

# ANNUAL REPORT 2019



**children's  
defense fund**  
Leave No Child Behind®

# OUR MISSION

The Children's Defense Fund Leave No Child Behind® mission is to ensure every child a *Healthy Start*, a *Head Start*, a *Fair Start*, a *Safe Start* and a *Moral Start* in life and successful passage to adulthood with the help of caring families and communities.

CDF provides a strong, effective and independent voice for *all* the children of America who cannot vote, lobby or speak for themselves. We pay particular attention to the needs of poor children, children of color and those with disabilities. CDF educates the nation about the needs of children and encourages preventive investments before they get sick, drop out of school, get into trouble or suffer family breakdown.

CDF began in 1973 and is a private, nonprofit organization supported by individual donations and foundation, corporate and government grants.

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

### **Angela Glover Blackwell** **Chair**

Founder in Residence  
PolicyLink

### **Ruth-Ann Huvane** **Vice-Chair**

Child Advocate

### **Martin Rodgers** **Treasurer**

Senior Managing Director —  
US Southeast and Metro  
Washington, DC Office Managing  
Director at Accenture

### **Ivanna Omechevarria** **Secretary**

Child Advocate

### **Lan Bentsen**

Founder, Shape Tomorrow

### **Carol Oughton Biondi**

Board Member, California  
State Advisory Committee on  
Juvenile Justice & Delinquency  
Prevention/ Board Member, ARC  
(Anti-Recidivism Coalition)

### **Laphonza Butler**

Partner, SCRB Strategies

### **Malaak Compton-Rock**

Founder and Director  
The Angelrock Project

### **Marian Wright Edelman**

Founder and President Emerita  
Children's Defense Fund

### **DD Eisenberg**

Child Advocate

### **George Gresham**

President  
1199 Service Employees  
International Union (SEIU)

### **Deborah Jewell-Sherman**

Director, Urban Superintendents  
Program and Professor of Practice,  
Harvard Graduate School of  
Education

