneys were taking time to meet with them, this did not always translate into feeling that they were truly heard or that their wishes and preferences were reflected in legal advocacy. Feedback from youth participants in particular reflected a lack of an internalized sense that they were vital participants in their cases. A variety of strategies and approaches should be used to ensure that clients are engaged and involved in their cases and can recognize the presence and value of their input in the process.

Discussing race, culture, and religion with clients and bringing these factors up in legal advocacy and arguments when pertinent. Some parent participants described that religion and culture were directly related to the claims made against them in their child welfare case, yet their attorney was apprehensive to address cultural matters with the client. Results indicate a need for cultural humility training, to help child welfare attorneys see the importance of asking about race, culture, and religion and to promote communication skills related to these inquiries.

Asking about and using chosen pronouns and chosen names when talking with clients and when referring to clients in written and oral legal advocacy. This is a validating technique and can serve as a protective factor for gender-expansive individuals involved in the child welfare system.

Paying attention to and mirroring the language that youth clients use when referring to their parents, siblings, and kin. Focus group and qualitative interview participants highlighted the need for child welfare attorneys to be sensitive to, and incorporate into discourse, the ways in which youth referred to their family members, the names they used to describe family members, and the diverse ways in which youth defined family and kin.

Having and expressing empathy for the family system in addition to the individual client and promoting a positive narrative whenever possible. Responses indicate that while an overwhelming majority of youth felt that their attorney was empathetic to, and understanding of them, individually, they perceived less

empathy or understanding from the attorney toward others in their family system. The responses also indicate that while an attorney might *possess* empathy and understanding for parents, siblings, and relatives, attorneys may benefit from education on how to use more intentional and overt communication to *articulate* that empathy and understanding, as well as how to promote strengths-based narratives of the client and their family system whenever possible.

Coordinating with counterparts to assist clients in addressing logistical barriers that impact full participation. Individuals with lived experience, youth and parents alike, expressed hopes that their attorneys would help navigate, advocate for, and plan to ensure supports (like transportation, childcare, permission to leave school, etc.) were provided. The responsibility for providing transportation and facilitating leave from school also typically fall within the scope of the child welfare agency, yet participants reported that this was not always coordinated. Further, there was qualitative evidence from focus groups indicating that there was greater child welfare agency follow-through when the client's attorney explicitly advocated for supports to be provided and needs to be met.

Recommendations for Future Use of Survey Tools and Evaluation Methods

Individuals with lived expertise played a foundational role in the *NACC CWLS Evaluation and Lived Experience Data Report* by steering the direction of survey questions and providing insights that lent nuance and context to results. The PAR approach used in collecting the lived expertise data and designing the law professional survey anchored conceptualizations of quality representation in the experiences of those most impacted. Youth and parents with lived expertise shared reflections and insights pertinent to defining representation quality and opportunities for improving the practice as a whole.

One limitation of the approach was the reliance upon a retrospective survey sample of lived experience experts, meaning that youth and parent survey participants were speaking to past, rather than current, child welfare experience. Given the retrospective sample, most survey and qualitative participants did not recall the names of their attorneys and did not know their attorney's certification status. As such, group comparisons by attorney certification status were not possible with the lived expertise data.

The law professional survey demonstrated promising empirical application for the field toward the evaluation of child welfare legal representation quality and use in understanding CWLS credential impacts. Likewise, the lived expertise survey could serve to benefit the field as a tool for garnering client feedback. Though the evaluation team identified some areas for survey improvement (for clarity/word choice and survey logic flow, for example), it is recommended that these surveys be distributed to law offices (for use by their attorneys and clients) for testing alongside each other so that two additional insights can be gleaned:

1. Examining survey response differences from individuals with lived expertise based on the certification status of their attorney; and
2. Examining client and attorney perspectives regarding representation quality to determine key differences in the ways in which attorneys self-assess, and the perspectives of clients.

Doing so would enable further testing of the validity and reliability of the survey instruments, while also lending valuable insights on the impact of the CWLS credential and the ways in which attorneys and clients perceive legal representation quality.

