

CFCC Connections is the newsletter of the University of Baltimore School of Law Sayra and Neil Meyerhoff Center for Families Children and the Courts (CFCC).

ADVOCACY: ADDRESSING THE NEEDS OF OUR FAMILIES

TCAP RECAP

New Year,
New Name,
Same Initiative.

by Michele Hong



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After nearly 20 years of supporting chronically absent students and families in Baltimore City and across Maryland, the Truancy Court Program (TCP) has changed its name! Beginning in the 2023-2024 school year, what was once known as the TCP is now the Tackling Chronic Absenteeism Project (TCAP). CFCC has moved away from the language of “truancy” because it implies that students are missing school due to their defiance or their negligence. Data we collected showed that for many of our TCAP students, the root causes of the absences had nothing to do with their defiance or failure to prepare. Despite the new moniker, the program remains the same – a non-punitive, holistic, and restorative approach to addressing chronic absenteeism in Baltimore City Public Schools (City Schools). During the Fall 2023 Session, TCAP operated in six City Schools, including one elementary school, three elementary/middle schools, and two high schools.

The Fall 2023 session kicked off with Orientations at each of the six schools in mid-September. During the Fall 2023 session, the TCAP Team served 78 students and families. The TCAP Team consists of a Coordinator, Mentor, Case Manager, and Attorney. Each weekly session includes check-ins with a volunteer judge, restorative circles, and academic tutoring from staff or UBalt students. Throughout the week, members of the TCAP Team work diligently to address any individual or systemic issues that are uncovered in the weekly check-ins, phone calls, texts, and restorative circles. While the issues impacting truancy are myriad, barriers that frequently affect our families include housing insecurity, transportation, food insecurity, violence, trauma, and parental incarceration. Throughout the Fall 2023 session, the TCAP



CFCC Executive Director Aubrey Edwards-Luce pictured with a TCAP Graduate of Maree G. Farring Elementary/Middle School

Team facilitated over 590 individual conversations with TCAP students, the TCAP Team, and the volunteer TCAP Judge; reached out to parents/caregivers on over 2,695 occasions; facilitated 72 restorative circles; provided 12 tutoring sessions to 23 discrete students; provided over 225 resources, including food, clothing, alarm clocks, books, etc.; offered 47 referrals with a total of 211 follow ups for those referrals, and assisted with 15 legal matters with a total of 116 follow ups for those referrals.

Students who successfully fulfill all program obligations and requirements graduate from the program culminating in graduations held at each school beginning in mid-December. TCAP changed its graduation metrics to better align the program with City Schools' chronic absenteeism efforts. Historically, students graduated from the TCP, if they demonstrated a 65% decrease in absences and/or tardies. Schools are now focusing

a on "attendance rates." As a result, students graduate from the TCAP when at least one of the following conditions is met:

1. The student improves their attendance rate by at least 10%, when comparing attendance during the TCAP against attendance in the prior two quarters;
2. For those students where attendance data from the prior two quarters is not available, the student has an attendance rate of at least 85% while participating in the TCAP
3. At the discretion of the TCAP Judge in consultation with the TCAP Team. Discretionary authority provides an opportunity to "graduate" those students whose pre-TCAP attendance rate was 91% or higher and thus could not mathematically improve by 10%, but who demonstrate improved attendance, academic achievement, and attitude towards school attendance.

Applying the metrics stated above, 62 of the 78 students (79%) successfully graduated from TCAP. Historically, the TCP typically attained a 70-75% graduation rate. Graduation rates were lower, however, during Covid's period of virtual learning, as well as directly after the return to "in-person" learning. We are excited to see an improvement in our graduation rates!

In addition to our regular weekly programming, the TCAP Team invited members from the community to facilitate workshops for our students. During the Fall Session, the following workshops were provided to students:



Global Gardens Students at Collington Square Elementary/Middle School

- CFCC Executive Director and a volunteer TCAP judge, Aubrey Edwards-Luce, facilitated workshops on “Understanding How Trauma Affects the Body and Coping Mechanisms” for students of all ages.
- Three law students from the University of Baltimore School of Law, Bronfein Family Law Clinic, presented an interactive workshop on “Know Your Rights: Voting and the Police” with high school students.
- The TCAP Case Manager, Christopher Kelly, hosted a workshop on the high school choice process and how to select schools for middle school students.
- TCAP volunteer judge, Mark Friedenthal, a public defender, spoke to high school students about their rights when stopped by the police both on school grounds and in public.
- Students from the Baltimore Polytechnic Institute (Poly) partnered with Great Kids Farms and My Box to facilitate a workshop on climate change and gardening, “Global Gardens: Climate Change and You” for middle school students. Poly students also spoke to the middle school students about school choice and their own experiences at Poly.