### **Jurnee Smollett-Bell**

Actress

### **Bryan Stevenson, Esq.**

Founder and Executive Director  
Equal Justice Initiative

### **CDF BOARD EMERITI**

#### **Rev. Kirbyjon Caldwell**

**Geoffrey Canada,**  
Chair, 2008 – 2014

#### **Lisle Carter, Jr.\***

#### **Laura Chasin\***

#### **Hillary Rodham Clinton, Esq.**

Chair, 1986 – 1992

#### **Maureen Cogan**

#### **Deborah S. Cogut, Esq.**

#### **Leonard Coleman, Jr.**

#### **Leslie Cornfeld, Esq.**

#### **Leslee Dart**

#### **John Deardourff\***

#### **Pat Fallon\***

#### **Rev. James Forbes, Jr.**

#### **James Forman, Jr., Esq.**

#### **Henry Louis Gates, Jr.**

#### **Winifred Green\***

#### **Clay Grubb**

#### **Lucy Hackney, Esq.**

#### **Howard Haworth\***

#### **Dorothy Height\***

### **David Hornbeck, Esq.**

Chair, 1994 – 2005

### **Rev. Dr. M. William Howard, Jr.**

**James Joseph,**  
Chair, 1993 – 1994

### **Deborah Leff, Esq.**

### **Marilyn Levitt**

### **William Lynch, Jr.\***

### **Katie McGrath**

### **Charles Merrill, Jr.**

### **Heidi Miller**

### **Eileen Norton**

### **Wendy Puriefoy**

### **Leonard Riggio**

### **Dennis Rivera**

### **Johnathan Rodgers**

**Donna E. Shalala,**  
Chair, 1992 – 1993

### **Barbara Shaw**

### **J. Michael Solar, Esq.**

### **Susan Thomases, Esq.**

### **Thomas Troyer, Esq.**

### **Jason Tyler**

**Robert Vagt,**  
Chair, 2005 – 2008

### **Laura Wasserman**

### **Suzanne Weil**

### **Ali Wentworth**

### **Abigail Wexner, Esq.**

### **Reese Witherspoon**

### **Deborah Wright, Esq.**

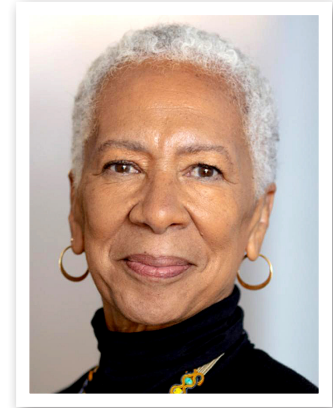
\*deceased

Cover photo © Steve Nero

## A Letter from the Board Chair

Dear friends,

Before reflecting back on the accomplishments of the past year, it is essential to recognize the moment we find ourselves in today. As I write this letter, our nation faces a crisis unprecedented in modern times. The impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic reach far beyond the dire public health consequences; the effects on our economy, on our institutions, and on vulnerable children and families will be seismic, far-reaching, and long-lasting.



To me, this crisis makes clear that the mission and the work of the Children's Defense Fund is as important today as it has ever been in its 47-year history. Too often, our children—especially children living in poverty, children of color, and children in other marginalized communities—are the helpless victims of our misguided priorities as a nation. Even in crises like these, when we come together as a nation to help those who are struggling, the needs of children are too often left out of the conversation. That is why the Children's Defense Fund exists: to make sure that children's voices are heard and their needs are met with urgency.

Over the past year and in response to the current crisis, CDF is making that mission a reality. As soon as the crisis began, CDF's leadership and staff moved quickly to adapt the organization's strategy to meet the moment: redirecting federal and state policy advocacy to get children and families the support they need to survive; retooling programs like CDF Freedom Schools® to continue providing essential enrichment and education for children across the country; and ramping up public outreach to make sure families know how to access life-saving resources and best support children through this difficult time.

I am so proud of the work the Children's Defense Fund has accomplished over the past year and the organization's nimble and effective response to the current crisis. Along with my fellow board members, I have the utmost confidence in CDF's team of passionate child advocates that has achieved, and will continue to achieve, meaningful impact for our nation's children. Even amidst the vast uncertainty of this crisis, I am certain that the Children's Defense Fund will never waver from its mission to protect and uplift America's children.

Thank you for your support of this critical work.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Angela Blackwell'. The signature is fluid and stylized, with a long horizontal line extending from the end.

Angela Glover Blackwell  
Chair, CDF Board of Directors

## A Letter from the National Executive Director

To friends, colleagues, partners, and supporters,

We are living through a moment that has exposed the deadly consequences of our nation's structural inequities and revealed the staggering number of families living one disaster away from ruin. For our nation's most vulnerable children, the COVID-19 pandemic can mean going hungry, facing an increased risk of abuse or neglect, an inability to learn at home without access to books or the internet, and the trauma of losing loved ones.

If there were ever a moment in our history that laid bare why America needs the Children's Defense Fund, this is it. That's why it is so important to reflect and build on the progress we have made and will continue to make for America's children.



Last year, our policy advocacy achieved important victories for children at the national and local level. From leading efforts to implement a landmark child welfare reform law, to releasing a bold plan to lift 5.5 million children out of poverty, to making meaningful changes to protect youth in the criminal justice system, our national and state advocacy efforts are ensuring millions of children have a better chance at fulfilling their potential.

In 2019 more than 12,000 children spent over 2 million hours learning, growing, and discovering their own power to make a difference in CDF Freedom Schools®. Our young Servant Leader Interns spent more than 5,000 hours being trained as educators and activists while young people, faith leaders, and advocates across the country developed leadership skills and renewed a commitment to justice for children through programs like Beat the Odds® and the Proctor Institute.

And whether it was 18-year old Israel Glenn sharing his personal story as he led 80,000 petition signers calling on presidential candidates to address child poverty, or the 1,000 teens and mothers visiting Capitol Hill offices demanding legislators take action to “protect children, not guns,” in 2019 we helped amplify the voices of the children and young people whose futures we fight for every day.