Appendix A: About the Evaluation Team

Participatory Action Research Collective

Research and Evaluation Consultants

Specializing in Preventative and Pre-Petition Evaluation and Engaging Individuals with Child Welfare System Lived Expertise



About Us

Participatory Action Research Collective (PARC) was founded by Stef Sloan, PhD, in 2022, to specialize in mixed-methods participatory action research and evaluation for child welfare law, justice, and family well-being initiatives. The team combines lived expertise and advanced evaluation methods to demonstrate preventative and pre-petition program outcomes and impact.

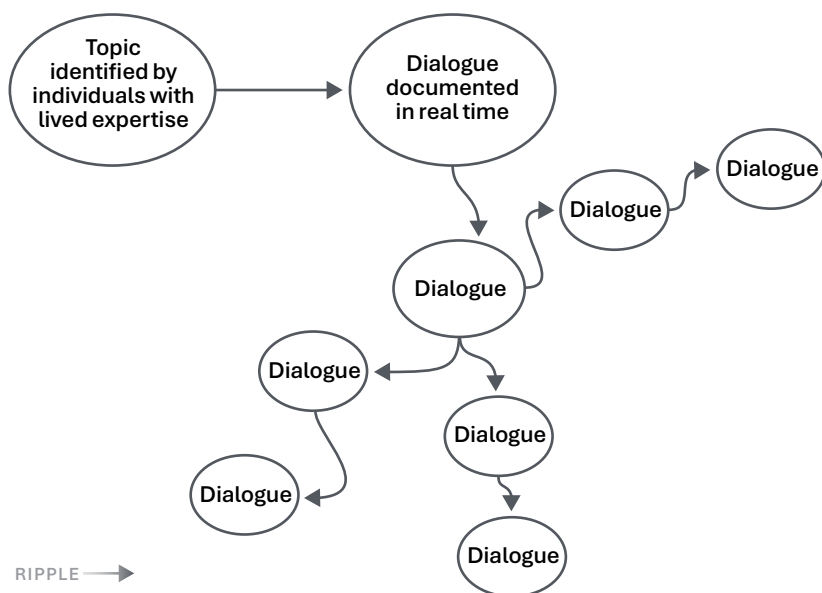
The PARC team includes researchers with experience in survey and instrument development and validation, advanced quantitative and statistical methods, visual participatory and qualitative methods, lived expertise engagement, data visualization, grant writing, facilitation, and reporting, and cost analysis. PARC team members also hold subject matter expertise in child welfare, child development, family systems, family trauma, protective factors, child maltreatment prevention, and child welfare forensic science. In addition, projects engage specialists in program design, report and graphic design, and strategic framing to ensure high-quality and effective dissemination of evaluation results.

The PARC team has conducted preventative and pre-petition evaluations for programs in a variety of states, as well as evaluated national child welfare law initiatives. Dr. Sloan and colleagues have also designed and implemented local preventative and pre-petition legal clinics, leveraged federal child maltreatment prevention funds to support program sustainability, and worked at the state and federal policy levels to advocate for the use of preventative and pre-petition legal services.

Appendix B: Ripple Effects Mapping, Participatory Action Research, and Data Collection Resources

