

Center for Children's Advocacy

CCA NEWSLETTER • WINTER 2026



Fighting for the legal rights of Connecticut's most vulnerable children.

With February well underway, the Center for Children's Advocacy (CCA) is advocating for legislative reforms to enforce the rights of children to health, safety, and education, and fighting for resources to ensure children's basic needs are met. This newsletter outlines our legislative agenda in detail, highlights our recent work on behalf of immigrant youth, youth with disabilities, and youth experiencing homelessness, provides vital information on the housing rights of displaced tenants, and celebrates our community partners and supporters.

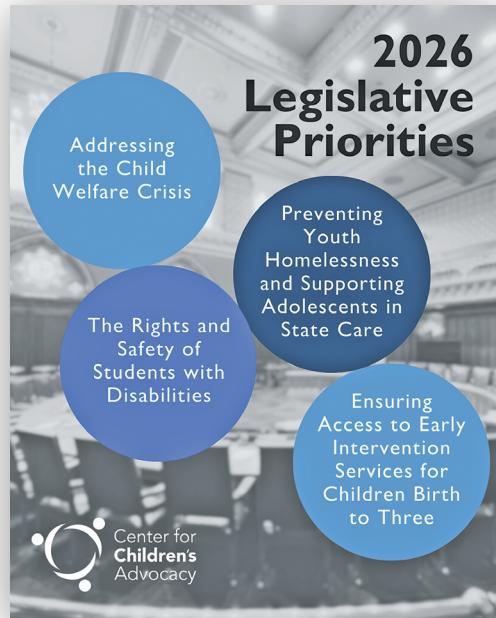
2026 Legislative Priorities

Every day, CCA advocates for individual children and families navigating complex legal and social systems. And our work does not stop with individual cases. We also focus on strengthening and transforming the systems that shape children's lives across Connecticut.

During the 2026 legislative session (February 4–May 6, 2026), CCA is advancing policy priorities aimed at protecting children's health and safety, enforcing their civil rights, and ensuring that no young person exits state care into homelessness.

This session, alongside other advocacy efforts, our work centers on four urgent areas: a child welfare system in crisis, ensuring access to early intervention services for children ages birth to three, the rights and safety of students with disabilities, and preventing homelessness for young people transitioning out of state agency care.

Read more about our 2026 legislative priorities here: <https://cca-ct.org/2026-legislative-priorities/>



State Orders Special Education Reforms After CCA Complaint

CCA successfully resolved a systemic legal complaint against New Haven Public Schools on behalf of multiple children, many with profound disabilities, who were denied access to special education teaching and services during this school year.

Read the full press release: <https://cca-ct.org/state-orders-new-haven-schools-to-fix-systemic-special-education-failures-following-cca-legal-complaint/>

Black History Month Spotlight:

Improving Care for Youth in Chronic Pain

During Black History Month, CCA is supporting youth-led advocacy at the intersection of racial equity, health justice, and disability rights. Through our Hartford Medical Legal Partnership Project, CCA partnered with Connecticut Children's Medical Center's Chronic Pain Advocacy Group (CPAG) to develop legal content for its new **Voices 4 Youth in Pain** website, <https://voices4youthpain.org>. The CPAG is a group of teens and young adults of color who experience chronic pain, and their caregivers.

The site responds directly to a reality too often faced by Black youth: pain complaints dismissed, minimized, or misunderstood in schools and some healthcare settings. By centering lived experience and legal rights, Voices 4 Youth in Pain empowers families with tools to advocate for appropriate care, educational accommodations, and dignity.

Learn more about how you can protect children who experience chronic pain from sickle cell disease:

CCA's patient's guide: <https://cdn.cca-ct.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/15180905/web-2015-Sickle-Cell-patients-1.pdf>

CCA's provider's guide: <https://cdn.cca-ct.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/15180902/Sickle-Cell-providers-9-7-17-Web.pdf>

CCA represents youth who experience chronic pain from conditions like sickle cell disease and need accommodations from their school. For more information, contact Attorney Bonnie Roswig, BRoswig@cca-ct.org

Voices 4 Youth in Pain

HOME WHAT IS CHRONIC PAIN? HEALTHCARE SUPPORT SCHOOL RESOURCES ABOUT US



WELCOME
Striving to Improve Pain Care for Children, Adolescents, and Young Adults

CCA's Immigration Advocacy

A 17-year-old high school student was held in U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) custody in Connecticut for nearly four months – despite living lawfully with his father and attending school – after being detained during a routine stop in New York.

With legal action and advocacy from Sabrina Tavi, CCA's Director of the Immigrant Children's Justice Project, and CCA Board Member Christopher Mattei of Koskoff Koskoff & Bieder PC, a federal judge ordered the youth's release, allowing him to reunite with his father just days before the holidays.

Read the article in the Hartford Courant: https://www.courant.com/2026/01/02/ct-lawyer-advocates-help-massachusetts-teen-held-by-ice-in-ct-return-to-his-father-for-the-holidays/?blm_aid=50658

Note: Must have a Courant subscription to read the article.

CCA represents undocumented children and youth in a range of circumstances, including those living with family members, living independently, or residing in federal Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) shelters. CCA also works with existing clients to help them prepare for potential ICE interactions.

Learn more about the Immigrant Children's Justice Project: <https://cca-ct.org/our-work/immigration/>



Advocating for Systemic Change in Schools

In a recent Op-Ed for the CT Examiner, Kathryn Meyer, Director of CCA's Medical-Legal Partnership at Yale Child Study Center, Zoe Masters, Staff Attorney with CCA's School Justice

Project, and Dan Pearson, Executive Director of Educators for Excellence, argue that rising challenges in schools are not the result of student behavior alone, but of systemic conditions that deprive children and teachers of the tools

they need to support and educate children.

