

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

UH Law Center Combines Forces with Center for Urban Transformation to Expand Pro Bono Juvenile Justice

Programs aim to break school-to-prison pipeline and provide exceptional representation for youth

HOUSTON, March 31, 2021 – The University of Houston Law Center's Juvenile and Children's Advocacy Project (JCAP) is collaborating with the Center for Urban Transformation's juvenile diversion program (CUT) to expand CUT's capacity to represent and serve young people in Houston's Fifth Ward, with a goal of breaking the school-to-prison pipeline.

JCAP will provide CUT clients with superior legal representation in multiple capacities including youth with solely juvenile justice system involvement; youth with dual system (DFPS and juvenile justice) involvement; juvenile record sealing; and school discipline representation.

This partnership will help ensure that poverty does not mean inadequate representation. Quality legal representation will help protect Fifth Ward's Black and Latino youth from the multigenerational trauma and financial barriers that result from involvement with the judicial system.

"We are excited to announce our new collaboration with the Center for Urban Transformation (CUT)," said Katya Dow, JCAP's legal program director. "CUT has been working to improve the lives of families in Houston's historic Fifth Ward since 2018, and JCAP has been serving underrepresented juveniles since 2014. With this new partnership, JCAP will begin providing legal services, including record sealing and expunctions, and juvenile representation, to members of CUT's community."

CUT's Juvenile Justice Diversion Program, which is in its first year of operation, aims to break the school-to-prison pipeline and cultivate a culture of compassion. The program aims to divert Fifth Ward students who are deemed at-risk, or are arrested, from involvement with the judicial system. Instead of having a charge filed with the court – adding barriers to future career opportunities – students are invited to participate in the center's program that provides holistic case management and opportunities for compassion-based restorative justice, community engagement and mentoring.

The founding members of the center include Pleasant Hill Ministries; Fifth Ward Community Redevelopment Corporation; Berg & Androphy, Houston Habitat for Humanity; and Legacy Community Health. The program began with an assembly of committed partners that formed the Fifth Ward Public Safety Leadership Council, which is led by the center and includes the founding organizations of the center; Harris County District Attorney's Office; Harris County Juvenile Probation; Houston Independent School District, and many other community leaders.

About the Juvenile and Children's Advocacy Project

Since 2014, [the Juvenile and Children's Advocacy Project of Texas](#) has devoted its energy to passionately advocating for juvenile justice. In 2000, Professor David R. Dow founded the Texas Innocence Network, Texas' oldest innocence network, at the University of Houston Law Center (UHLC). After decades of representing death penalty clients, Professor Dow and his wife, Professor Katya Dow, an attorney and passionate advocate for juvenile rights, established the Juvenile and Children's Advocacy Project (JCAP) at University of Houston Law Center. JCAP is notable presence in the Houston community, celebrating strong alliances with the Harris County Juvenile Probation Department, the Harris County Youth Collective, Harris County Public Defenders' Office, Houston Recue and Restore Coalition, and a seat at the Texas Supreme Court Children's Commission Dual Status Task Force.

About the Center for Urban Transformation

[The Center for Urban Transformation](#) is the 501c3 Fifth Ward collaborative of leading Houston community organizations and institutions, including Pleasant Hill Ministries, Fifth Ward CRC, Berg & Androphy, Legacy Community Health, and Houston Habitat for Humanity that are seeking to collaborate to transform the quality of life of families in the poorest neighborhoods in Houston and build a model for communities across the nation. The Center's mission is to build resilient families by increasing 5th Ward families' capacity to grow in all areas that impact the quality of life by working across sectors, fill gaps in services, and apply research to serve the community.

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About the University of Houston Law Center

The [University of Houston Law Center](#) (UHLC) is a dynamic, top tier law school located in the nation's 4th largest city. UHLC's Health Law, and Intellectual Property Law, programs rank in the U.S. News Top 10. Our part-time program is ranked No. 11. It awards Doctor of Jurisprudence (J.D.) and Master of Laws (LL.M.) degrees, through its academic branch, the College of Law. The Law Center is more than just a law school. It is a powerful hub of intellectual activity with more than 11 centers and institutes which fuel its educational mission and national reputation. UHLC is fully accredited by the American Bar Association and is a member of the Association of American Law Schools.

About the University of Houston

The [University of Houston](#) is a Carnegie-designated Tier One public research university recognized with a Phi Beta Kappa chapter for excellence in undergraduate education. UH serves

the globally competitive Houston and Gulf Coast Region by providing world-class faculty, experiential learning and strategic industry partnerships. Located in the nation's fourth-largest city and one of the most ethnically and culturally diverse regions in the country, UH is a federally designated Hispanic- and Asian-American-Serving institution with enrollment of more than 47,000 students.