As we look ahead to the unprecedented challenges 2020 brings, and the shameful inequities and injustices exacerbated by this crisis, the Children's Defense Fund will not waver from our commitment to children, especially those who are most vulnerable.

Even as we face a crisis unlike any other in modern times, our team is poised to continue making progress for children in 2020. Our national and state teams are successfully advocating for increased resources to protect children and support their families during and beyond the pandemic. Our programs are embracing the challenge of going virtual for Summer 2020. We are stepping up our efforts to make sure children and families can access the life-saving resources and information they need to survive.

For nearly 50 years, the Children's Defense Fund has fought to end child poverty, to make children a national priority, and to give every child what they need to fulfill their potential. That work will not pause, but will only move ahead with greater purpose and urgency, in the year ahead.

Sincerely,

A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Max Lesko'.

Max Lesko

National Executive Director



# 2019 ACHIEVEMENTS

## Nationwide Impact

### Serving Children in Need

- **12,000** children spent over **2.5 million** hours learning and growing in CDF Freedom Schools®
- More than **70,000** engaging, enriching, multicultural books provided to build scholars' home libraries
- **728,280** full, nutritious meals served to children
- **60,410** months of reading gains achieved



### Defending Children through Advocacy

- Released [our 9-point plan](#) to lift **5.5 million** children out of poverty now
- Collected **80,000** signatures on a successful petition to address child poverty in the presidential debates
- Secured passage of the **Family First Transition and Support Act** to support the implementation of landmark legislation to improve the child welfare system and keep children safely with their families
- Released a **200-page implementation guide** to support state and tribal child welfare system reforms



### Empowering Child Advocates

- **5,400** hours of training provided in classroom instruction, civil rights history and community activism
- More than **1 in 5** CDF Freedom Schools Servant Leader Interns attend HBCUs
- **1,000** teens and moms from **33** states from Jack and Jill of America delivered [Protect Children, Not Guns 2019](#) to lawmakers on Capitol Hill
- Partnered with **21 seminars** and **schools of divinity** to develop coursework on justice for children



# LOCAL IMPACT

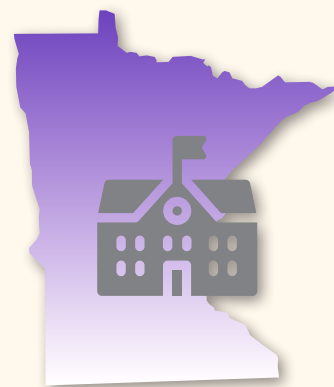
## California

- **Redirected millions of dollars** away from law enforcement towards community-rooted youth services by redesigning Los Angeles County's spending plan for state Juvenile Justice Crime Prevention Act (JJCPA) funds
- **Secured passage of a law that ends the racially disproportionate practice of suspending students in grades K-8** for behavior deemed "disruptive" and "defiant," and advocated for **\$15 million in funding** to replace racially unjust and harmful school climate practices with positive and healing approaches
- **Helped create a Probation Oversight Commission** in Los Angeles County, the first of its kind in the nation, which advises the Board of Supervisors about the Los Angeles Probation Department, assesses its policy priorities, and investigates issues of concern
- **Helped secure a \$50 million budget** allocation to **create an additional 3,086 childcare slots** across California



## Minnesota

- **Served over 1,500 scholars** at **14 CDF-MN Freedom School sites**
- **Successfully advocated** for **\$4 million in new funding** to improve child development outcomes for children of color and American Indian children
- **Held 45 community engagement and listening sessions** about ways to better support young children and their families



## New York

- **Helped secure an additional \$200 million** to implement statewide youth justice reforms
- **Advocated and secured increased funding** for an early intervention services program to **better serve 33,000 infants and toddlers** with developmental delays and disabilities