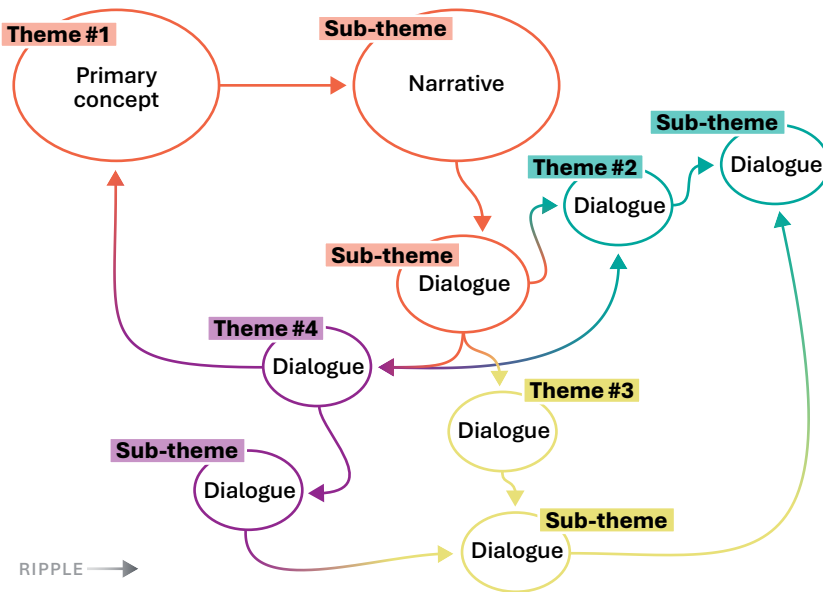
Ripple Effects Mapping (REM) is a participatory action research method used to engage individuals in a collective meaning-making, focus group setting. REM is intended to engage all individuals that experience a program — in this case, the child welfare system — either directly or indirectly, to discuss benefits, insights, experiences, and challenges. Using visual data mapping in real-time, REM brings together individuals from varying perspectives and standpoints to discuss program experiences, outcomes, and impact. Participants engage in real-time meaning-making of the data, which ensures the use of anti-racist, equity-focused, power-sharing approaches that truly center the perspectives of those most impacted. Specifically, this method was deployed within this study by engaging participants in dialogue while the facilitator visually mapped their experiences, yielding rich qualitative and visual data. Through a mind-mapping exercise, participants discussed experiences related to child welfare lived expertise, experiences with legal representation, and overall reflections of the child welfare system, to generate insight about the scope of impact. REM data informed key aspects of the evaluation’s focus, survey development, and qualitative evaluation insights.

The following diagram shows how dialogue is captured in real-time in REM focus groups:



Visual data were analyzed to understand directional relationships between themes (ripples). Narrative segments (phrases uttered during the focus group) were then color coded based on themes generated during the narrative analysis process. The visual data were then collapsed and combined wherever overlapping or redundant codes were identified and then further reduced until there were no code redundancies were present in the data. Visual data were then further analyzed by isolating themes and sub-themes to examine inter-theme relationships and directionality. Visual data were then used to provide further insight into qualitative themes, particularly related to directional relationships between themes.

The following example shows how narrative segments are thematically coded and subsequently color coded, and the ways in which ripples provide insight into the interconnected nature of themes:



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Appendix C: IRB Approval



April 25, 2024

Stef Sloan, PhD.
Stef Sloan PhD LLC
725 NE Todd George Road
Lees Summit, MO 64086

Re: National Association of Counsel for Children
Protocol Number and Study Title: NACC_01; National Association of Counsel for Children (NACC)
Child Welfare Law Specialist (CWLS) Program 2024 Annual Evaluation
Salus Number: 24253

Dear Stef Sloan, PhD.:

On **April 02, 2024**, Salus IRB determined this research involves no more than minimal risk and qualifies for expedited review in accordance with 21 CFR 56.110 and 45 CFR 46.110, under the following research category: Category 6 and Category 7

Using the expedited review process, the following actions occurred on the above referenced study:

Approved:

- Principal Investigator
- Investigative site(s)
- Protocol V1
- Informed Consent Document Youth_Parent Focus Group_V2, English version, with modifications made by Salus IRB
- Informed Consent Document Law Professional Focus Group_V2, English version, with modifications made by Salus IRB
- Informed Consent Document Law Professional Survey Information Statement_V2, English version, with modifications made by Salus IRB
- Informed Consent Document Youth_Parent Survey Information Statement_V2, English version, with modifications made by Salus IRB
- Enrollment of Economically Disadvantaged
- Law Professional Survey dated 3_7_24
- Youth Parent Survey Questions dated 3_13_24
- Survey Recruitment Flyer
- Youth/Parent Focus Group Recruitment Flyer

Salus IRB does not require IRB review/approval on subsequent versions of recruitment or study material when only the study dates change, e.g., Subject Study Calendars, Recruiting Scripts, Subject Emails.

Study document(s) reflecting the modifications made by the Board are attached. In the event you wish to discuss any of the modifications, please contact our office. **Only copies of the Informed Consent Document containing Salus IRB approval may be used for enrollment.**

Salus IRB
2111 W. Braker Lane • Suite 100 • Austin, Texas 78758
P: 512-380-1244 • F: 512-382-8902
salus@salusirb.com • www.salusirb.com

Appendix D: Youth and Parent Survey

The survey is displayed in true format to the export for scientific transparency and is thus visually inconsistent with the designed report above.

