

**FIGHTING FOR
THE LEGAL
RIGHTS OF
CONNECTICUT'S
MOST
VULNERABLE
CHILDREN.**



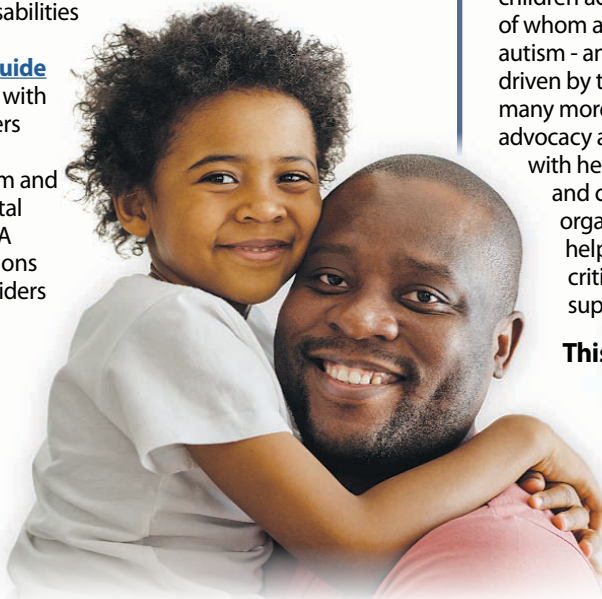
Autism Acceptance Month

Group of kids sitting together in classroom
As April comes to a close, the Center for Children's Advocacy (CCA) is highlighting Autism Acceptance Month while continuing to advance our work across Connecticut to ensure children's rights are upheld. Our Spring newsletter shares how CCA is helping children with autism and other developmental disabilities access the services they are legally entitled to and advocating for stronger oversight and accountability of child-serving systems. We also feature our Speak Up! youth leaders' advocacy, highlight some of our work in the community, and welcome new members to our Board of Directors.

Know Your Rights: Inclusion in Everyday Programs

Did You Know? No child with a diagnosis of autism or any other developmental disability can be excluded from a camp, childcare or after-school program because of that diagnosis. Federal and state protections for individuals with disabilities require community programs make reasonable modifications to policies, practices, and procedures so children with disabilities can participate.

CCA's [Provider Guide](#) shares information with health care providers about the rights of children with autism and other developmental disabilities, and CCA offers training sessions to health care providers about how they can advocate for legally required accommodations for children with disabilities. For more information, contact **Bonnie Roswig**, BRoswig@cca-ct.org.



CCA's Advocacy

For families across Connecticut, getting services for a child with autism is not straightforward, even when those services are legally required. Each year, CCA serves more than 1,000 children across the state, 15% of whom are children with autism - and system reforms driven by this work impact many more. Through legal advocacy and partnerships with healthcare providers and community organizations, CCA helps families secure critical services and supports.

This advocacy work includes:

- Individual legal representation to enforce children's rights
- Training and one-on-one legal guidance for parents and providers
- Advocacy for system changes to improve services for children with autism

For more information, contact attorney **Bonnie Roswig**, BRoswig@cca-ct.org.



Each year, CCA serves more than **1,000** children across CT.

15% are children with autism.

CCA Invited to Testify on the Rights of Individuals with Disabilities to Safe Care

STATE REPORT-- More than 4,200 allegations of abuse and neglect of individuals with developmental disabilities.

Fifteen deaths in a single year.

CCA's Executive Director Sarah Eagan was invited to speak at a special legislative hearing on April 7 about failures to protect individuals with developmental disabilities in Connecticut's care system and what must come next to ensure the safety of youth and adults with disabilities in state-funded group homes. "There is no glossing the narrative," she noted. "In my opinion, this is not a safe system."

