

Child Advocacy Clinic Frequently Asked Questions

About the Clinic

What is the Child Advocacy Clinic?

The Child Advocacy Clinic is part of HLS's [Child Advocacy Program](#) (CAP). The Clinic is designed to educate students about a range of social change strategies and to encourage critical thinking about the pros and cons of different approaches. We partner with organizations/agencies engaged in a variety of work for children.

I don't have any background in children's issues. Is the CAP Clinic right for me? Are there any pre-requisites?

The clinic is relevant for students with a particular interest in children's issues **but also for students more generally interested in social change**. No prior background in children's law and policy or working directly with children is required or necessary. There are no pre-requisites.

What substantive areas are addressed through the Clinic?

A variety of substantive areas impacting the lives of children are addressed with a focus on:

- child welfare (abuse and neglect, foster care, and adoption)
- education
- juvenile justice

What types of advocacy will I do through the Clinic?

Each CAP Clinic student is placed at a different organization/agency serving children. These placements use a range of strategies to spark social change such as: individual client representation, impact litigation, legislative and policy reform, alternative dispute resolution, regulatory reform, grassroots organizing, community education, and social entrepreneurship.

What makes the clinic unique?

The Clinic focuses broadly on social change, and each student engages in different advocacy methods. Some students work inside the system and others fight for reform from the outside. Students bring into the classroom their varied experiences, not only discussing specific cases/projects they're engaged in, but also their organization's larger vision for improving conditions for children and families. Students have the chance to reflect on which strategies in the field are working and why.

Technical Considerations (Credits, Semesters, Co-Requisites)

What are the components of the CAP Clinic? Are there any co-requisites?

The Child Advocacy Clinic includes both a:

- Classroom/seminar component AND
- Clinical fieldwork component

Students who enroll in the clinical fieldwork component (either Winter/Spring OR Spring) must simultaneously enroll in the classroom/seminar component.

How do the credits work? Which semester is the Clinic offered?

The classroom/seminar is offered **every Spring semester**. There are two clinical fieldwork options:

- Winter/Spring OR
- Spring

Each student gets 2 classroom credits (Spring) for participating in the Child Advocacy Clinic seminar. Students who do Winter/Spring clinical work will get 2 clinical credits (Winter) and 3 or 4 clinical credits (Spring). Students who do Spring clinical work will get 3 or 4 clinical credits (Spring). Students also have the option of engaging in additional projects for extra written work credits.

Here is a summary of the relevant credits for Winter/Spring and Spring students:

Winter/Spring Students

- 2 classroom credits (Spring)
- 2 clinical credits (Winter)
- 3 or 4 clinical credits (Spring)
- extra written work credits (optional with approval)

Spring Students

- 2 classroom credits (Spring)
- 3 or 4 clinical credits (Spring)
- extra written work credits (optional with approval)

How many hours will I be working at my clinical placement?

In the Spring semester, 1 clinical credit = 5 hours of work per week. So, in the Spring semester, you'll be working either 15 or 20 hours per week (depending on whether you opt for 3 or 4 clinical credits). Winter/Spring students will, in addition, work full-time at their placement sites during the Winter term.

Where can I find the course descriptions?

You can find the descriptions for the following in the [HLS course catalog](#) or CAP website:

- [Child Advocacy Clinic Seminar](#) (classroom component)
- [Child Advocacy Clinic](#) (Winter/Spring) (fieldwork component)
- [Child Advocacy Clinic](#) (Spring) (fieldwork component)

Clinical Fieldwork Placements

What types of organizations and agencies does CAP partner with?

CAP students are placed in an array of fieldwork settings, ranging from organizations providing individual advocacy, to those promoting systemic change through impact litigation and legislative reform, to grassroots organizing initiatives, to social enterprises. Some students will work for reform from within the system and others from outside. Most placements are in the Boston-area, although the Winter/Spring option opens the possibility of working with organizations beyond Boston (as described in more detail below). Check the CAP website for a [Master List of Placements](#) used in prior years.

What types of projects do CAP students work on?

CAP students work on different types of projects such as: engage in courtroom advocacy; participate in school and home visits; assist with interviews of child victims; analyze social science and psychological research; leverage the media and write op-ed articles; prepare for city council or legislative hearings; provide trainings to youth, parents, teachers, attorneys, and police officers; develop legislative reform proposals; participate in mediations; and provide strategic advice to start-ups. For instance:

- In the **child welfare** area, students may represent individual children who are abused and neglected, serve alongside Assistant District Attorneys prosecuting caretakers accused of child maltreatment, work with a new social venture to engage the media to promote the interests of foster care youth, or attempt to replicate a model problem solving court for drug addicted parents.
- In the **education** area, CAP students may work alongside lawyers and community organizers to advocate for improved educational opportunities for low-income students, participate in a campaign to provide children access to high quality early education, work with a city councilor to improve Boston inner-city schools, or work with the state agency charged with overseeing schools on issues such as charter schools, assessment and accountability, student rights, and school discipline.
- In the **juvenile justice** area, CAP students may support legislative changes to improve conditions of confinement for juveniles, promote policies to reform the justice system

for youth of color, develop programs to improve police-youth interactions, or join efforts to combat life without parole sentences for juveniles.

- Many placements cut **across substantive areas**. Students may serve as law clerks in the juvenile court, alongside mediators to resolve disputes involving children, with a non-profit serving homeless children, or with a medical-legal collaborative aimed at improving child well-being.

How do I get assigned to a fieldwork placement?

Once you are enrolled in the Clinic, CAP will provide a list of placement sites and possible projects. You will provide CAP information about your background and interests and rank your placement preferences. You will be matched with a placement to the degree possible in accordance with your preferences. Historically, almost all students have been matched with one of their top 3-4 choices.

Do I have to spend all my hours on-site at my clinical placement?

CAP does *not* require you to perform all your work on-site at your placement organization, if your work can just as easily be done from HLS. Typically, students engaged in direct service work spend almost all – if not all – of their hours on-site; students engaged in other types of work may do a portion of their hours off-site, when it makes sense.

Winter/Spring Option

Tell me more about the Winter/Spring option. How does that work?

The Winter/Spring option enables students to work at leading organizations beyond Massachusetts. The student works full-time on-site at the organization during Winter term. The student then returns to Cambridge for Spring term and works with that same organization remotely. CAP covers the cost of transportation and housing for students who need it.

Exception: CAP sometimes offers Winter/Spring students the opportunity to work at local organizations; students work full-time, on-site at the organization during Winter term and part-time at that same organization during the Spring.

What type of projects might I do if I'm a Winter/Spring CAP student?

The [Master List](#) of Winter/Spring organizations CAP has partnered with to-date can be found on the CAP website. Winter/Spring students generally do *not* engage in direct service work, since they are working remotely for their organization during the Spring term. Instead, a student might draft memoranda and briefs for litigation; develop legislative reform proposals; analyze social science and psychological research; leverage the media; engage in written work for a

variety of types of publications (legal journals, popular press, guides for practitioners, content for websites); provide strategic advice to start-ups; create, conduct, and analyze interviews; work to replicate a model problem solving court.

Contact

What if I have more questions?

Contact Jessica Budnitz at jbudnitz@law.

How can I learn more about the Child Advocacy Program, including non-clinical courses?

Visit the [CAP website](#).