



**COUNTY OF MONTGOMERY**  
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**Sheriff Kilkenny calls on local attorneys to provide pro bono legal child advocate services**

**Norristown, PA (October 4, 2016)** – Sheriff Sean P. Kilkenny will be expanding his legal role to help fill an increased need for pro bono child advocates. Legal aid needs for abused and neglected children in Montgomery County are expected to climb 30 percent by the end of the year. To help, Kilkenny will be taking a Continuing Legal Education course offered by the [Montgomery Child Advocacy Project](#) entitled “The Art of Representing a Child in the Legal Arena.”

In 2015, MCAP was able to help approximately 380 children and youth by providing pro bono child advocacy services. However, many other cases go unreported.

“This expands my role as an attorney, but also enhances my duty as a sheriff to serve and protect the citizens of the county,” said Kilkenny. “I encourage all of my peers to consider taking the class to help our most vulnerable population, during their most difficult time.”

MCAP provides free legal representation to children in the county, who are victims of abuse and neglect. Cases can include physical abuse, sexual abuse, gross neglect, medical neglect, endangerment, dependency, and children who have been witnesses to violent crimes. The project also ensures that the child has a safe home environment, during legal proceedings. Each attorney will be required to represent at least one child in the calendar year, in order to receive credit.

During the full-day class, speakers from the Office of Children and Youth and the District Attorney’s Office will offer their expertise in child advocacy, in and outside of the courtroom. The class will also cover the role of an MCAP Advocate in criminal court, the standing of MCAP attorneys, and an overview of dependency proceedings. Additional training will be offered following the class.

“We know that our children are the most vulnerable when caretakers fail to keep them safe,” said MCAP Executive Director Mary C. Pugh. She is urging local attorneys to join MCAP to provide the safety net that protects kids, and ensures their right to grow up in a healthy and safe environment.

MCAP was formally incorporated in 2004 but has helped over 4,400 children since 1999. It costs over \$1,000 per case to represent a child in the MCAP Project. Attorney advocates were able to donate \$898,450 worth of legal services in 2014.

According to MCAP, approximately 80 percent of all child abuse is perpetrated by parents, which highlights the need for these special services.

“It’s heartbreaking and deplorable to think that children may have to stand up in court to family, who have abused or neglected them,” said Kilkenny. “These kids deserve the support and comfort that this project can offer.”

MCAP’s CLE “The Art of Representing a Child in the Legal Arena” will be held on October 21, 2016 from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. at the [Montgomery Bar Association](#). Members pay a fee of \$50.00 and non-members pay \$150. Each participant will earn seven CLE credits. For more information and to register, visit <http://bit.ly/2dFUTkR>.

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