CFCC is most grateful for the support we receive from state and federal funders, foundations, and individuals, among others. This support has allowed us to operate the TCAP in City Schools for the almost 20 years. Through the years, we have collaborated with countless organizations and programs to operate our program, including the Office of the Public Defender, the Pro Bono Resource Center, Disability Rights Maryland, Great Kids Farms, My Box, and the Family League of Baltimore City, to name a few. Through collaborative efforts, we are better able to support our students and families.

YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE FOR TCAP FAMILIES

Many of our TCAP families are food insecure and rely on the free breakfast and lunch that is provided at every City School. For the last two years, we have been providing Spring Break Food Baskets to these families, as a resource when the free meals are not available. We recently hosted a bake sale to raise funds to support our Spring Break Food Basket project, as well as any other items a family may require (e.g., alarm clocks, school uniforms, warm clothing). If you would like to donate to our TCAP Fund, kindly click on the link.



[DONATE NOW](#)

CFCC in the Spotlight



- **March 12, 2024** - CFCC Executive Director, Aubrey Edwards-Luce gave testimony at the House Judiciary Committee Hearing in support of HB1499.
- **March 11, 2024** - CFCC Faculty Director, Shanta Trivedi gave a training on the harm of removal at the 2024 Children in Court & Race Equity Education Conference in Newark, NJ.
- **March 11, 2024** - Aubrey attended the announcement of Doris Duke Foundation's new Opt-in for Families (Opportunities for Prevention and Transformation) initiative at Martha's Table in Washington, DC.
- **March 8, 2024** - Aubrey spoke at the UBalt Law School on a panel titled "Representing Children in the Law" hosted by the following student groups: Black Law Students Association, the Criminal Law Association, the Family Law Association and the Society for Equity in Education.
- **March 7, 2024** - Aubrey attended the Bipartisan Congressional Briefing on Primary Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect in Washington, D.C. Hosted by Prevent Child Abuse America and Honorary Co-Hosts: Senators John Cornyn (R-TX), Maggie Hassan (D-NH), Shelley Moore Capito, (R-WV), Bob Casey (D-PA), Lisa Murkowski (R-AK), Ben Ray Lujan (D-NM), and Angus King (I-ME) and Representative Danny Davis (D-IL) the briefing included an

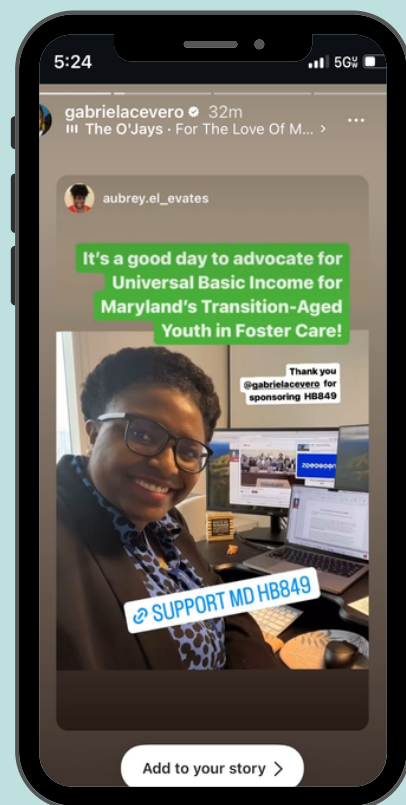
The 2024 Legislative Session is now convening in Annapolis, Maryland from January 10 through April 8, 2024. A full list of bills included in Maryland's 446th session of the General Assembly can be found [here](#). We have a watchful eye on several bills covering the areas of child welfare, foster care, parental rights, youth justice, and domestic relations.



Where does CFCC stand? [Visit our website to view our testimony.](#)

"Delegate Acevero shared my IG story about testifying in support of HB 849."

- Aubrey Edwards-Luce, CFCC Executive Director



...CFCC in the Spotlight Continued

overview of how prevention is possible with federally funded programs already available to parents and caregivers. The event presented current programs that support families before they are in crisis and reduce adverse childhood experiences. Speakers included family and state leaders implementing and participating in prevention focused community-based solutions for families.

