BACKGROUND

In December 2012, CRY America, Inc. generously awarded the Child Welfare League of America $20,000 to support its work to advance the U.S. ratification of and ongoing implementation of the principles and policies outlined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

As that nation’s leading child welfare organization, CWLA has ability to advance best practices among its members and the field, and to build public will to ensure that all children grow up safely, in loving families and supportive communities with everything they need to flourish and with connections to their culture, ethnicity, race and language. As a leadership organization with members that include public and non-profit child serving agencies, universities, child advocacy organizations, and others who work to promote the well being of children and their families, CWLA is well positioned to promote changes in public policy, and to promote practice excellence.

2013 Project Goals and Accomplishments

**Goal I: Advance U.S. Ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child through education, policy advocacy, and media outreach.**

Objective 1: CWLA will support participate in regular meetings and assist with new implementation strategies that are reflective of the U.S. President’s second term priorities and the related leadership changes at the U.S. State Department.

Objective 2: Convene key stakeholder to gather learning’s and plan next steps regarding implementation of the CRC.

Objective 3: Publish information materials regard the CRC in our magazine, the Children’s Voice.

Objective 4: Use the CWLA National Blueprint for Excellence in Child Welfare as a vehicle for fostering discussion about the rights of children.

Objective 5: Support coalition building and advocacy in conjunction with other non-profit partners including the Campaign for U.S. Ratification of the CRC.

**Summary of Activities and Accomplishments.**
• Early in 2013, CWLA has continued to advance awareness of the CRC among its members, partners, and the public. CWLA’s CEO held a meeting with key leaders in the effort for CRC ratification to discuss post election strategy.

• Working with our partner organizations, CWLA conducted follow-up with the administration, and specifically with the Department of State regarding the sign on letter from 54 CEO’s of national organizations. This letter sought continued support and renewed action on efforts to advance the CRC through the State Department’s internal review process required in advance of formal ratification by the U.S. Senate.

• The political environment around passage of the CRC remains challenging, CWLA has looked for creative ways to advance the process and build a constituency for the CRC. In a related effort, in January of 2013 CWLA began work with the National Council on Disabilities to explore the challenges faced by disabled children and adults who are involved in the child welfare system. Encouraged by the synergy of the work on behalf of the disabled and on behalf of children and families, CWLA encouraged advocates to seek ways to work in partnership to advance both the Convention on the Rights of Disabled Persons (CRPD) and the CRC. CWLA has provided input on the development of a new toolkit that describes the importance of the CRPD as it relates to the rights of children.

• CWLA has also continued to distribute the Child Welfare journal Special Issue on Ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. CWLA is now offering online access to individual articles as well as print versions of the entire issue.

• CWLA has once again helped to develop and will be disseminating materials via Twitter, Facebook, and email in support of Universal Children’s Day on November 20, 2013.

• CWLA continues to serve as an active member of the Steering Committee for the Campaign for U.S. Ratification of the CRC.

• A major accomplishment on 2013 was completion and broad dissemination of CWLA’s National Blueprint for Excellence in Child Welfare (For further information go to http://www.cwla.org/programs/standards/blueprint.htm. The set of standards articulates 19 specific rights for children that include and extend beyond those rights currently codified in U.S. law. These rights aim to advance the principles of the CRS and address issues where improvements are needed for U.S. children including rights to family connections; racial ethnic and gender identity, and safety from corporal punishment. CWLA’s process of promulgating these standards requires our members to work toward achieving these rights in the course of their work...
on behalf of children and families. The new standards and in particular the section on children’s rights have been extraordinarily well received.

**Goal II: Support the capacity of families, communities and other stakeholder to care for children and families who are vulnerable.**

Objective 1: Finalize and circulate curriculum that emphasized the important role fathers play in the care of their children.

Objective 2: Organize special sessions at the CWLA National Conference about fatherhood that will feature the curriculum that CWLA is developing along with other innovative fatherhood initiatives.

Objective 3: Expand the availability of our nationally known PRIDE curriculum and training that are designed to build knowledge and skills for foster and adoptive families.

Objective 4: Expand the availability of our recently developed curriculum and training for kinship caregivers.

Objective 5: Organize a National Kinship Care Conference to be held in the winter of 2014.

Objective 6: Continue to promote the special edition of CWLA’s award winning, peer reviewed Child Welfare Journal focused on family engagement, the CRC and finalize special editions on Indian Child Welfare, child protective services, immigration and research to practice.


**Summary of Activities and Accomplishments.**

During 2013, CWLA has continued its efforts to improve practices that build the capacity of families, direct service agencies and others to meet the needs of the children in their care. CWLA has completed an initial draft of its new curriculum on fatherhood in partnership with one its member agencies. The curriculum draft was presented to CWLA’s 2013 National Conference. Consistent with its curriculum development process, CWLA has conducted a preliminary test of the curriculum modules and revisions to the material are underway.

CWLA has been actively engaged in advancing its PRIDE practice model, curriculum, and training with more than a dozen consultations and trainings conducted this year in the United States and abroad. CWLA staff is also working in partnership with a
member agency to develop an evaluation design to examine the effectiveness of the curriculum in preparing foster and adoptive families for their new parenting roles.

CWLA also completed and published a new curriculum, Collaborating with Kinship Caregivers. Designed for frontline social workers, this 12-hour training teaches professionals how to facilitate collaboration with kinship caregivers to enhance child safety, well-being, and permanency outcomes for children in their care. CWLA has already conducted the new training in several jurisdictions and hopes to expand its efforts in 2014.


This year CWLA has also provided assistance to advance the rights of children through policy and practice improvements including broad dissemination of the CWLA’s National Blueprint for Excellence in Child Welfare, an Executive summary, and a Frequently Asked Questions sheet on its website, to its member organizations, through social media and email sends to more than 15,000 e-newsletter subscribers. CWLA staff has also presented the National Blueprint at national and state conferences around the country. For example:

- State child welfare service licensing offices considered ways they might incorporate principles of the National Blueprint during a presentation and discussion at their national conference.
- In Nevada advocates are seeking ways to implement the National Blueprint’s principles statewide in both public and private child serving organizations.
- Advocates worked with state legislators in New Jersey on proposed legislation to gain the rights of adopted children to access their original birth certificates.
- State legislators in Connecticut sought passage of state legislation endorsing key principles of the CRC.

In 2013, CWLA also worked to highlight other concerns regarding the safety and well-being of children including:

- Conducting program reviews in Maryland, Virginia and Florida to evaluate practice, programs, and policies due to concerns about the safety, permanency, or well-being of children in the care of local child welfare agencies.
• Publication and dissemination of a special issue of its journal, *Child Welfare*, on Services for Native American Children and Families in North America. Initiation of special issues on brain development research, and immigration.

• Joining with Casey Family Programs to develop an amicus brief to the United States Supreme Court in the case of Baby Girl vs. Adoptive Family. This case highlighted concerns regarding widespread non-compliance with the Indian Child Act intended to ensure that decisions regarding the care of Indian children are culturally appropriate, and reflect unique relationship that exists between the U.S. Government and tribal nations. Eighteen child welfare organizations signed on to this brief.

• Conducting a webinar series on preventing serious and fatal child maltreatment. This series will conclude with an in person National Roundtable that will bring together child protection agencies, child welfare service providers, and prevention programs to examine public health strategies for reducing severe maltreatment for children who are 0-5 years old.