Survey Flow

Standard: Information statement (3 Questions)

Block: Screening question (3 Questions)

Block: Validation response items for incentives (6 Questions)

Standard: Demographics (19 Questions)

Branch: New Branch

If Have you had experience with the child welfare system as a youth or parent? Yes, I experienced the child welfare system as a parent Is Selected

Block: Parent Questions (17 Questions)

Branch: New Branch

If Have you had experience with the child welfare system as a youth or parent? Yes, I experienced the child welfare system as a youth Is Selected

Block: Youth Questions (23 Questions)

Start of Block: Information statement

Q10

KEY INFORMATION This research is to evaluate the impact of the National Association of Counsel for Children’s Child Welfare Law Specialist Program. Your participation in this research project is completely voluntary. Your participation will take approximately 20 minutes or less. You will be asked to take an online survey about your experiences with legal representation related to child welfare system involvement. More detailed information on the procedures can be found below. There are no risks anticipated from taking this survey. You will receive a \$25 financial incentive for full completion of this survey. Your alternative to participating in this research study is not to participate.

Q11 INTRODUCTION The following information is provided for you to decide whether you wish to participate in the present study. You should be aware that even if you agree to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without penalty. We are conducting this study to evaluate the National Association of Counsel for Children’s Child Welfare Law Specialist Program. We are asking questions about your experiences with legal representation in the child welfare system. This will entail your completion of a survey.

Your participation is expected to take approximately 20 minutes to complete. The survey may include some questions that seem personal or upsetting. The content of the survey should cause no more discomfort than you would experience in your everyday life. Remember, you do not have to answer any question you do not want to answer and can end your participation at any time. This survey will help inform our report about the impact of the Child Welfare Law Specialist program. The report will describe the information you and other survey respondents provide, but your responses will be kept anonymous and no information that could identify you will be included. Although participation may not benefit you directly, we believe that the information obtained from this study will help us gain a better understanding of experiences with legal representation resulting from child welfare involvement. Your participation is solicited, although strictly voluntary. Your name will not be associated in any way with the research findings. To receive the financial incentive, you will be asked to provide some identifying information, but that information will only be used for the incentive. It is possible, with internet communications, that through intent or accident, someone other than the intended recipient may see your responses. Ensuring internet connection security will decrease the likelihood of this. If you would like additional information concerning this study before or after it is completed, please feel free to contact us by phone or mail. Completion of the survey indicates your willingness to take part in this study and that you are at least 18 years old.

Sincerely,

Stef Sloan, Ph.D.

Principal Investigator

Stef Sloan, PhD, LLC.

participate.parc@gmail.com

Q12 Please make your selection

- I would like to take the survey (selecting this option means you agree to the above information statement). (1)
- I do not want to take the survey. (2)

Skip To: End of Survey If Q12 = I do not want to take the survey.

End of Block: Information statement

Start of Block: Screening question

Q1 Have you had experience with the child welfare system as a youth or parent?

- Yes, I experienced the child welfare system as a youth (1)
- Yes, I experienced the child welfare system as a parent (2)
- No, I have not experienced the child welfare system (3)

Skip To: End of Survey If Q1 = No, I have not experienced the child welfare system

Display this question:

If Q1 = Yes, I experienced the child welfare system as a youth

Q2 Which of the following reflects your experience?

- I had an attorney appointed to me (1)
- I did not have an attorney appointed to me (2)

Skip To: End of Survey If Q2 = I did not have an attorney appointed to me

Display this question:

If Q1 = Yes, I experienced the child welfare system as a parent

Q3 Which of the following reflects your experience?

- I had an attorney appointed to represent me (1)
- I did not have an attorney appointed to represent me (2)

Skip To: End of Survey If Q3 = I did not have an attorney appointed to represent me

End of Block: Screening question

Start of Block: Validation response items for incentives

Q4 These questions are required to receive the financial incentive. You can skip this and still complete the survey. You will be asked to provide your age and date of birth. You will also be asked to provide your email. After validating your responses, your virtual gift card will be sent to your email. To validate your responses, we may contact you via the email address you provide.

Q5 Would you like to answer identification verification questions?