- **March 6, 2024** - Aubrey testified in support of HB 849 and SJ4. HB 849 would establish a Universal Basic Income program for transition-aged youth who are aging out of foster care. SJ4 would establish governmental responsibility and accountability for addressing student chronic absenteeism. Senator Carter, the sponsor for SJ4, committed to accepting CFCC's recommendation to change the resolution's language from addressing "truancy" to "chronic absenteeism."
- **February 23, 2024** - Shanta co-authored an op-ed with Shereen A. White, [50 years after the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act, it's time to redefine child protection through a lens of equity and support.](#)

February 22, 2024 - Aubrey is featured in the Mining For Gold podcast titled Dreaming Sanctuary. Streaming now on Apple Podcasts, Google, SafeCamp Audio, Spotify, and Amazon Music.



CFCC Executive Director Aubrey Edwards-Luce, DHS Secretary Lopez, Assistant Secretary of Policy Heather Zenone, and Special Assistant to the Secretary Angelique Salizan after the hearing on SB708 - a bill about kinship foster care

- **February 21, 2024** - Aubrey shared her lived experience as a kinship caregiver as she testified in support of SB 708, a bill championed by Maryland DHS Secretary Rafael Lopez. SB 708 would align Maryland's law with the evidence that shows that children who are removed into foster care have better educational, social, and health outcomes when they are placed with kinship caregivers. The bill balances a "kin first" with the best interest of the child analysis and respect for parents' right to direct the care, custody, and control of their children.

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...CFCC in the Spotlight Continued

- **February 16, 2024** - Aubrey attended The National Foster Youth Institute's Black Youth Leadership Forum at the Library of Congress in Washington, DC. Members of Congress and community leaders took center stage to discuss legislative initiatives and the community organizing they are doing to help build up successful Black youth. Amanda Bertholf moderated a conversation around community engagement and uplifting youth. Speakers included Natasha Leake, Robert T. Stephens, Nancy Kay Blackwell, and Kenneth Ward.
- **February 15, 2024** – Shanta testified on two bills in the House of Delegates – HB 644 which would require child protective agents to advise parents of their rights in child welfare investigations and HB 833 which would establish a presumption that a child is getting proper care and attention if their parent is enrolled in inpatient substance use treatment.
- **February 12, 2024** - Aubrey Edwards-Luce and CFCC Deputy Director Michele Hong attended a grant training with the Maryland Administrative Office of the Courts, a longtime funder of the TCAP, formally known as the TCP.
- **February 8, 2024** - Shanta, was featured in the ABA Journal article titled Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA), a topic which she recently published an article that argues for the repeal of ASFA.
- **February 5 - 2024** - Shanta presented her work in progress at Temple University, Beasley School of Law in Philadelphia, PA as a participant in the Faculty Research and Development Faculty Exchange Program.
- **Jan 25, 2024** - Shanta conducted a virtual training on the child's constitutional right to family integrity for the Montana Office of the State Public Defender.



CFCC Faculty Director Shanta Trivedi pictured with members of OPD in support HB833

Upcoming at CFCC

April 1, 2024 – Shanta will deliver the keynote address at the Maine Commission on Indigent Legal Services, Inaugural Child Protective Defense Conference in Lewiston, Maine.

April 9-12, 2024 – ABA Conference - Shanta Trivedi and Aubrey Edwards-Luce are attending the ABA Center for Children and the Law Annual Conference. Trivedi is presenting on the harms of child welfare involvement on parents.

April 19, 2024 – Aubrey will deliver a keynote address about supporting youth in foster care at the Maryland Rotary Club Statewide Conference alongside a policy and lived expert Kimberly Martin of the Children's Defense Fund.

April 25, 2024 - Michele will participate in a panel titled Identities Shape Experiences. Women in the Law Shape Common Ground, at the Annual Meeting of Law School Diversity Professionals (AMDIP).

May 14, 2024 – Shanta will conduct a virtual training for the Committee for Public Counsel in Massachusetts on the harm of removal

May 17, 2024 – Shanta will conduct a virtual training for The Counsel for Child Abuse and Neglect (CCAN) on the harm of removal.

Fall 2024



Stay tuned for information about CFCC's Symposium! A convening of multidisciplinary professionals and lived experts to address some of the most pressing long-term and emerging challenges facing children, their families and their communities—and discuss best practices that offer hope for the future.



CFCC Launches The Child Welfare and Racial Equity (CWARE) Collaborative [Website](#)

The CWARE Collaborative is a group of organizations and individuals that have come together to promote a radical anti-racist transformation of the child welfare system. We are a team of organizational policy experts and advocates with lived expertise who have survived the child welfare systems as children, youth, parents, kinship caregivers, and foster parents. We're united by a vision of children, parents, and families free to thrive in their homes and communities.



