

Juvenile & Capital Advocacy Project

University of Houston Law Center

Record Sealing & Expunction | Mentoring | Dual Status Representation
Juvenile Representation in School Disciplinary Proceedings

www.jcaptexas.org | info@jcaptexas.org

For assistance, please call Katya Dow at 713-743-1011 or Christina Beeler at 713-743-1511

Our Background & Mission

JCAP was established at the University of Houston Law Center (UHLC) in 2014 to provide social and legal services for economically and socially disadvantaged youth. JCAP's mission is to reduce juvenile delinquency, including its underlying causes, and improve life outcomes for economically and socially disadvantaged youth through the provision of legal, educational, and social support services.

Our Programs

JCAP provides a mentoring program for middle-school youth at the Lawson Academy, and a variety of legal services. The mentoring program, operated in partnership with Lawson and the United Universalist Church, recruits mentors from a wide variety of backgrounds in the greater Houston area, and trains them in a mentoring protocol developed by JCAP. The goal of JCAP's mentoring program is to provide these youth with a broader vision of what they can achieve economically, socially, and professionally. The legal services arm of JCAP operates three principal programs: record-sealing and expunction; a dual status youth (DSY) program; and a new school discipline representation program by which youth can obtain direct legal representation in juvenile court, adult criminal court, and school administrative proceedings for disciplinary infractions in public schools.

Record-Sealing and Expunction

JCAP's record-sealing and expunction program emerged from the recognition that juvenile records do not, despite what many juveniles are told (and what many lawyers believe), automatically disappear once the juvenile reaches a certain age. The continued existence of these records, often reflecting minor offenses, can prevent affected individuals from obtaining employment, receiving financial aid or being admitted to college, enlisting in the military, or being eligible for public housing. In partnership with the Harris County Juvenile Probation Department (HCJPD), the Harris County Juvenile Courts, and the Houston Bar Association (HBA), JCAP's juvenile record sealing & expunction programs evaluate both juvenile and adult criminal records and identify those records that are eligible for sealing, expunction, or nondisclosure. Clients are represented by JCAP attorneys and student interns throughout the process of sealing or expunging their records, including notifying all relevant agencies once the court grants the sealing order. Since its inception, JCAP has sealed over 400 juvenile records.

Dual Status Youth

In the course of developing and implementing the expunction program, and through alliances with organizations such as the Coalition for the Homeless, the Salvation Army, and the juvenile court judges, JCAP became aware of the need for a program to address the unique challenges faced by so-called dual status youth (DSY). These juveniles are involved in both the juvenile justice system as well as the foster care system and are disproportionately youth of color with histories of abuse and neglect. UH law students are trained to represent and advocate for juveniles who are in contact with two different legal systems by being assigned to delinquency cases for dual status youth, with cases ranging from misdemeanors to felonies. UH law students in the JCAP program handle all legal aspects of the delinquency case under the supervision of attorneys, including investigating cases, interviewing witnesses and preparing cases for trial. Students also investigate factors in the foster care system that impact the delinquency cases and the youth that are facing charges, and advocate in the foster care system to address issues that are negatively affecting dual status youth.

School Discipline Program

JCAP's newest program aims to provide community outreach and legal representation in juvenile court, adult criminal court, and school disciplinary administrative proceedings to juveniles arrested in schools or facing expulsion or suspension for a disciplinary infraction at school. Through this program, JCAP also provides know-your-rights trainings on students' rights in schools and in confrontations with law enforcement.

