

Fund for Social Change

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Chronology of the Child Welfare Fund

1984: New York City foster care population is 16,230.

1989: Crack epidemic, as well as rise in HIV/AIDS cases, devastates NYC neighborhoods and families.

1992: NYC foster care population reaches 49,365.

1992: Child Welfare Fund (CWF) founded by an anonymous donor in collaboration with David Tobis at Hunter College .

1992: A grant from CWF creates Represent (originally known as Foster Care Youth United), the first nationwide magazine written by and for youth in foster care.

1994: CWF provides a grant to the Education Center for Community Organizing at the Hunter School of Social Work to develop a parents' voice in child welfare policy. The Child Welfare Organizing Project (CWOP) is founded.

1994: Represent reaches a nationwide circulation of 10,000 after being profiled on National Public Radio.

1995: CWF creates an endowment at the Hunter School of Social Work for CWF Scholars. The fellowships are for social work students who are activists for change in child welfare.

1995: Six-year-old Eliza Izquierdo, whose family had contact with the child welfare system, is beaten to death by her mother. As a result of the outcry over her death, the numbers of children entering foster care surge to more than 13,000 a year.

1995: First parent from CWOP hired as a parent advocate at a private foster care agency.

1995: CWF funds the Marisol lawsuit, filed in Federal Court by Children's Rights Inc. and charging that New York City fails to care for and protect children in its custody or children in danger of abuse or neglect. CWF continues support of the lawsuit for four years.

1995: CWF provides Welfare Rights Initiative its first grant to begin to organize among 1200 students on public assistance at Hunter College, and to train them to become leaders. WRI in time becomes a powerful voice for college students receiving public assistance.

1996: Number of children in New York City foster care declines to 42,000.

1996: CWOP organizes the first citywide conference bringing together parents with children in the system, foster youth, and advocates to discuss system reform.

1996: Parents from CWOP begin leading training sessions for child welfare social workers and administrators.

1997: Child Welfare Watch founded by CWF and City Limits magazine, creating an independent journalistic voice to report on the system and to press for changes in policy.

1997: Legal Information for Families Today (LIFT) is founded by a former Child Welfare Fund Fellow. CWF provides LIFT its first grant to provide free legal information to parents in Family Court.

1998: Parents from CWOP testify for the first time at city council, state, and federal hearings on child welfare.

1998: CWF awards first grant to People United for Children, a grassroots community organization that advocates for parents and helps them reunite with children who have been removed into foster care.

1999: CWF and David Tobis are honored by Legal Information for Families Today (LIFT) for helping to start the organization.

1999: CWF creates the annual Awards for Youth in Foster Care, administered by Youth Communication, to honor foster youth who have overcome obstacles and helped others do the same.

1999: CWOP begins training parents at its Leadership Institute.

1999: CWF creates an endowed scholarship program for Hunter College students to participate in the Welfare Rights Initiative Leadership Training Program

1999: CWF provides Voices of Youth a planning grant to create an organization to increase the influence and leadership of young people in foster care.

1999: CWF receives Human Spirit Award from St. Christopher's Inc.

1999: Voices of Youth begins training congregate care workers, law guardians, social workers and others.

2000: CWF establishes the annual Best Practices Award, administered by COFCCA, to recognize child welfare professionals who demonstrate outstanding practice in their work with families in the child welfare system.

2000: Welfare Rights Initiative successfully presses the New York State Legislature to have internships and work/study count towards welfare work requirements. WRI successfully pushes to have the legislation renewed every two years.

2000: CWF funds the Center for Family Life in Sunset Park , Brooklyn, to assist immigrants who are not served by any social welfare system, by creating a sports field and community commons.

2001: CWF creates the annual Family Unity Awards, administered by People United for Children, to recognize parents, relatives, and other guardians who have struggled to overcome great difficulties to be reunited with their children.

2001: CWF provides a grant to launch Voices of Women at the Battered Women's Resource Center , to empower battered women to advocate for themselves.

2002: CWF provides a four-year grant to Good Shepherd Services to create a preventive services program for families previously not served by social welfare systems. The program contributes to an extremely low rate of foster care placements in Red Hook.

2002: CWF funds six agencies to collaborate on creating “The Survival Guide to the NYC Child Welfare System,” a handbook for parents.

2002: CWF and the Open Society Institute create the Partnership for Family Supports and Justice (PFSJ), which becomes a collaboration between 15 foundations and the Administration for Children's Services, designed to create a community network of services to prevent foster care placements in Highbridge, the Bronx (the Bridge Builders program).

2002: CWOP creates Parents Advisory Work Group, which meets regularly with the ACS in an advisory role on parents' issues.

2002: The Child Welfare Fund, the FAR Fund, and the Partnership for Family Supports and Justice are joined administratively under the Fund for Social Change.

2002: Voices of Youth, with the help of the Fund for Social Change, sends a delegation to Stockholm, Sweden to present its model for youth advocacy at an international conference on alternatives to residential institutions.

2003: Philomena Timmons of CWOP is named to the ACS advisory board. She is the first parent with a child in the system to serve on the board.

2004: The Child Welfare Fund and the FAR Fund convene a forum of advocates and consumers from child welfare and developmental disabilities fields to learn from and support each other.

2004: CWF awards first grant to New Yorkers for Children, the non-profit wing of ACS. The grant is used to hire child welfare parents and youth as advocates to increase access to services for families in 11 communities throughout the city.

2004: The Administration for Children's Services joins the The Partnership for Family Supports and Justice as a member of the donors' collaborative in Highbridge.