Members of The Child Welfare and Racial Equity (CWARE) Collaborative

ICYMI

In Case You Missed it

December 5, 2023 CFCC Faculty Director Shanta Trivedi gave the keynote address at the Office of Criminal Conflict & Civil Regional Counsel, 4th DCA Region's Parent Representation Conference entitled The Child Welfare System's Approach to Domestic Violence is Not **What's Best for Kids or Their Parents.**

November 21, 2023 - CFCC Faculty Director, Shanta Trivedi featured in The upEND Podcast along with Joyce McMillan in a segment entitled [The trauma of family separation and foster care are well documented, so why is this harm ignored?](#)



November 1, 2023 CFCC hosted the Maryland State Bar Association, Family Law Section Open Meeting. Presenters included Hon. Joanie Raymond, Magistrate, Circuit Court for Frederick County; Steffani Langston, Esq., Associate Attorney, Wasserman Family Law; Erica LeMon, Esq., Advocacy Director for Children's Rights Maryland Legal Aid; and Laure Ruth, Esq., Chief Program Officer, The Women's Law Center of Maryland; moderated by Christopher W. Roberts, Esq., Roberts Family Law.

October 28, 2023 CFCC Faculty Director Shanta Trivedi was a panelist at the Keeping Families Together: Crisis in Child Welfare conference at Duke University School of Law.

October 12-13, 2023 CFCC Executive Director Aubrey Edwards-Luce attended the American Bar Association's Commission on Youth at Risk invitation-only meeting at Hofstra University School of Law. The event was titled, "Renewal and Revolution: Recommitting the Legal Profession to Serving Children and Youth, their Families, and Communities."

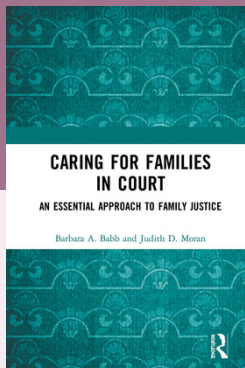
October 6-8, 2023 CFCC partnered with First Focus on Children in D.C. to host the annual convening of the lived experts of the Child Welfare and Race Equity (CWARE) Collaborative. The group met with one executive office and three federal legislators' offices. Additionally, the in-person gathering allowed the leaders to further refine their policy strategies and grow their vision for the CWARE Collaborative.

CFCC Symposium on The Harm of Removal to Children, Parents, and Communities, Wednesday, September 27, 2023 - Recordings are now available on the University of Baltimore School of Law's YouTube Channel: [Click Here.](#)

[See the bios for the CFCC 2023 Symposium speakers.](#)

After you've viewed the recording of the CFCC 2023 Symposium, please take 5-10 minutes to share your thoughts about the event via the [Symposium Evaluation Form](#)

Resources for You



CFCC Founding Director Barbara Babb's 2019 book, *Caring for Families in Court: An Essential Approach to Family Justice*, co-authored with Judy Moran, is available in paperback. The authors propose an approach to family justice system reform that envisions the family court as a "care center," by blending existing theories surrounding court reform in family law with an ethic of care and narrative practice.

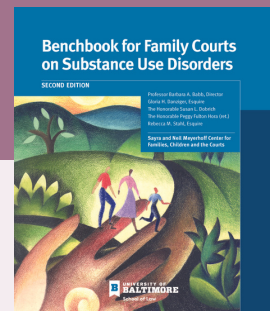


For Families: CFCC's Community Resource Guides

Recognizing that families living in poverty are at greatest risk of involvement with the child welfare system and/or criminal legal system, CFCC publishes comprehensive guides to community-based resources offering help with issues that often lead to family separation through the foster care system or parental incarceration.

[Access and download our Community Resource Guides.](#)

Does your organization provide services for low-income or other marginalized members of our community? Email us with information on your organization at cfcc@ubalt.edu.



CFCC's *Benchbook for Family Courts on Substance Use Disorders* – Second Edition provides valuable insight into the science of addiction, the treatment of substance use disorders (SUDs), how SUDs affect children and families in many family law cases, and how family courts can intervene in ways that lead to better outcomes. The good news is that with a recognized neurobiological basis for substance use disorders, there is potential for recovery. Evidence-based interventions can prevent harmful substance use and related problems, and the courts have considerable power to influence individuals suffering from these disorders.

***The Benchbook for Family Courts on Substance Use Disorders* is available for \$29 as an e-book or PDF. [Download your order form.](#)**

About CFCC

The Sayra and Neil Meyerhoff Center for Families, Children and the Courts (CFCC) supports families, communities and the justice system to improve the lives of children and families and to strengthen communities.

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