While improvements have been made in reporting, the system remains underfunded and underregulated - limiting its ability to consistently ensure safety, particularly for individuals who are highly vulnerable or unable to communicate their experiences. The consequences are real - and, in some cases, fatal. CCA is continuing to fight for stronger transparency, meaningful oversight, and systemic reforms to ensure youth and adults with disabilities receive safe, reliable care - every day, in every setting. Contact **Sarah Eagan**, seagan@cca-ct.org for more information.



To watch Sarah's full testimony: <https://vimeo.com/1187760572>

Speak Up! at Youth Day 2026

Connecticut's youth took the floor at the State Legislature's Juvenile Justice Policy and Oversight Committee (JJPOC) meeting on Youth Day, speaking directly to state leaders about what young people need to



access opportunity and further their education. CCA's Speak Up! youth were part of a powerful group of young leaders and partners brought together by Tow Youth Justice Institute.

The meeting brought youth voices directly into conversation with policymakers and state leaders, including Governor Ned Lamont, State Representative Toni Walker, and Thea Montanez, Special Advisor to the Governor. Young people spoke candidly about the barriers they face: from housing and transportation challenges to lack of

access to jobs, documentation, and mental health support.

"A lot of young people are actually seeking out employment... it's just a really hard process for them."

– Selena, CCA Speak Up! Youth

"They're not getting any voices from the kids who are actually affected."

– Tristan, CCA Speak Up! Youth



And they came with solutions, calling for stronger pathways to employment, mentorship, and wraparound supports.

"Young people know what we need."

– Olu, CCA Speak Up! Youth

Opportunities like these are critical because when youth voices are centered, policies can be shaped by real experience. Through our Speak Up! Youth Project and our partnerships, CCA is working to ensure young people are not just impacted by systems, but are helping to change them.

We'll be sharing "powerful voices" from Youth Day at Spring for Kids! this year on June 3rd. Join us at Spring for Kids! to hear from our Speak Up! Youth, see their impact, and be part of the work driving change across Connecticut. You won't want to miss it!

Get your tickets today.

https://secure.ggiv.com/for/centerforchildrensadvocacy/event/springforkids2026?blm_aid=0

CCA's New Bridgeport Office Open House

CCA hosted an Open House on the morning of March 25, welcoming friends and partners to its new Bridgeport office. Attendees included State Representative Steve Stafstrom, Bridgeport City Council members, Koskoff, Koskoff & Bieder, Make the Road Connecticut, Bridgeport Prospers, PT Partners, The Center for Family Justice, and Bridgeport Superintendent of Schools Royce Avery and his team, among many others. We are honored that so many took time out of their day to visit and celebrate this new space with us, and we look forward to continuing to build strong partnerships in the Bridgeport community.

At right, Agata Raszczyk-Lawska from CT Legal Services, Ilana Ofgang, Callie Heilmann from Bridgeport Generation Now, Abby Anderson from The Justice Walk, Sabrina Tavi, Janet Ortiz



Kathryn Meyer, Ilana Ofgang, Megan Graefe from CHRO, Rep Steve Stafstrom, Callie Heilmann from Bridgeport Generation Now



Michele McKinley, Chief of Special Education for Bridgeport Public Schools, Rep Steve Stafstrom, Superintendent Avery & Bridgeport Public Schools team



Family sharing their voices from CCA's Educational Success Project



Dream Team who worked on the habeas cases from CCA's Immigrant Children's Justice Project



Event Chair and CCA Board Director, Renee Bea, and CCA Board Director and Event Keynote speaker, Chris Mattei

Giving Children a Voice: From the Frontlines

What a powerful night for Connecticut's kids!

We are still buzzing from the energy of Giving Children a Voice on April 22nd, where over 60 guests gathered in Westport to hear Chris Mattei speak on the vital importance of showing up for what is right and the power of community in fighting for children in need.

The heart of the evening was hearing directly from family and youth voices. Their stories brought to life the impact of our Educational Success and Immigrant Children's Justice Projects, reminding us all why we must continue to advocate for every child's right to a bright and stable future.