This 2026 legislative session, CCA is advancing policy priorities informed by these challenges and focused on investing in student supports, strengthening school-based services, and addressing the root causes shaping student outcomes.

Read the article: "The Title of This Crisis is Not Student Aggression": <https://ctexaminer.com/2026/01/27/the-title-of-this-crisis-is-not-student-aggression/>



"Students aren't creating this crisis; they are responding to conditions adults designed."

— Zoe Masters, Kathryn Meyer & Daniel Pearson

"The Title of this Crisis is Not Student Aggression," CT Examiner

Uniform Relocation Assistance Act: Know Your Rights

DID YOU KNOW? The Uniform Relocation Assistance Act (URAA) requires cities and towns to provide relocation assistance to residents who are displaced by a fire or condemnation of an uninhabitable apartment, including help paying for short-term housing and deposits for an apartment. Every city and town in CT must provide URAA rights, including payments up to \$4000.

CCA's Medical Legal Partnership (MLP) at Yale New Haven Hospital recently learned that the City of Bridgeport was not complying with the URAA, specifically after fires that made units uninhabitable. The MLP is connected to partners at CT Legal Services and CT Fair Housing, who will ensure Bridgeport provides assistance to all eligible families, and MLP continues to assist people who are not receiving their URAA rights.

Contact Attorney Sarah Mervine for more information, smervine@cca-ct.org.

CCA's Youth Homelessness Advocacy

CCA recently partnered with the CT Judicial Branch's Court Support Services Division (CSSD) to present Connecticut's collaborative work addressing housing instability and youth homelessness within the justice system to a national audience.

The presentation, delivered to grantees of the Youth Homelessness System Improvement Program, highlighted CCA and CSSD's joint efforts to develop and administer a housing survey for minors and youth entering and exiting the justice system, build a case-conferencing model for youth experiencing housing instability or homelessness, and implement housing-focused interventions informed by shared data.

For more information, email Attorney Stacey Violante Cote, sviolante@cca-ct.org



Collaborating for Kids: Lunch and Learn with Day Pitney & Verrill

CCA recently organized a series of engaging "Lunch and Learn" sessions to strengthen ties with the legal community and create new partnerships.

Hosted by Board Director Alan Ruiz, we were honored to return to Day Pitney LLP, one of CCA's longstanding partners and a tremendous sponsor of our mission. We also opened a new dialogue and visited Verill Law, a firm that shares a deep commitment to community service and involvement and pro bono work.

Led by our Executive Director, Sarah Eagan, and attended by our Board co-Chair, Ginny Kim, these gatherings are vital for fostering the in-community engagement that sustains our work and serve as both a "thank you" for the firms' support and a platform for future collaboration. We are grateful to Day Pitney and Verill Law for hosting us and for their alignment with CCA's work in these challenging times.

To learn more about CCA's Pro Bono program, contact Attorney Sabrina Tavi, stavi@cca-ct.org.



Images from the Lunch and Learn at Day Pitney



Images from the Lunch and Learn at Verrill Law

Celebrate With Us Spring For Kids!

2026: Champion of Children Awards

June 3, 2026 | 5:30-8:00pm

The Yard Goat Club at Dunkin' Park
Hartford, CT



Save the Date for CCA's Spring for Kids! 2026



We are excited to announce this year's Spring for Kids! will be held on June 3rd from 5:30-8:00pm at the Yard Goat Club in Hartford!

Save the date and make plans to attend CCA's flagship fundraiser with your colleagues and friends as we celebrate and honor our 2026 Champions of Children and spotlight our family and youth voices.

We are proud to announce this year's Champions of Children: Former Commissioner of the Connecticut Office of Early Childhood, **Beth Bye**, and Director, Strategic Partnership Investments, Greater Hartford Gives Foundation (formerly The Hartford Foundation for Public Giving), **Judy McBride**.

This year's Sustainability Award honoree is renowned Civil Rights Attorney and CCA Advisory Board member, **Preston Tisdale**.

Please contact Maggie Prendergast, MPrendergast@cca-ct.org, to help us celebrate our honorees this year through sponsorship and advertisement opportunities, AND be sure to follow CCA on social media (Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn) for more updates!

See you on June 3rd!

A Season of Impact: Our Board-Supported Holiday Drive

This year's Holiday Drive was a resounding success, fueled by the unwavering support and leadership of our Board of Directors. Their commitment ensured that we could provide critical relief to families facing significant hardships during the holiday season, and we could not be more grateful.

The true impact of this generosity is best felt through the words of our frontline staff:



Our School Justice Attorney, Zoe Masters, shared: "My clients were so appreciative! For a couple of families, this made it possible just to get through the week of basic expenses, and for others, it made it possible to have something special for the holidays that they otherwise wouldn't have been able to afford. Thank you so so much!!"



Our Disability Rights Director, Attorney Bonnie Roswig, shared: "These were all families who struggle with basic needs issues and who have a range of significant stressors. They were very pleased to get anything 'extra' so that they could purchase needed items."

Because of our Board's dedication, the children, youth, and families CCA serves didn't just receive gifts this year. CCA's Board provided stability, security, and moments of joy during incredibly challenging times. THANK YOU!



CCA is a Charity of Choice at Johnny's Jog this year!

Girls participating in the walk, with the Johnny's Jog for Charity logo and the CCA logo underneath.

CCA is honored to have been selected as a Clover Club Charity for the 2026 Johnny's Jog, supporting CCA's legal services that help children with disabilities get critical services and supports. Welcome spring and support CCA at Johnny's Jog for Charity 5K on March 22!

Register Now: <https://www.johnnysjog.com>



Want to support the work of the Center for Children's Advocacy?
Help give children a voice
Donate Today! ccacommunications@cca-ct.org