Lawyers, I suppose, were children once.
—CHARLES LAMB

In recognition of Harper Lee (1926-2016) who chose this quote as the epigraph for *To Kill a Mockingbird*, a book that has inspired many a child to become a lawyer.

To the dedicated lawyers who work day in and day out representing children, parents and child welfare agencies in America’s still inadequate child protection system. Struggle on!

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**Introduction**

**Ch. 1 Challenge: Improve Child Representation in America**

This chapter reviews the legal representation of the child in the United States child welfare system, including:
- The central importance of an effective legal advocate for the child
- Lack of effective national standards to guide child representation
- Insufficient number of attorneys trained in child welfare law
- Inadequate compensation for attorneys in dependency cases

To address these weaknesses, the U.S. Children’s Bureau launched QIC-ChildRep: “to gather, develop and communicate knowledge on child representation, promote consensus on the role of the child’s legal representative, and provide empirically-based analysis of how legal representation for the child might best be delivered.”

**Ch. 2 Evolution of Child Representation**

This chapter summarizes the academic and policy discussions regarding legal representation of the child in child welfare cases since CAPTA was first enacted in 1974.

**Ch. 3 National Needs Assessment**

This chapter explains how the QIC Needs Assessment examined data and empirical research from:
- State laws
- Stakeholder Discussions
- Surveys of State Report Cards on child representation
- Focus Groups, and

• Reviews of the few existing empirical studies of child representation.

Using that data, the project identified an emerging consensus as to duties and tasks of the child’s legal representative of the child and system supports that would allow high practice standards to be realized.

**Ch. 4 Emerging Consensus and the QIC Best Practice Model**

This chapter describes the QIC Best Practice Model and the rationale behind the *Six Core Skills*. It compares and contrasts the QIC Model with the 1996 ABA Standards and the ABA Model Act of 2011. The models agree the following are needed to better equip attorneys to represent children:
- Approach each child through a developmental lens based on his or her age and demographics;
- Better understand and determine a child’s ability to direct counsel; and
- Partner children in dependency cases with dedicated attorneys who take a holistic approach to each case.

The chapter also discusses how differences between client-directed representation and best interests representation have narrowed.

**Ch. 5 Six Core Skills and the QIC Best Practice Training**

The chapter describes:
- The *Six Core Skills* and how to teach the QIC approach in two days using an easy-to-retain, adult learning format.
- How to reinforce the *Six Core Skills*, through regular coaching and pod meetings.
- QIC *Six Core Skills* training materials.
Ch. 6  What the Lawyers Say About Implementing the Six Core Skills

These comments from coaching reports and interviews reflect attorneys’ experiences with the QIC model and highlight challenges and successes of the approach. Attorneys found the six core skills familiar and intuitive while advancing the level of practice.

Ch. 7  Sample Selection and Research Methods

Britany Orlebeke, Andrew Zinn, Xiaomeng Zhou, Ada Skyles

This chapter reports on the methodology and process of implementing the QIC-ChildRep study using data covering 240 lawyers representing over 4000 children. The project was designed to test whether attorneys practicing the QIC-ChildRep Best Practice Model would change their practice, and consequently improve safety, permanency and well-being outcomes for children relative to control attorneys.

Ch. 8  Profile Of Lawyers Representing Children

Britany Orlebeke, Andrew Zinn

We profile child advocates and discuss implications for developing and sustaining a state’s child representation. In this study, most children are represented by an experienced lawyer who handles only a few cases as part of a diverse legal practice. This has significant implications for training and delivery of legal services for children.

Ch. 9  Lawyer Activities and Their Impact

Andrew Zinn and Britany Orlebeke

Drawing from the QIC data, this chapter identifies major activities of a child representative across diverse groups and identifies qualitative distinctions across attorneys. This chapter examines the interrelationships among the different behaviors and draws conclusions about types of practice behaviors. This is important for two reasons: it informs our understanding of child representation practice and helps us put into perspective different practice behaviors across QIC groups.

Ch. 10  Findings Of The Evaluation Of The QIC-ChildRep Best Practices Model Training For Attorneys

Britany Orlebeke, Xiaomeng Zhou, Ada Skyles and Andrew Zinn

Our research shows that the QIC attorneys in both Washington State and Georgia applied the Six Core Skills:

- They changed the way they represented children and were significantly more likely to engage in behaviors considered best practice.
- These best practice behaviors resulted in measurable improvement in case outcomes for children.
- The model resulted in greater contact with the child and increased communications with the other players.
- The QIC lawyers in both states were also more actively involved in conflict resolution and negotiation activities and showed a commitment to moving the case forward.
- Children represented by the trained QIC attorneys tended to exit care sooner than the controls.
- Children represented by QIC attorneys in Washington State were 40% more likely to experience permanency within six months of placement than children represented by control attorneys.

Ch. 11  Reflections on QIC Empirical Findings

What do these finding mean in the context of this study? What are the lessons learned going forward? What insights do the data provide for the practitioner? What further questions do the data raise for future research and policy development?

Ch. 12  The Flint MDT Study: A Description and Evaluation of a Multidisciplinary Team Representing Children in Child Welfare Cases

Robbin Pott

Children in Genesee County (Flint), Michigan, represented by a team of a lawyer and social worker were compared with children only represented by an attorney. Despite the cultural challenges of lawyers and social workers collaborating together, multidisciplinary teams improved case outcomes and the experience of children facing foster care. The MDT approach led to quicker case resolutions and preserved family connections more often.

Ch. 13  How to Improve Legal Representation of Children in America’s Child Welfare System

This final chapter provides a vision for the future of child representation based on the QIC experience, which include:

- implementing the QIC consensus role of the child’s lawyer in every state,
- organizing the delivery of legal services for children statewide,
- encouraging supportive communities of learning among the lawyers, and
- promoting the promise of multidisciplinary legal representation.

Appendix A.
QIC Best Practice Model of Child Representation in the Child Welfare System

Appendix B.
1996 American Bar Association Standards of Practice for Lawyers Who Represent Children in Abuse and Neglect Cases

Appendix C.
2011 ABA Model Act Governing Representation of Children in Abuse, Neglect and Dependency Proceedings

Acknowledgements

CHILDREN’S JUSTICE is available here: