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**KENTUCKY RECEIVES ‘D’ GRADE FOR LEGAL REPRESENTATION
OF CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE:**

National Report Card Offers Solutions for Improvement

JEFFERSONTOWN, Ky. – (April 27, 2007) – A recently released report card on legal representation of foster children gave Kentucky a ‘D’ for the services it provides to abused and neglected children. First Star, a national child advocacy organization, issued the report, issuing grades to states based on components like mandates for representation, training requirements, child’s involvement in proceedings, and attorney immunity from malpractice.

Kentucky was one of six states to receive a ‘D’ grade based on a 100-point index and fifteen other states received failing grades. The Commonwealth received a score of 60 out of 100. Neighboring states received a range of grades with Illinois, Indiana, and Missouri receiving failing grades, Ohio receiving a C, Tennessee a B, and West Virginia an A.

Report recommendations to the Kentucky Legislature include:

- Ø Develop training for attorneys and authorize “multidisciplinary interaction”
- Ø “Require continuity of counsel”
- Ø Give children the right to legal representation during the appeals process

The First Star report also recommended that children’s attorneys have caseload and compensation levels that allows for “effective assistance of counsel.”

“While Kentucky guarantees attorneys for children in its child welfare system, the issue of quality representation is simply not adequately addressed. At a broad level, we can do more to support the quality issue through proactive legislation in 2008 and a focused commitment from the legal profession. On a pragmatic basis, issues like increasing fees for court-appointed attorneys are imperative if we really want to tackle the quality issue,” said Dr. Terry Brooks, Executive Director of Kentucky Youth Advocates, one of two groups that issued a report on concerns with adoption practices, particularly in Hardin County, in January 2006.

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