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## **Children's Law Center of Los Angeles Receives Community Opportunities Funds from First 5 LA to Strengthen Relationships Between Teen Parents and their Children.**

**Los Angeles** – For teen parents and their babies, the foster care system does not always provide the support and guidance these young families need to develop strong and healthy relationships. However, with a grant from First 5 LA, the Children's Law Center of Los Angeles (CLC) hopes to change how the system addresses the needs of these vulnerable families.

The Children's Law Center of Los Angeles provides legal representation for nearly 100% of the 24,000 abused and neglected youth under the jurisdiction of the dependency court, including many parenting teens and their children. This representation includes ensuring that their health, mental health, and educational needs are met as well as ensuring that they find safe, stable families that will keep them free from abuse and neglect.

With a three year grant of \$150,000 from First 5 LA, CLC will help strengthen young families by providing CLC's 110 staff attorneys and 55 social work investigators with specially-designed training on the best strategies for supporting teen parents and their babies. Specifically, the training will expand on a project CLC brought to the courthouse last year which focused on the mental health needs of babies. Last year a small group of investigators and attorneys were trained on the special mental health needs of infants introducing them to entirely new concepts relating to an infant's social emotional responses to engagement from caregivers and the surrounding environment. With this newly expanded training, CLC investigators and attorneys will gain the expertise needed to better educate and advocate for young parents and their infant children.

*"CLC has long recognized the potential for young parents in foster care to create better futures for themselves and their children. We are thrilled to finally have the resources to support, nurture and strengthen these young families", - Leslie Starr Heimov, Executive Director.*

Through funding provided by First 5 LA, CLC will be able to more effectively coordinate services for parenting teens and their babies, to meet the unique developmental, behavioral, health, and mental health needs of children born to teenagers in foster care. Through heightened advocacy and services for these families, CLC will help more teen parents reunify with or maintain custody of their children, reduce the incidences of developmental, behavioral, and mental health problems in these children, strengthen the parent child bond and help the teen parents to learn essential parenting skills.

For further information about CLC and to support CLC's efforts to help vulnerable children and families, visit [www.clcla.org/donate.htm](http://www.clcla.org/donate.htm). All donations are tax-deductible.