A massive thank you to our Event Chair and Board Director, Renee Bea, along with our Board Officers, Board Directors, and Advisory Board members for their leadership. It was incredible to see so many longstanding

Center for Children's Advocacy
Giving Children a Voice: From the Frontlines
 The Boathouse at Saugatuck | Westport, CT
 Wednesday, April 22, 2026
 Event Chair
RENEE BEA, ESQ.
 Keynote Speaker
CHRIS MATTEI

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sustainability partners alongside so many new faces from across the Fairfield County community!

Our advocacy is only possible because of our dedicated sponsors. Please join us in thanking them for their commitment:

Sustaining & Equity Partners: A huge shout-out to our long-term, loyal partners: Finn Dixon & Herling, LLP, Koskoff Koskoff & Bieder PC, Shipman & Goodwin, Silver Golub & Teitell LLP, Slarskey LLC, Southport Compass, Stockman O'Connor, Wiggan & Dana LLP and the John and Kelly Hartman Foundation. Your continued commitment changes lives!

New Partnership: We were thrilled to welcome Verrill Law LLP as our newest Growth Sponsor! We are so excited to grow this relationship in the years to come.

Together, we are a voice for the vulnerable. Thank you for standing with us!

Equipping Practitioners to Advocate for Youth in Hartford County

CCA attorneys provided a series of four trainings this month for youth development practitioners in Hartford. The trainings educated practitioners about the legal rights of children and youth regarding legal issues of education, immigration, child welfare, access to health care, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), juvenile and criminal justice and LGBTQ+ rights. Equipping these practitioners with knowledge about rights and advocacy strategies helps them support the children and families with whom they work. Reach out to Deputy Director Stacey Violante Cote to schedule a training with your organization.



Attorney Stacey Violante Cote providing training on teen legal rights



Attorney Josh Michtom providing training on children's rights in the child welfare system

Epilepsy Project Parent Support Group

CCA Epilepsy Project Attorney Ilana Ofgang was a guest speaker at the Epilepsy Foundation of CT's virtual Parent Support Group



meeting on April 27, where she discussed special education advocacy with a special focus on school-based accommodations and related services. Contact attorney **Ilana Ofgang**, IOfgang@cca-ct.org for more information.

Welcoming New Members to CCA's Board of Directors

Please join us in welcoming two outstanding leaders to the CCA Board of Directors: Dr. Michael D. Powers and LaMarte Williams, Jr., Esquire.



Dr. Michael D. Powers is Co-Executive Director & Founder of The Center for Children with Special Needs in Glastonbury. He is also an Assistant Clinical Professor of Psychology at the Yale Child Study Center, which established the first children's behavioral health Medical-Legal Partnership (MLP) in the nation with CCA. A nationally recognized leader, he brings more than 25 years of experience in the diagnosis, assessment, and treatment of individuals with autism and related developmental disabilities and has helped shape educational programs and services for students across the country and internationally. His expertise and thought leadership will strengthen CCA's work advancing access to services and supports for children with disabilities.



LaMarte Williams, Jr. is a partner at the international law firm Perkins Coie, where he focuses on complex commercial litigation and other high-stakes matters. Known for his thoughtful, strategic approach to advocacy, LaMarte also brings a strong commitment to community engagement and public service. As a former paralegal at CCA, he offers both deep organizational knowledge and a renewed perspective that will help advance CCA's mission of protecting the legal rights and well-being of Connecticut's children and youth.

We are glad to welcome both Dr. Powers and Attorney Williams to the Board and look forward to the impact of their leadership!

Fighting for Connecticut's Children Together



Every day, children across Connecticut are denied access to the services, supports, and protections they are legally entitled to.

Can we count on your support to advocate for these children, hold systems accountable, and ensure all children in Connecticut have a chance to thrive?

Support CCA's Work Today
Contact Center for Children's Advocacy
ccacommunications@cca-ct.org
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Want to support the work of the Center for Children's Advocacy?
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