

LOUISIANA PUBLIC DEFENDER BOARD



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EQUAL JUSTICE FOR ALL

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BATON ROUGE: Clay Walker, Deputy Public Defender for the state and Director of Juvenile Defender Services at the Louisiana Public Defender Board, has been awarded a 2010 Award for Leadership in Juvenile Justice from the National Juvenile Justice Network. Mr. Walker has been employed by LPDB since June of 2008 and is the first ever Director of Juvenile Defender Services for Louisiana. Three organizations and four individuals received the 2010 award.

The National Juvenile Justice Network will be holding its annual awards event from 5:00-7:00 on Wednesday, July 14, 2010 at the Ritz-Carlton Audubon Room at 921 Canal Street in New Orleans. Will Harrell, Southern Poverty Law Center Director for Louisiana and Mississippi, nominated Mr. Walker for the award. He said, "Clay Walker is an exemplary public servant who is capable of communicating effectively with all the stakeholders in the juvenile justice system. He has the capacity to parse the technical details like a mechanic while being mindful of the big picture like a visionary. We are humbled by the positive impact that he has had in Louisiana."

Mr. Walker was the only non-elected individual honored with this distinction. Other Louisiana awardees are the New Orleans Children Youth and Planning Board, the Jefferson Children Youth and Planning Board, the New Orleans Juvenile Detention Alternative Initiative Advisory Committee and Louisiana State Representative Walt Leger, III.

Part of the significant achievement of the Public Defender Act of 2007 is that Louisiana's public defense system – for the first time since juveniles won the right to counsel in 1967 – now provides staff and resources to support the unique needs of its juvenile clients. Juvenile defense is a altogether different practice of law, requiring specialized knowledge of child development and competency, effective interaction with parents, teachers, and other important people in the child's life, and strong relationships with local resources, services and alternatives to detention.

Mr. Walker says, "Both the Board and the staff of LPDB strongly believe that juvenile public defenders are a critical advocate for a child at a point of crisis – by effectively intervening and advocating in the child's interest, public defenders are the greatest resource for improving the chances that the child will never again have contact with the criminal justice system." LPDB is working to improve the resources available to public defenders to provide this advocacy and work with a broad range of policy makers, social service providers and community leaders to develop data-driven justice programs that serve children and their families.

The National Juvenile Justice Network (NJJN) enhances the capacity of state-based, juvenile justice coalitions to advocate for fair, equitable and developmentally appropriate adjudication and treatment for all children, youth and families involved in the juvenile justice system. The member agency-comprised network has agencies in nearly 35 states; Louisiana's members are Families and Friends of Louisiana's Incarcerated Children (FFLIC) and the Juvenile Justice Project of Louisiana (JJPL).

The mission of LPDB is: In pursuit of equal justice, the Louisiana Public Defender Board advocates for clients, supports practitioners and protects the public by continually improving the services guaranteed by the constitutional right to counsel. Through its commitment to performance standards, ethical excellence, data-driven practices and client-centered advocacy, the Louisiana Public Defender Board oversees the delivery of high quality legal services affecting adults, children and families, and supports community well-being across Louisiana.

In 2006, Mr. Walker received the Louisiana State Bar Association's pro bono award for his work in juvenile court in Shreveport. He received the Volunteers for Youth Justice "Shining Star" award in 2007 and the Shreveport Chamber of Commerce's "40 Under 40" in 2008. Mr. Walker is also active on many boards and community committees, including the Louisiana Legislative Task Force on Legal Representation in Child Protection Cases, the Task Force for School Discipline Reform, the Task Force for Juvenile Detention Center Standards, the Louisiana State Bar Association's Right to Counsel Committee, the Louisiana State Bar Association's Children's Law Committee, and the Louisiana Law Institute's Children's Code Committee.