

Partnership with Alliance for Children's Rights Unites Foster Children with Adoptive Parents

News

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Each year, Jenner & Block Partner Kirsten Spira and the Alliance for Children's Rights join forces to guide foster parents through the bureaucratic process on the way to successful adoptions. These cases involve children who have been placed in the foster care system and their birth parents' parental rights have – either voluntarily or otherwise – already been severed. The children come in all ages and from a variety of difficult situations, but what they have in common is they have been placed in a foster situation where the foster parent or parents want to adopt them. In most cases, these foster parents are unrelated to the child, but sometimes they are aunts or uncles or other relatives who have stepped up in a crisis. The team helps finalize the adoption in a formal adoption hearing. Children's Court allows foster parents to be represented by supervised law school students and lawyers from other parts of the country who have been admitted pro hac vice. Typically, Los Angeles office-based summer associates, subject to supervision, take the lead on four to six adoptions during the summer, and Jenner & Block lawyers might finalize another half dozen adoptions during the year.

The successes are heartwarming. Everly, born of an incarcerated mom who gave her up, is now the child of an unmarried schoolteacher who sobbed at her good fortune to have Everly in her life. Siblings Taniah and Zy'Riah were adopted into a family that already had three children, and their adoption meant they joined a troop of children led by a mom who spends her considerable energy and drive organizing sports practices, coaching teams, and instilling strict rules on grades. A 17-year-old officially became the child of his aunt, the only parent he had ever known.

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Kirsten Hicks Spira

Partner

kspira@jenner.com

+1 213 239 5148

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