- Yes, I would like to answer identity verification questions to receive a financial incentive (1)
- No, I do not want to answer identity verification questions. I understand that I will not be eligible to receive the financial incentive. (2)

Display this question:

If Q5 = Yes, I would like to answer identity verification questions to receive a financial incentive

Q6 Please complete the reCAPTCHA verification

Display this question:

If Q5 = Yes, I would like to answer identity verification questions to receive a financial incentive

Q7 What is your date of birth? (mm/dd/yyyy)

Display this question:

If Q5 = Yes, I would like to answer identity verification questions to receive a financial incentive

Q8 What is your email address? (this is the email address we will use to send you your virtual gift card)

Display this question:

If Q5 = Yes, I would like to answer identity verification questions to receive a financial incentive

Q9 Please confirm your email address.

End of Block: Validation response items for incentives

Start of Block: Demographics

Q13 We would like to know more about you. This section will include questions about your race, ethnicity, gender, background, etc. This section includes 11 questions and will take approximately 5-10 minutes to complete.

Q14 What **state** was your child welfare case in?

▼ Alabama (1) ... Wyoming (52)

Q15 What **county** were you living in when you were involved with the child welfare system?

Q16 What was the name of the attorney or attorneys who represented you? (they will not be notified or made aware of your responses)

Q17 How old were you when you were first involved with the child welfare system (in years)?

Q18 How long were you involved in the child welfare system?

Q19 What is your current age (in years)?

Q20 What is your race and/or ethnicity? (Select all that apply and enter additional details in the spaces provided)

- Indigenous American or Alaska Native (1)
- Asian (2)
- Black or African American (3)
- Hispanic or Latinx (4)
- Middle Eastern or North African (5)
- Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander (6)
- White (7)
- Prefer to self-describe: (8) _____
- Prefer not to answer (9)

Display this question:

If Q20 = Indigenous American or Alaska Native

Q67 Please specify: What is your race and/or ethnicity? -- Indigenous American or Alaska Native Enter, for example, Navajo Nation, Blackfeet Tribe of the Blackfeet Indian Reservation of Montana, Native Village of Barrow Inupiat Traditional Government, Nome Eskimo Community, Aztec, Maya, etc.

Display this question:

If Q20 = Asian

Q68 Please specify: What is your race and/or ethnicity? -- Asian

- Asian Indian (1)
 - Chinese (2)
 - Filipino (3)
 - Japanese (4)
 - Korean (5)
 - Vietnamese (6)
 - Another group (enter, for example, Pakistani, Hmong, Afghan, etc.): (7)
- _____

Display this question:

If Q20 = Black or African American

Q69 Please specify: What is your race and/or ethnicity? -- Black or African American

- African American (1)
- Jamaican (2)
- Haitian (3)
- Nigerian (4)
- Ethiopian (5)
- Somali (6)
- Another group (enter, for example, Trinidadian and Tobagonian, Ghanian, Congolese, etc.): (7) _____

Display this question:

If Q20 = Hispanic or Latinx

Q70 Please specify: What is your race and/or ethnicity? -- Hispanic or Latinx

- Mexican (1)
- Puerto Rican (2)
- Salvadoran (3)
- Cuban (4)
- Guatemalan (5)
- Another group (enter, for example, Colombian, Honduran, Spaniard, etc.): (6)

Display this question:

If Q20 = Middle Eastern or North African

Q71 Please specify: What is your race and/or ethnicity? -- Middle Eastern or North African

- Lebanese (1)
- Iranian (2)
- Egyptian (3)
- Syrian (4)
- Iraqi (5)
- Israeli (6)
- Palestinian (7)
- Another group (enter, for example, Moroccan, Yemeni, Kurdish, etc.): (8)

Display this question:

If Q20 = Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander

Q72 Please specify: What is your race and/or ethnicity? -- Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander

- Native Hawaiian (1)
- Samoan (2)
- Chamorro (3)
- Tongan (4)
- Fijian (5)
- Marshallese (6)
- Another group (enter, for example, Chuukese, Palauan, Tahitian, etc.): (7)

Display this question:

If Q20 = White

Q73 Please specify: What is your race and/or ethnicity? -- White

- English (1)
- German (2)
- Irish (3)
- Italian (4)
- Polish (5)
- Scottish (6)
- Another group (enter, for example, French, Swedish, Norwegian, etc.): (7)

Q21 Which **gender** best describes you?