## Ohio

- As part of the Ohio Children's Budget Coalition, **secured more than \$1 billion** in funding for programs to protect and support Ohio's children and families
- **Supported the launch** of the Ohio Legislative Children's Caucus, a **bipartisan group of 40 policymakers** committed to child-focused, common-sense legislation
- **Launched a new youth empowerment program** for **CDF Beat The Odds® scholars**, providing additional support and mentoring to help them navigate their first year of college



## Southern Region

- Led advocacy efforts for **increased transparency for Mississippi's Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) block grant program** to ensure funds are used to support children and families in need
- **Advanced early education** alignment between **child care centers, Head Start and the Jackson Public School District** to help ensure **all children** in the district **arrive at kindergarten ready to learn**
- **Engaged rural, Black women in Alabama, Georgia, and Mississippi** in civic education and voter engagement activities



## Texas

- Reached nearly **50,000 people and enrolled 2,300 children** in CHIP/Children's Medicaid
- **Helped protect health coverage for millions of Texans** by mobilizing hundreds of thousands of Texans to defend Children's Medicaid, CHIP and the Affordable Care Act
- **Established a group of young Texans** to lead in the **Youth Civic Education and Engagement initiative** to reimagine the engagement of young people in civic life



# Now and for Generations to Come – The Power of CDF Freedom Schools®

Across the country, CDF Freedom Schools® inspires, engages and ignites 'scholars' to learn and dream in a safe place, valued and supported by caring adults. For David Williams, *CDF Freedom Schools* changed his life. Like many of the children and young people who experience *CDF Freedom Schools*, he got involved at a young age. And for the last 20 years, he's continued to inspire and educate young people.



"I've been involved in *CDF Freedom Schools* since I was five. And after 20 years, the program is built in me. It's part of who I am," he explained. "After a few years in *CDF Freedom Schools*, when I was just 8 years old, I promised myself that I would make a difference. That when I got older, I would be a role model for children in my hometown of Bennettsville, South Carolina. And that's exactly what I did."

Thousands of children, college students and community partners across the country will have an unforgettable experience when they participate in *CDF Freedom Schools*. David is one of many who knows the power of the *CDF Freedom Schools* movement. It's where he found his "why."

"I found my voice in *CDF Freedom Schools*. I found my "why." Why I wanted to excel in school. Why I needed to give back to my community. Why I wanted to be part of a movement that lifts up and empowers children to be the best they can be," he explained. "When you walk into a *CDF Freedom Schools* classroom, your first thought might be that it's an excellent summer school program. And you'd be right—but the truth is that it's so much more than that. It's a movement."

A movement that is intergenerational. A movement that empowers, educates and inspires all age groups. A movement that is family.

"It's hard to overstate the power of *CDF Freedom Schools*. Outside the classroom, you don't know what is going on in your scholars' lives: hunger, neglect, or trauma. But once they enter your caring environment, all of that goes away. Once they're in that classroom, it's a family," he said.



With hope, education and action, CDF Freedom Schools® across the country are making a difference in the lives of the children and young people they reach.

**“We have the brain. We have the mind. We’re smart, we’re strong, and we can do anything. We learned it in *Freedom School*. We can do it if we put our mind to it.”**

— Camren, age 7

**“All I can say is *Freedom School* makes me feel awesome. And I hope it feels awesome to the other kids.”**

— Delano, age 8

**“With the *CDF Freedom Schools* model, we create spaces that affirm scholars and give them chances to be comfortable and be themselves and be empowered and be engaged in ways that they don’t have otherwise.”**

— Allen Davis, Director of Secondary Scholar Initiatives/Regional Director of Operations,  
*Freedom School Partners*

**“I went into the role thinking I was going to pour into the youth, but they gave me so much. Youth, they’re loyal. If you care for them, they’ll care for you. I was surprised how much they uplifted me because I thought I was there to uplift them. It turns out that they served me instead.”**

— Ashnee Young, Ella Baker Trainer and the Executive Director  
of New Evolution Educational Center



## The Impact We Make Together – Voices of CDF Supporters

People contribute to the Children's Defense Fund in many ways. They may be individuals who volunteer time or offer personal resources, or others who work through partnering organizations. They help support our work to make sure every child in America has what they need to thrive and reach their full potential.

The power of caring adults and engaged communities can be the difference in a child's life. Here are a few testimonials from our dedicated partners and donors that remind us why their hard work and selflessness is so important.

**"It is important to me that the Children's Defense Fund advocates for an equitable education system where children are given the attention they need, without being inappropriately labeled or subjected to discrimination. The Children's Defense Fund's work, research and awareness has really spoken to me and has helped me put words and practice to my thoughts and assumptions. Thank you for the work you do—it touches every fiber of my being and fills my heart with warmth, joy and hope."**



— Tamieka Thomasson, Early Childhood Specialist

**"Every single person at the Children's Defense Fund cares about the work they do. They don't do the work for prestige or accolades, they do it because it's about the greater purpose of helping children through direct services and policy change. You walk in and feel welcomed by every person on every team. They gave me real work that had a real impact."**

— Cindy Vanessa J, Volunteer

**"I believe the most necessary charities are those that provide a voice for individuals or groups who are unable to speak for themselves. The Children's Defense Fund protects the most vulnerable of those groups: children of color, children who are disabled, and children who live in poverty. These kids are the voices of tomorrow—and, if given the opportunity to grow and thrive, they are the ones who will change our future for the better."**

— Pamela R, Supporter

**"Every month, my spending reflects what I believe in most: my faith, education and children. I better the lives of children through my monthly contribution to the Children's Defense Fund. The Children's Defense Fund represents the voice of all America's children and holds us grown-ups accountable for putting children first. My monthly contribution is a small support for such big work, but I know it's important."**



— Joli Cooper, Partner and Monthly Donor







# OUR FINANCES

The financial information presented below reflects post-audit financials for the Children's Defense Fund (CDF) in 2019. CDF saw positive financial results in fiscal year 2019. The information below reflects income and expenses from October 1, 2018, through September 30, 2019.

In 2019, over seventy-eight percent of every dollar was spent on program services, with fundraising and administration costing a little over twenty-one percent.

The Children's Defense Fund is committed to being an effective and efficient steward of every gift we receive, and to apply each gift to improve the odds for all of America's children, especially those most vulnerable.

**Total income: \$20,074,012**

**Total expense: \$22,363,206**

## Program expenses

Programs that invest in children and communities that will lead the movement: **\$10,687,434**

Policy and program development and implementation: **\$4,635,827**

Public education, media campaigns, internet outreach and publications: **\$2,229,895**

## Other expenses

Fundraising expenses: **\$2,403,028**

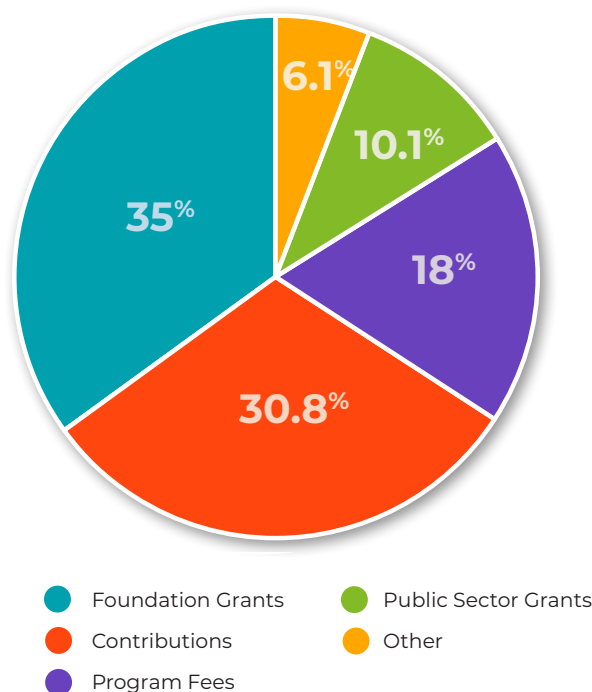
Administrative expenses: **\$2,407,022**

## Net assets

Beginning net assets: **\$27,484,983**

Ending net assets: **\$25,195,789**

REVENUE SOURCE	% OF TOTAL REVENUE
Foundation Grants	35.0
Contributions (Individuals and Organizations)	30.8
Program Fees	18.0
Public Sector Grants	10.1
Other	6.1

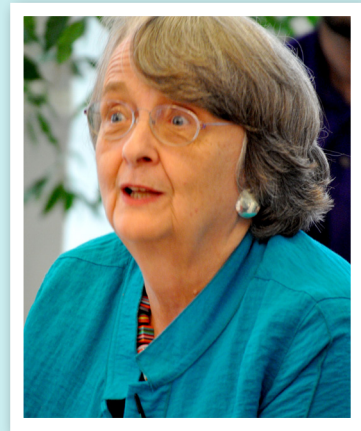


# A Legacy of Millions of Lives Changed

## A Tribute to MaryLee Allen

On June 13, 2019, the Children's Defense Fund lost a lifelong advocate for children, our Policy Director, MaryLee Allen. She was a mother, sister, and beloved friend and mentor to many. For more than 40 years, MaryLee helped shape CDF's advocacy for children and was integral to countless policy successes that have made America a better place for children.

As CDF's longest-serving staff member and the anchor of CDF's policy work, MaryLee was instrumental in helping produce CDF's first-ever policy report, *Children Out of School in America*, a report that examined why school-age children were at home and not in school. The report later became a major catalyst for the enactment of the *Education for All Handicapped Children Act* (now the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act*, or IDEA). From IDEA to the *Adoption Assistance and Child Welfare Act of 1980* to the recent landmark *Family First Prevention Services Act of 2018* it is not an exaggeration to say every federal child welfare law enacted in the past four decades was influenced by MaryLee's hard work and relentless advocacy.



MaryLee was a strong believer that major policy reforms couldn't be accomplished without a wave of support and advocacy from different stakeholders and partners at all levels. Lawmakers and advocates alike knew her impact. In late 2019, Congress passed a spending bill that included the *Family First Transition Act*, which provides critical resources to help states, tribes and territories implement the *Family First Prevention Services Act of 2018 (Family First)*—a critical law to improve the child welfare system that MaryLee was instrumental in shaping and enacting. As a way to recognize her career devoted to the protection of children and families, the *Family First Transition Act* renamed the Promoting Safe and Stable Families Program (PSSF) to the “MaryLee Allen Promoting Safe and Stable Families Program.” PSSF, one of the most significant sources of federal funds that help keep children safe, was one of the many reforms MaryLee helped turn from an idea to reality over the course of her long and successful career.

MaryLee's leadership and unwavering commitment to ensuring every child a chance to fulfill their potential will live on through the children, family, friends and colleagues whose lives she changed. We miss her beyond measure, and we continue to honor her every day by fighting for the ideas, principles and children to whom she devoted her career. We will “go, go, go,” as MaryLee would say, and keep moving forward to improve the lives of America's most vulnerable children.



# OUR LEADERSHIP



**Mamie Berry**  
Director of  
Administration/Human  
Resources



**Patrick Bresette**  
Executive Director  
CDF-Texas



**Gijs deLeede**  
Chief Financial  
Officer



**Marian Wright  
Edelman**  
Founder and  
President Emerita



**Oleta Garrett Fitzgerald**  
Executive Director  
Southern Regional  
Office



**Emily Gardner**  
Communications  
Director



**Shimica Gaskins**  
Executive Director  
CDF-California



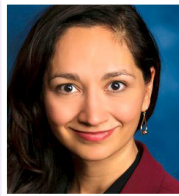
**Jeanne Middleton-  
Hairston**  
Interim National Director,  
CDF Freedom Schools



