



Board of Commissioners of Cook County

118 North Clark Street
Chicago, IL

Legislation Text

File #: 19-6064, **Version:** 1

PROPOSED GRANT AWARD

Department: Cook County Public Defender's Office

Grantee: Cook County Public Defender's Office

Grantor: Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, U.S. Department of Justice

Request: Authorization to accept grant

Purpose: The goal of the Cook County Juvenile Defender Educational Advocacy Program is to reduce the educational collateral consequences of juvenile adjudication on low-income youth in Cook County. The program will provide indigent youth with the civil legal services necessary to reenroll in school, obtain needed services and avoid unnecessary or unfair suspensions and expulsions, all of which are protective factors against reoffending and recidivism.

Grant Amount: \$353,770

Grant Period: 10/1/2019 - 9/30/2022

Fiscal Impact: None

Accounts: N/A

Concurrences: The Budget Department has received all the requisite documents and determined the fiscal impact on Cook County, if any.

Summary: Educational disengagement is one of the most significant collateral consequences of juvenile justice system involvement for young people. Court-involved minors are less likely to complete high school or continue their education beyond high school, which dramatically curtails employment opportunities and ultimately increases likelihood of recidivism. In addition to navigating school reentry and suspension and expulsion hearings, children with court involvement need support that only attorneys can provide, including accessing needed - and often legally mandated - social and educational services. However, this work is rarely taken on by public defender's offices, as limited resources demand a focus on their primary objective: defending minors in their criminal cases.

The Cook County Juvenile Defender Educational Advocacy Program will provide a critical bridge between juvenile justice and civil representation for minors and will enable the Cook County Public Defender's Office to provide our young clients with more holistic and coordinated advocacy at every stage of their justice system involvement. The Cook County Juvenile Defender Educational Advocacy Program will further OJJDP's mission of reducing violent crime by providing indigent youth with the civil legal services necessary to reenroll in school, obtain needed services and avoid unnecessary or unfair suspensions and expulsions, all of which are protective factors against reoffending and recidivism. The proposed program will expand upon what CCPD has learned from past efforts to bridge the gap in educational advocacy services in a lasting way. Rather than relying on short-lived fellowships or intermittent partnerships with nonprofit organizations, this effort will build the infrastructure necessary to integrate education advocacy services into the operations of the Juvenile Justice Division's multidisciplinary teams of lawyers, case managers and support staff.

The primary goal of the Cook County Juvenile Defender Educational Advocacy Program is to reduce the educational collateral consequences of juvenile adjudication on low-income youth in Cook County. Central to the achievement of this project's goals is the creation of a new, full-time position in the Juvenile Justice Division of the CCPD, the Education Attorney. Completing the civil legal services side of JJD's multidisciplinary representation teams, the education attorney will: 1) represent CCPD juvenile clients at school disciplinary hearings; 2) obtain IEPs and other needed - and often legally mandated - services for minors; 3) assist minors and their families with school reentry. Finally, the program develops an Educational Advocacy for Public Defenders Toolkit to extend lessons learned beyond Cook County.