- Male/man (1)
- Female/woman (2)
- Non-binary, gender queer, or not exclusively male or female (3)
- Another gender: (4) _____
- Don't know (5)
- Prefer not to answer (6)

Q22 Do you consider yourself to be transgender, non-binary, or another gender?

- No, I am not transgender (1)
- Yes, I am a transgender women (assigned male at birth and identify myself as a woman) (2)

- Yes, I am a transgender man (assigned female at birth and identity myself as a man) (3)
 - Yes, I identify as non-binary, gender queer, or another term (4)
 - Not sure (5)
 - Prefer to self-describe: (6) _____
 - Prefer not to answer (7)
-

Q23 Which of the following best represents how you think about your **sexual orientation**?

- Lesbian or gay (1)
 - Straight or heterosexual (not gay or bisexual) (2)
 - Bisexual (3)
 - Queer (4)
 - Pansexual (5)
 - Don't know (6)
 - Prefer to self-describe: (7) _____
 - Prefer not to answer (8)
-

Q24 Do you have a mental or physical condition, impairment, or disability that affects daily activities or requires the use of equipment or technology?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)
- Prefer not to answer (3)

End of Block: Demographics

Start of Block: Parent Questions

Display this question:

If Q1 = Yes, I experienced the child welfare system as a parent

Q51 The following questions will ask about your attorney. When answering, think about the person who represented you directly in your child welfare case. If you had more than one attorney, respond based on the attorney who represented you the longest. Some questions will ask you about the legal process, which means actions related to your court case (for example: court hearings or meetings, written motions, submitting evidence, court orders,

safety plans, etc.). You will be asked 15 questions and it will take approximately 10-15 minutes to complete.

Display this question:

If Q1 = Yes, I experienced the child welfare system as a parent

Q52 What was **true** about your experiences with your attorney? (select all that apply): My attorney...

- Spoke to me with a calm and friendly voice (1)
- Was a good listener (2)
- Was able to see my perspective (3)
- Cared about my priorities (4)
- Gave me the chance to ask questions (5)
- Explained my options to me (6)
- Helped me make informed choices (7)
- Helped me have realistic expectations of the legal process (8)

Display this question:

If Q1 = Yes, I experienced the child welfare system as a parent

Q53 **Before** legal meetings (case management meetings, going to court, etc.), what was **true** about your attorney? (select all that apply): My attorney...

- Met with me in-person (1)
- Met with me virtually or over the phone (2)
- Explained their role to me in plain language (3)
- Prepared me for what to expect from the legal process (4)
- Explained legal words and concepts in a way that I could understand (5)
- Told me the truth about my case (6)
- Hid important details from me about my case (7)
- Helped me think about different solutions (8)
- Gave me reminders about meetings ahead of time (9)
- Helped me find child care or transportation so that I could attend legal meetings (10)
- Helped me access resources that could help me and my family, such as accessing benefits, housing, child care, or other basic needs (11)
- Helped me decide whether to attend court (12)

Display this question:

If Q1 = Yes, I experienced the child welfare system as a parent

Q54 During legal meetings (case management meetings, going to court, etc.), what was **true** about your attorney? (select all that apply): My attorney...

- Helped communicate my needs and priorities (1)
- Helped others understand my perspective (2)
- Advocated for what was most important to me (3)
- Helped make sure I felt included during legal meetings (4)
- Made sure that my case continued to move forward (5)
- Advocated for others to speak respectfully to me, and about me (6)
- Spoke up in court (7)

Display this question:

If Q1 = Yes, I experienced the child welfare system as a parent

Q55 My attorney showed empathy and understanding for me.

- Yes (1)
- No (2)
- Not sure (3)

Display this question:

If Q1 = Yes, I experienced the child welfare system as a parent

Q56 My attorney showed empathy and understanding for my children.

- Yes (1)
- No (2)
- Not sure (3)

Display this question:

If Q1 = Yes, I experienced the child welfare system as a parent

Q57 My attorney talked to me after court about how it went.

- Yes (1)
- No (2)
- Not sure (3)

Display this question:

If Q1 = Yes, I experienced the child welfare system as a parent

Q58 My attorney asked me my opinion throughout my case.