**Kathleen King**  
Interim Policy  
Director



**Max Lesko**  
National Executive  
Director



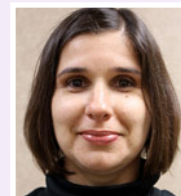
**Tracy Nájera**  
Executive Director  
CDF-Ohio



**Naomi Post**  
Executive Director  
CDF-New York



**Mark Publow**  
Chief Development  
Officer



**Bharti Wahi**  
Executive Director  
CDF-Minnesota

## CDF National Office

840 First Street NE, Suite 300  
Washington, DC 20002  
Tel: (202) 628-8787  
1 (800) 233-1200  
Fax: (202) 662-3510  
[www.childrensdefense.org](http://www.childrensdefense.org)

## CDF-California

634 S. Spring Street,  
Suite 500C  
Los Angeles, CA 90014  
Tel: (213) 355-8787  
Fax: (213) 355-8795  
[www.cdfca.org](http://www.cdfca.org)

## CDF-Minnesota

555 Park Street, Suite 410  
St. Paul, MN 55103  
Tel: (651) 227-6121  
Fax: (651) 227-2553  
[www.cdf-mn.org](http://www.cdf-mn.org)

## CDF-New York

815 Second Avenue, 8th Floor  
New York, NY 10017  
Tel: (212) 697-2323  
Fax: (212) 697-0566  
[www.cdfny.org](http://www.cdfny.org)

## CDF-Ohio

395 East Broad Street  
Suite 330  
Columbus, OH 43215  
Tel: (614) 221-2244  
Fax: (614) 221-2247  
[www.cdfohio.org](http://www.cdfohio.org)

## CDF-South Carolina

117 Cheraw Street  
Bennettsville, SC 29512  
Tel: (843) 479-5310  
Fax: (843) 479-0605

## CDF-Southern Regional Office

(Alabama, Arkansas,  
Florida, Georgia,  
Louisiana, Mississippi)  
2659 Livingston Road  
Suite 200  
Jackson, MS 39213  
Tel: (601) 321-1966  
Fax: (601) 321-8736  
[www.cdf-sro.org](http://www.cdf-sro.org)

## CDF-Texas

5410 Bellaire Blvd., Suite 203  
Bellaire, TX 77401  
Tel: (713) 664-4080  
Fax: (713) 664-1975  
[www.cdf-texas.org](http://www.cdf-texas.org)

## Austin Office

1910 E. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.  
Austin, TX 78702  
Tel: (512) 236-1699  
[www.cdf-texas.org](http://www.cdf-texas.org)

## Rio Grande Valley Office

113 W. Pecan Blvd., Room 109  
McAllen, TX 78501  
Tel: (956) 687-5437  
Fax: (956) 687-5438  
[www.cdf-texas.org](http://www.cdf-texas.org)

## CDF Haley Farm

1000 Alex Haley Lane  
Clinton, TN 37716  
Tel: (865) 457-6466  
Fax: (865) 457-6464





## Help Make a Difference for Children

As we look to the unprecedented challenges of the upcoming year, our work to ensure every child can thrive and reach their full potential is more important than ever. With support, CDF will continue to lift children out of poverty, protect them from abuse and neglect, and ensure that they have access to the basic care, education, and supports they need to thrive.

The fight for children and families never stops. Please make a monthly gift today to ensure the needs of children remain front and center.

To donate by mail, please [fill out this form](#) and send to:

**Children's Defense Fund  
Development Department  
840 First Street NE, Suite 300  
Washington, DC 20002**

Reach us anytime by email at [donations@childrensdefense.org](mailto:donations@childrensdefense.org).

Visit [www.childrensdefense.org/support/other-ways-to-support](http://www.childrensdefense.org/support/other-ways-to-support) to learn about other ways to support the work of the Children's Defense Fund.



# children's defense fund

Leave No Child Behind<sup>®</sup>

840 First Street NE, Suite 300

Washington, DC 20002

(202) 628-8787

1 (800) 233-1200

[www.childrensdefense.org](http://www.childrensdefense.org)