



February 18, 2022



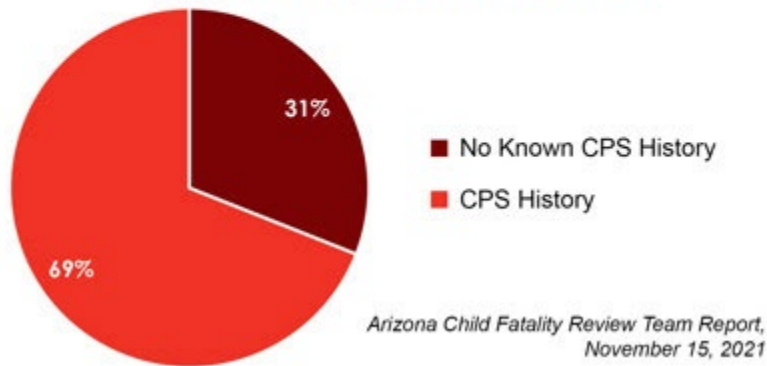
[Watch Video](#)

Hi friends –

Last week came the news about the unspeakable abuse and murder of an 11-year-old boy named Chaskah Smith. Authorities in two states investigated the family at least 6 times, but the brothers were not moved to safety. Chaskah was murdered, and his surviving brother now is in foster care.

Chaskah's murder in Arizona is the Gabriel Fernandez story in California and the Zaiden Jovanovich story in Kansas – and many thousands more. *It is estimated that at least half of all children abused to death across country are known to – but missed by – investigating authorities.* According to the 2021 Child Fatality Report, that figure in Arizona is 69 percent.

**Percentage of Abuse Deaths among Children
by Family's Involvement
with Child Protective Services Agency,
Ages 0-17 Years, Arizona, 2020**



Gen Justice is calling for states to establish independent investigative units to review every child abuse fatality and near fatality. When an airplane crashes, the National Transportation Safety Board immediately investigates. Based on their investigation, the board makes recommendations aimed at preventing future accidents. We have no idea why the system failed Chaskah – or frankly – why it fails so many thousands.

Just last week, the Kentucky Center for Investigative Reporting discovered more than 70 percent of the Kentucky children who died or almost died from abuse in the last five years had prior involvement with child protective services. “That tells me that if we had a better system, at least 70 percent of these children would not have died,” said Kentucky Youth Advocates Executive Director Terry Brooks.

Lawmakers should commit to establishing an independent investigative unit that will allow for uncovering failures and breakdowns as quickly and accurately as possible to prevent more deaths. Lessons should be widely shared. We will not be able to protect these children until investigations shine light into the dark recesses of this opaque system.

Thank you,

Darcy



We are here to put an end to tragic stories like the one above – *and we can because of people like Daniel Bruno.*

Daniel Bruno is the CEO of Chandler's Duck Donuts and held a huge fundraiser during the Duck's second anniversary to bring awareness to the kids of Gen Justice. The jubilee was replete with face painting, live music, and did we mention the endless donuts?

"You're A-Glazing!" we told Daniel Bruno, Chandler Mayor Kevin Hartke, and the many participating visitors. Please email Aimee@genjustice.org if you're interested in creating a fundraiser! We'd love to brainstorm with you to reach your personal community wherever you are.



North Carolina!

We're so happy for the children of North Carolina who now will have families much more quickly; relative searches now are mandatory, faster and documented. These recommendations reflect the key elements of our model reform, the Family Search and Stability Act. The law also requires the court to give relative, kin and foster placements the opportunity to address the court regarding the child's well-being. This omnibus bill reflects the hard work of the NC Values Coalition and child advocates who worked across the aisles to improve the laws for North Carolina's abandoned and abused children. Bravo, NC!

[Read Fact Sheet](#)



Ohio's Pioneering Technology Finds Relatives Faster

Ohio is using a new technology to create a foster child's family tree in hopes of finding more relatives. Curating public information from over 300 sources, early results show six times as many family connections located in half the time. We know finding relatives faster means less time in the system. That's why we created our Family Search and Stability Act that has passed in multiple states, which is currently pending in Ohio. Hats off to Ohio for this tech-novation!

[Read Article](#)

CHILDREN'S LAW CLINIC STORIES



Real Children. Real Help. Real Impact.

Our pro bono Children's Law Clinic helps abused children in their court cases, providing free emergency legal assistance and counsel to expedite their safety and passage to family.



Michael*

"Thank you...because now I feel safe." So said one of our young clients to Children's Law Clinic lead attorney Brittany Reiner, who prevailed round after round in court, freeing this child from abuse and bringing him to safety. Thanks to readers for making this win possible.

**Details modified to protect the child's identity.*



Cold Case Teams Increase Permanency for Teens

Georgia has created a specialized team for the kids in the foster system who need the most support and, statistically, have the lowest odds of adoption. These children and teens have often endured severe trauma, have higher needs, and, as a result, spend years in the system with little hope for a family. Georgia developed a program that puts an expert team in place for these kids to provide a coordinated effort for their needs, including mental health support, disability services, medical interventions, and better placement options. The results are in and 30% of the kids served by this team achieved a permanent family. Wow! And the outcomes for the youth that didn't achieve permanency improved significantly, improving their lives after foster care. We've never seen a program with better results for this population and invite advocates to take a closer look.

[Learn More](#)



Dream Team

Dan Shufelt, who many readers know as the inimitable former CEO of Arizona Helping Hands, wrote "Gen Justice Dream Team safeguards rights of foster children!" This is a bouquet of epic proportions. Thank you, Dan.



OUR PARTNERS



**A Path Forward
Thanks to American Refrigeration Supplies, Inc.
& the Kitchell Foundation!**

American Refrigeration Supplies, Inc. (ARS) and the Kitchell Foundation wanted to give teens transitioning out of foster care a path forward. “Our dream is to open a door to youth who seem to have had every other door to the future closed,” said ARS President John White. Their generosity is giving Gen Justice the resources to study the educational gaps among kids in foster care to create viable solutions from kindergarten on, including paths to schools like the East Valley Institute of Technology specializing in trades where skilled workers are in high demand.

Stay tuned for our forthcoming blueprint for how we can improve educational outcomes for kids in care.