- Yes (1)
- No (2)
- Not sure (3)

Display this question:

If Q1 = Yes, I experienced the child welfare system as a parent

Q59 My attorney helped me understand mental health evaluations that were done in my case.

- Yes (1)
- No (2)
- Not sure (3)

Display this question:

If Q1 = Yes, I experienced the child welfare system as a parent

Q60 I heard my attorney mention the titles of other specific court cases or names of laws when they were speaking in court.

- Yes (1)
- No (2)
- Not sure (3)

Display this question:

If Q1 = Yes, I experienced the child welfare system as a parent

Q61 My attorney asked me about my culture.

- Yes (1)
- No (2)
- Not sure (3)

Display this question:

If Q1 = Yes, I experienced the child welfare system as a parent

Q62 My attorney advocated for child contact to include cultural traditions (such as attending religious gatherings, having access to certain foods, or finding time and space to observe/practice).

- Yes (1)
- No (2)
- Not applicable (3)

Display this question:

If Q1 = Yes, I experienced the child welfare system as a parent

Q63 My attorney asked me about my pronouns.

- Yes (1)
- No (2)
- Not applicable (3)

Display this question:

If Q1 = Yes, I experienced the child welfare system as a parent

Q64 My attorney referred to my family members using the same terms I use.

- Yes (1)
- No (2)
- Not sure (3)

Display this question:

If Q1 = Yes, I experienced the child welfare system as a parent

Q65 Which of the following was **true** about your attorney? (select all that apply): My attorney...

- Advocated for spending time with my child(ren) doing activities we like to do together (1)
- Used harsh or disrespectful language when speaking about me (2)
- Understood the unique needs of my family (3)
- Advocated for contact with my child(ren) that worked best for our family (4)

Q75 Would you have felt more comfortable if you knew your attorney had a special credential for your type of case (e.g., your attorney was specially certified to work on child welfare-related cases)?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)
- Not sure (3)

Display this question:

If Q1 = Yes, I experienced the child welfare system as a parent

Q66 What else would you like for us to know about your experience with your attorney?

End of Block: Parent Questions

Start of Block: Youth Questions

Q25 The following questions will ask about your attorney. When answering, think about the person who represented you directly in your child welfare case. If you had more than one attorney, answer the questions based on the attorney who represented you the longest. Some questions will ask you about the legal process, which means actions related to your court case (for example: court hearings or meetings, written motions, submitting evidence, court orders, safety plans, etc.). This section will ask you 19 questions and will take approximately 10-15 minutes to complete.

Display this question:

If Q1 = Yes, I experienced the child welfare system as a youth

Q27 What was **true** about your experiences with your attorney? (select all that apply): My attorney...

- Spoke to me with a calm and friendly voice (1)
- Was a good listener (2)
- Used activities during our meetings (3)
- Used humor or play to help me feel more comfortable (4)
- Allowed me to choose where we would meet (5)
- Listened to what I had to say without interrupting (6)
- Was able to see my perspective (7)
- Cared about my priorities (8)
- Gave me the chance to ask questions (9)
- Explained my options to me (10)
- Helped me make informed choices (11)
- Helped me have realistic expectations of the legal process (12)

Display this question:

If Q1 = Yes, I experienced the child welfare system as a youth

Q29 **Before** legal meetings (case management meetings, going to court, etc.), what was **true** about your attorney? (select all that apply): My attorney...

- Met with me in-person (1)
- Met with me virtually or over the phone (2)
- Explained what a attorney/lawyer was and what they do (3)
- Prepared me for what to expect from the legal process (4)
- Explained legal words and concepts in a way that I could understand (5)
- Told me the truth about my case (6)
- Seemed like they weren't telling me everything I needed to know (7)
- Helped me think about different solutions (8)
- Gave me reminders about meetings ahead of time (9)
- Helped me solve problems (transportation, getting permission to leave school, etc.) so that I could attend legal meetings (10)

Display this question:

If Q1 = Yes, I experienced the child welfare system as a youth

Q30 **During** legal meetings (case management meetings, going to courts, etc.), what was **true** about your attorney? (select all that apply): My attorney...

