

SPOTLIGHT

There is limited access for low-income parents, caregivers, and guardians to legal services in child custody and child support matters. In fact, the "Report of Pennsylvania Bar Association Task Force for Legal Services to the Needy" identifies family law, particularly child custody and child support, as one of the "critical areas" of law with "an overwhelming unmet need for poverty legal services." To address this demand, five law students created a student-run program, the Custody and Support Assistance Clinic (CASAC), in the fall of 1992.

CASAC: CUSTODY AND SUPPORT ASSISTANCE CLINIC

The project began with the five founders as advocates, under the supervision of three Community Legal Services attorneys, and has now grown to fifteen advocates. The advocates are law students, under the supervision of Community Legal Services, Inc., who volunteer to provide legal assistance to low-income clients who are representing themselves in child custody and support cases. Although they are not attorneys, CASAC advocates are trained to help people file court petitions and, in some cases, assist those people at child custody and support conferences. Already, the program has served over 200 clients. Having broadened its availability from Northeast Philadelphia to the greater Philadelphia area, CASAC hopes to continue meeting this tremendous need.

CASAC SERVICES

Specifically, CASAC advocates can answer questions regarding parties' general rights and obligations when they are involved in a family court proceeding. Additionally, they help people prepare all the necessary court documents, including: complaints for custody and support, petitions to modify existing orders, and contempt petitions. Finally, in certain circumstances advocates are available to attend conferences in order to assist pro se clients.

ACCESS TO CASAC

Anyone who is interested in scheduling an appointment with CASAC should call Community Legal Services' main office at 893-5300. Clients will be referred to a local office for an income eligibility review. Eligible clients will be given an appointment with CASAC, which is located in the near Northeast.