

Elizabeth Powers is the Director of Youth Justice at the Children’s Defense Fund – New York (CDF-NY) where she oversees the youth justice and education justice policy portfolios. Prior to CDF-NY, she worked at The Legal Aid Society as a forensic social worker alongside attorneys representing children in New York City’s Family Court in both Brooklyn and the Bronx. As part of Legal Aid’s Special Litigation and Law Reform Unit she contributed to class action law suits on behalf of children in the Child Welfare and Juvenile Justice systems. Ms. Powers earned her Master’s in Social Work degree from Fordham University in 2008, specializing in research. She completed her Master’s thesis as an intern for the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, analyzing a pilot mental health treatment modality for inmates held in punitive segregation at Rikers Island. She previously instructed a course on Forensic Social Work Practice at Fordham University’s Graduate School of Social Service and currently serves as a Faculty Instructor at City University of New York’s John Jay College of Criminal Justice. She previously served on the Board of Directors of Literacy for Incarcerated Teens, a non-profit dedicated to increasing access to literacy resources for detained youth.