Current Issues for Child Advocates

Friday, April 4, 2014
Mechanicsburg • PBI Conference Center

6 CLE Credits (5 Substantive/1 Ethics)

Moderator:
Hon. Eleanor L. Bush

8:20 – 8:30 Welcome and Introduction

8:30 – 10:30 Case Law Roundup and Other New Developments
Thomas C. Welshonce, Esq., Moderator

10:30 – 10:45 Break

10:45 – 11:45 Older Youth
Prof. Lucy Johnston-Walsh & Timothy P. Smith, Esq.

11:45 – 1:00 Luncheon
Presentation of the “Child Advocate of the Year” Award to Jennifer K. Pokempner, Esq.

1:00 – 2:00 The New Law on Child Abuse and Mandatory Reporting:
Changes to the Child Protective Services Law
Marisa K. McClellan, Esq. & Seán M. McCormack

2:00 – 2:10 Break

2:10 – 3:10 Due Process Rights & Child “Safety” Plans
Marisa K. McCellan, Esq., Moderator

3:10 – 3:20 Break

3:20 – 4:20 Real World Ethical Dilemmas for the Child Advocate
Hon. Eleanor L. Bush & Panel
The Children’s Rights Child Advocate of the Year committee is pleased to announce this year’s recipient, Jennifer Pokempner. Jen is a supervising attorney at the Juvenile Law Center in Philadelphia. She has been an attorney for children for over 12 years, and previously performed child advocacy work in law school and as an intern for various agencies. Jen recently received the Pennsylvania Permanency Advocate of the Year Award and has published many articles and publications, including several regarding older youth in care, one of which was distributed nationally. She presents on children’s rights throughout the state and nationally for both Pennsylvania bar associations and the American Bar Association. Jen also co-chairs the CRC legislative action committee and has chaired the legal rights for children committee of the Philadelphia Bar Association.

Jen is described as a smart, indefatigable and effective advocate who was one of the first in the country to identify the challenges that older foster youth face. She is further viewed as one of the state’s foremost advocates and leaders on behalf of older youth. As indicated above, she has produced a number of publications and is a prolific writer, especially creating guides for professionals serving children. In addition, she has been an effective legislative champion for older youth by leading multi-year, multi-organizational efforts to promote passage of laws affecting older youth and siblings in care. Jen is also seen as a national leader in the legislative sphere as she developed recommendations and crafting statutory language to improve college access, retention and success for youth in foster care in the Higher Education Act federal legislation.

Jen’s early work at JLC included building a legal resource component to the program at Covenant House Pennsylvania. She has also been active in nurturing and empowering youth to become self-advocates by developing JLC’s youth engagement program and by assisting
DPW’s Youth Advisory Board on the regional and state-wide level. In addition to empowering youth to be self-advocates, she is always generous and willing to assist colleagues by training lawyers, social workers, adoption workers and others on older youth practice and policy. She has also taught at the University of Pennsylvania and Temple law schools, and serves as a regular guest lecturer for many graduate and undergraduate courses.

As so aptly described by her nominator, “Jenny has had a profound and lasting impact on Pennsylvania laws, practice and policies. More importantly, she has had a profound impact on the lives and life trajectories of thousands of older youth in the Commonwealth who are in or have left care. She is a role model as a lawyer for children: a tenacious advocate who listens closely to the voices of youth; who empowers youth to find their own voice and an impassioned advocate who speaks with clarity and wisdom about how systems need to change in order to change the world for exceptionally vulnerable children.”

The Children’s Rights Committee is pleased to announce this year’s recipient of the Child Advocate of the Year Award, Jennifer Pokempner!