- Helped communicate my needs and priorities (1)
- Made sure other adults understood my perspective (2)
- Advocated for what was most important to me (3)
- Helped make sure I felt included during legal proceedings (4)
- Advocated for things that worked best for me (5)
- Referred to my parent(s) by their names (6)

Display this question:

If Q1 = Yes, I experienced the child welfare system as a youth

Q31 My attorney showed empathy and understanding **for me**.

- Yes (1)
- No (2)
- Not sure (3)

Display this question:

If Q1 = Yes, I experienced the child welfare system as a youth

Q32 My attorney showed empathy and understanding **for my parents**.

- Yes (1)
- No (2)
- Not sure (3)

Display this question:

If Q1 = Yes, I experienced the child welfare system as a youth

Q33 My attorney showed empathy and understanding **for my siblings**.

- Yes (1)
- No (2)
- Not sure (3)

Display this question:

If Q1 = Yes, I experienced the child welfare system as a youth

Q34 My attorney showed empathy and understanding **for my relatives**.

- Yes (1)
- No (2)
- Not sure (3)

Display this question:

If Q1 = Yes, I experienced the child welfare system as a youth

Q35 My attorney asked about how I felt about certain things.

- Yes (1)

- No (2)
- Not sure (3)

Display this question:

If Q1 = Yes, I experienced the child welfare system as a youth

Q37 My attorney talked to me after court about how it went.

- Yes (1)
- No (2)
- Not sure (3)

Display this question:

If Q1 = Yes, I experienced the child welfare system as a youth

Q38 My attorney helped make sure my needs were met.

- Yes (1)
- No (2)
- Not sure (3)

Display this question:

If Q1 = Yes, I experienced the child welfare system as a youth

Q39 My attorney asked me about my culture.

- Yes (1)
- No (2)
- Not sure (3)

Display this question:

If Q1 = Yes, I experienced the child welfare system as a youth

Q40 My attorney referred to me by the name I liked to be called.

- Yes (1)
- No (2)
- Not applicable (3)

Display this question:

If Q1 = Yes, I experienced the child welfare system as a youth

Q41 My attorney asked me about my pronouns.

- Yes (1)
- No (2)
- Not sure (3)

Display this question:

If Q1 = Yes, I experienced the child welfare system as a youth

Q42 My attorney referred to my family members using the same terms I use.

- Yes (1)
- No (2)
- Not sure (3)

Display this question:

If Q1 = Yes, I experienced the child welfare system as a youth

Q43 My attorney advocated for access to mental or physical health care.

- Yes (1)
- No (2)
- Not applicable (3)

Display this question:

If Q1 = Yes, I experienced the child welfare system as a youth

Q44 My attorney advocated for access to gender-affirming needs (for example: clothing, access to peer spaces, mental or physical health care, educational support, etc.)

- Yes (1)
- No (2)
- Not applicable (3)

Display this question:

If Q1 = Yes, I experienced the child welfare system as a youth

Q45 My attorney helped advocate for my educational needs.

- Yes (1)
- No (2)
- Not sure (3)

Display this question:

If Q1 = Yes, I experienced the child welfare system as a youth

Q47 My attorney helped me understand mental health evaluations that were done in my cases.

- Yes (1)
- No (2)
- Not sure (3)

Display this question:

If Q1 = Yes, I experienced the child welfare system as a youth

Q48 I heard my attorney mention the titles of other specific court cases or names of laws when they were speaking in court.

- Yes (1)
- No (2)
- Not sure (3)

Display this question:

If Q1 = Yes, I experienced the child welfare system as a youth

Q49 Which of the following was **true** about your attorney? (select all that apply) My attorney...

- Advocated for spending time with my parent(s) and sibling(s) doing activities we like to do together (1)

- Used harsh or disrespectful language when speaking about my parent(s) (2)
 - Understood the unique needs of me and my family (3)
 - Advocated for contact with my parent(s) that worked best for me (4)
-

Q76 Would you have felt more comfortable if you knew your attorney had a special credential for your type of case (e.g., your attorney was specially certified to work on child welfare-related cases)?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)
- Not sure (3)

Display this question:

If Q1 = Yes, I experienced the child welfare system as a youth

Q50 What else would you like for us to know about your experience with your attorney?

End of Block: Youth Questions
