

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). This externship Clinic is designed to educate students about a range of social change strategies and to encourage students to think critically about the pros and cons of different approaches. The Clinic has two components: a fieldwork placement and a classroom seminar. For fieldwork placements, CAP places students with organizations and agencies engaged in a variety of work for children using various methods to affect change. Students then use the seminar component to discuss their ongoing work and projects, reflect on each other's varied experiences, and evaluate which strategies in the field are working and why. The **Child Advocacy Clinic: System-Involved Youth** will be held in the **fall**. The **Child Advocacy Clinic: Child Welfare, Education & Juvenile Justice** will be held in the **winter-spring/spring**.

For more information about the Child Advocacy Clinic, visit: <http://cap.law.harvard.edu/cap-clinic/>.

What is the difference between the Child Advocacy Clinic: System-Involved Youth and the Child Advocacy Clinic: Child Welfare, Education & Juvenile Justice?

The main difference between the two classes will be the content of the seminar. The fall seminar will focus on issues specific to youth involved in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems, such as commercially and sexually exploited youth (CSEC); medical-consent of minors; emancipation, teen parenting, etc. The spring seminar will cover child advocacy issues on a broader scale, and will include a focus on education in addition to child welfare and juvenile justice. The placements for each semester will be similar, though only the spring semester will include education placements that focus on issues such as school discipline and special education. The placements that host students in both fall and spring will likely offer slightly different projects and assignments each semester, with a more specific focus on system-involved youth in the fall.

Can I take both the fall Clinic and the winter-spring/spring Clinic?

No. However, there is an option to continue working at your fieldwork placement for additional credits in the following semester(s) by enrolling in an Advanced Clinical. For more information, see the [Office of Clinical and Pro Bono Programs website](#).

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

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 background working directly with children or in children's law and policy is required, and there are no prerequisites.

What substantive areas are addressed through the Clinic?

The Clinic addresses a variety of substantive areas impacting the lives of children, with a focus on:

- Child welfare (abuse and neglect, foster care, and adoption)
- Education (*winter-spring/spring semesters only*)
- Juvenile justice

What types of advocacy will I do through the Clinic?

Each CAP Clinic student is placed at a different organization or agency serving children, so the advocacy that each student will engage in varies. CAP placements use a range of strategies to spark social change, such as: direct services, impact litigation, legislative and policy reform, 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 seminar their varied experiences, discussing their work, their placement organization's larger vision for improving conditions for children and families, and the strengths and limitations of different advocacy approaches.

Technical Considerations (Credits, Semesters, Co-Requisites)

What are the components of the CAP Clinic?

The Child Advocacy Clinic includes both a:

- Clinical fieldwork component AND
- Classroom seminar component

Students who enroll in the Clinic will be enrolled in the classroom seminar by the Office of Clinical and Pro Bono Programs.

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

Students choose among the **fall clinic**, the **winter-spring clinic**, and **spring clinic option** for their clinical fieldwork. The fall Clinic students will take the classroom seminar in the fall semester. The winter-spring and spring Clinic students will take the classroom seminar during the spring semester. The seminars will vary in their content. The fall seminar will focus on issues specific to youth involved in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems, and the winter-spring/spring seminar will focus on child advocacy issues more generally, including education.

All Clinic students receive 2 classroom credits for participating in the Child Advocacy Clinic classroom seminar. Students will receive 4 or 5 clinical credits for the fall/spring fieldwork. Students who enroll in the winter-spring clinic receive an additional 2 clinical credits for their winter fieldwork.

Below is a summary of the relevant credits for fall, winter-spring, and spring students:

Fall Students

- 2 classroom credits (fall)
- 4 or 5 clinical credits (fall)

Winter-Spring Students

- 2 classroom credits (spring)
- 2 clinical credits (winter)
- 4 or 5 clinical credits (spring)

Spring Students

- 2 classroom credits (spring)
- 4 or 5 clinical credits (spring)

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

In the fall and spring semesters, students work either 16 or 20 hours per week at their placement, depending on whether they opt for 4 or 5 clinical credits (1 clinical credit = 4 hours of work per week). Winter-spring students will, in addition, work full-time (40 hours per week) at their placement sites during the winter term.

Where can I find the course descriptions?

You can find course descriptions in the [HLS course catalog](#) or on the [CAP website](#).

Clinical Fieldwork Placements

With what types of organizations and agencies does CAP partner?

CAP partners with a wide variety of organizations and agencies, including those providing individual client 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. Fall and spring students work with organizations in the Boston area, and winter-spring students work with organizations outside of Boston (as described below in more detail). Check the CAP website for a [list of the most recent placements](#).

What type of work do CAP students do?

Based on their particular placements, CAP students might: 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; write bench memoranda and draft judicial opinions; and draft white papers for publication. For instance:

- In the **child welfare** area, students might represent individual children accused of status offenses, serve alongside Assistant District Attorneys prosecuting caretakers accused of child maltreatment, or attempt to replicate a model problem-solving court for drug-addicted parents.
- In the **education** area (winter-spring/spring only), students might work alongside lawyers and community organizers to advocate for improved educational opportunities for low-income students; participate in a campaign to provide children with access to high-quality early education; or work with the state agency charged with overseeing schools on issues involving, e.g., charter schools, assessment and accountability, student rights, and school discipline.
- In the **juvenile justice** area, students might 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 work alongside juvenile defenders in delinquency and youthful offender cases.

Note that many placements cut across substantive areas and engage students in a host of advocacy strategies and skills.

How do I get assigned to a fieldwork placement?

Once you are enrolled in the Clinic, CAP will provide you with a list of placement sites and

descriptions of their potential projects. You will provide CAP with information about your background and interests and rank your placement preferences. You will be matched with a placement in accordance with your preferences to the degree possible, but keep in mind that CAP works to provide students with a broad spectrum of experiences so as to enrich the classroom seminar and foster discussion about different advocacy strategies. Historically, almost all students have been matched with one of their top 3-4 choices.

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 around the country, and sometimes around the world. Winter-spring students work full-time, on-site at their organizations during winter term, and then return to Cambridge for spring term, working part-time and remotely for their same organizations. This option has the advantage of helping students form close relationships with organizations outside of Boston, but it does require students to proactively counter the drawbacks of working remotely during the spring. For those students who need it, CAP covers the cost of transportation and housing. **If you are interested in exploring the possibility of enrolling in the winter-spring clinic, but wish to work at a local organization, please talk to Crisanne Hazen (chazen@law.harvard.edu) as soon as possible.**

What type of projects might I do if I'm a winter-spring CAP student?

Depending on his or her placement, a winter-spring student might draft memoranda, briefs, and other court documents for litigation; develop legislative reform proposals; analyze social science and psychological research; 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; or create, conduct, and analyze interviews. Winter-spring students generally do not engage in direct services work, since they are working remotely for their organization during the spring term and thus are not able to have direct client contact during that time.

Contact

Who do I contact if I have more questions?

Contact Crisanne Hazen at chazen@law.harvard.edu.

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

Visit the CAP website: <http://cap.law.harvard.edu/>.