

Tenacity & Transformation

Our Campaign for DC Children

Families Together provides legal assistance to parents who are working to improve their children's lives.

Children thrive when their parents have the time and resources to guide them through life's inevitable challenges. That's not just what we believe, it's what the research shows. If a child experiences a traumatic incident, a supportive parent can dramatically reduce long-term harm.



The burdens created by poverty often drain parents' capacity to provide that support: taking three buses to buy affordable groceries, spending hours to navigate red tape to secure health care, getting a child safely to and from a library for homework when home internet is too expensive.

For nearly 30 years, we have worked with parents and caregivers to help them solve their children's health and education problems and represented children who have been placed in foster care when a parent is unable to safely care for their child.

Now, we are bringing these experiences and expertise to a new effort: Providing legal assistance to expectant and new parents to ensure they can give their child a strong start and representing parents who may be at risk of their child being removed from their home.

Introducing Families Together

To reach children and families sooner, we are forming new partnerships with community-based organizations and government agencies – all with a goal of strengthening DC families impacted by poverty and preventing the trauma of family separation that often results from children entering foster care.

When we help parents overcome barriers, they can focus on helping their children thrive.

Our work has just begun:

- **To give children a strong start, we launched a new collaboration with Mamatoto Village**, a community-based organization devoted to providing accessible perinatal support services for Black women.
- **We are also taking referrals from DC's Child & Family Services Agency with a goal to prevent children from entering the foster care system.** From our experience representing youth in the child welfare system, we have witnessed moments when lawyers could have resolved legal issues before a child is removed: navigating public benefits, securing special education services, representing children in high-conflict custody disputes or ensuring families have access to safe, healthy housing. When issues like these are fixed, it lifts the burdens off parents' shoulders and ensures children can thrive at home in their care.

"We know that new parents face a number of stressors that could impact a family's stability. Our partnerships with community organizations will allow us to expand our reach with targeted legal supports for new families."

– LaShanda Adams,
Chief Legal Officer

These partnerships are just the beginning. With 1 in 4 DC children living in poverty and more than 8,000 children facing housing instability, many more children need our help.

We plan to scale Families Together to reach many more children and families by expanding our partnerships with a focus on prenatal care teams, family success centers and other community-based organizations – reaching parents before their children's educational and health issues overwhelm them.

We have helped pass laws and create systems so children can stay at home with their parents and avoid the trauma created by separation and foster care. Now we are expanding our support to reach more parents and caregivers sooner – preventing harm and reducing trauma.