2004: Child Welfare Fund and David Tobis are honored by CWOP for their work on behalf of families with children in the child welfare system.

2005: At the Child Welfare Watch Forum on redesigning the foster care system, ACS Commissioner John Mattingly says, "The Child Welfare Watch reports, I think, are the most thoughtful, balanced and detailed analysis of a particular set of issues in child welfare, that I have ever seen anywhere."

2005: David Tobis is asked to be on Commissioner Mattingly's Task Force on Minority-Governed, Community-Based Foster Care Agencies, and on the Commissioner's Advisory Board.

2005: The Child Welfare Fund provides a grant to New Yorkers for Children, enabling the Administration for Children's Services to employ two parents with child welfare experience as parent advocates. This is the first time ACS has ever employed parents who have been involved with the child welfare system. Three parents are hired in 2007 as full-time, public employees.

2005: ACS produces a study, "The Status of Parent Advocate Programs at ACS Foster Care Agencies." Fifteen programs employ parent advocates.

2005: CWOP successfully presses the New York City Council to pass legislation, signed by the Mayor, to create a board of parents with child welfare experience to advise the Commissioner of the Administration for Children's Services.

2005: Good Shepherd Services PS 27 school-based preventive service program for high risk families, is supported by the Child Welfare Fund for four years. The program, evaluated by Anita Baker Consulting reports that Red Hook has half the rate of placements of children into foster care as a comparison site.

2005: The Child Welfare Fund provides the first grant to Turning Point, a new organization that provides direct services for Muslim women and children across geographic and ethnic affiliations who are affected by domestic violence.

2005: RISE magazine is launched with a first grant from the Child Welfare Fund. The publication is written by and for parents involved in the child welfare system. In two years its circulation reaches 10,000.

2006: The Child Welfare Fund evaluates Concord Family Services Youth Development Initiative which provides employment services for youth in foster care. Based on the evaluation, the CWF supports Concord's Job Readiness and Development program.

2006: The Child Welfare Fund supports SCO to hire parent advocates with child welfare experience to facilitate its Baby and Me groups and Visiting Coaching in Brooklyn and Queens

2006: The CWF decides to shift some resources to preventing family crises that might lead to foster care and to helping families and children after the children have been reunified with their families.

2006: The Child Welfare Fund supports CWOP to work with the Administration for Children's Services to develop a system to interview parents as part of the evaluation of preventive service programs. The interviews will determine if parents' needs are met and their rights respected by preventive service programs.

2006: Nixmary Brown is killed by her step-father. The number of foster care placements in 2006 increases by 53% from fewer than 4,800 in 2005 to more than 7,200 in 2006.

2007: Fifteen foundations and the Administration for Children's Services are members of the Bridge Builders collaborative in Highbridge, the Bronx which was started by the Child Welfare Fund and the Open Society Institute. The evaluation by Chapin Hall reports "...what we are hearing and seeing is a type of synergy, a breakthrough in thinking and action that has changed the way collaborative members work and the way that they think about their work."

2007: The Administration for Children's Services selects Bridge Builders to receive public funding as part of the Community Partnership Initiative.

2007: CWF supports Hour Children's launch of Hour Education/Advocacy Program (HEAP), providing parent education and advocacy for pregnant women, new mothers, and mothers who give birth while incarcerated on Riker's Island at the Rose M. Singer Center (RMSC).

2008: Commissioner Mattingly asks the Child Welfare Fund and the Fund for Social Change to organize a forum to promote the hiring of Parent Advocates in the child welfare system. The May forum is embraced by the child welfare community and leads to the creation of the Parent Advocates Initiative.

2008: The CWF helps launch the Parent Advocates Initiative to promote the hiring of parent advocates by foster care agencies. The collaborative includes the Administration for Children's Services, the New York State Office of Family and Children's Services, the Council of Family and Child Caring Agencies, CWOP and five other foundations.

2008: The National Coalition for Child Protection Reform, supported by the CWF, organizes a national forum to promote organizing of parents in the child welfare system. The forum is hosted by New York University Law School.

2008: CWF launches ACCESSNY in Highbridge, the Bronx. The program enables 100s of families a year to have easy access to more than 30 types of public benefits.

2008: CWF supports the Battered Women's Resource Center/Voices of Women to launch a campaign against malicious reporting of abuse and neglect.

2008: CWF supports the Brooklyn Family Defense Project's launch the Child Welfare Fund Marty Guggenheim Fellowship for parents' attorneys, focusing on addressing pervasive systemic issues faced by parents involved with child welfare cases in Family Court.

2009: CWF, in collaboration with the Child Welfare Organizing Project, launches the Road2Success, a college scholarship program for parents who have had children welfare experience and are now helping others. CWF scholarships are presented to the first five recipients.

2009: Chapin Hall's evaluation of Bridge Builders concludes "The data suggest that in the fourth year of the Project, Highbridge begins to stand out from the comparison sites in several ways. Highbridge experienced an unadjusted decline in the number and rate of maltreatment reports and in the indication of those reports that was ahead of what was seen in the other sites. When averaging across the pre-project years and across the Project years, Highbridge also saw the higher rates of children exiting care to family among all the sites.

2009: The CWF supports Einstein College of Medicine to launch the Court Team Project to help strengthen the bonds between mothers and their very young children. The program begins operating in Bronx Family Court as a way to prevent foster care placement as well as to work with mothers whose children are in foster care.

2009: After 18 years of collaboration, the Child Welfare Fund reconsiders its focus. The FSC no longer administers the Child Welfare Fund.