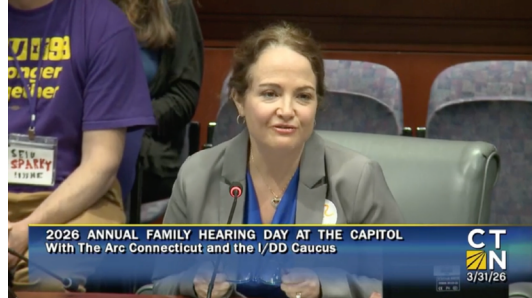




**FIGHTING FOR
THE LEGAL
RIGHTS OF
CONNECTICUT'S
MOST
VULNERABLE
CHILDREN.**



Kathryn Meyer, Director of CCA's Medical Legal Partnership at the Yale Child Study Center, and Sarah Eagan, JD, CCA's Executive Director testifying at this year's legislative session.

2026 Legislative Wins

This legislative session, CCA helped advance major reforms to strengthen protections, accountability, and access to services for children and youth across Connecticut.

Working alongside youth advocates, families, partner organizations, and state leaders, CCA advocated for new laws that will:

- Increase support for children in foster care and strengthen accountability within the child welfare system
- Create safeguards for children withdrawn from public school for homeschooling
- Improve oversight of abuse and neglect investigations involving people with disabilities in state care
- Address barriers that prevent youth with

intellectual disabilities from accessing needed services

- Reinforce school districts' obligations to support students experiencing homelessness
- Limit out-of-school suspension for young children in kindergarten through second grade
- Advance youth-led advocacy around transportation access for high school students
- Together, these reforms reflect the power of legal advocacy, policy reform, youth leadership, and family voices working together to create systemic change.

Read more about CCA's 2026 legislative wins and what they mean for children and youth across Connecticut: https://cca-ct.org/ccas-2026-legislative-wins/?blm_aid=46631



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work of the
Center for
Children's
Advocacy?
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children
a voice
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Advancing Systemic Education Reform

CCA's education advocacy often begins with the needs of individual students, but the impact does not stop there. When CCA identifies patterns that affect many children, we advocate with schools, districts, and state agencies to drive broader reforms that protect the rights of many more students.

Protecting Students with Disabilities from Discriminatory Discipline



CCA's advocacy with the Connecticut State Department of Education helped lead to new statewide communication from education officials clarifying and reinforcing schools' responsibilities when disciplining students who are eligible for special education. The memo from the State reinforces that students with disabilities must not be suspended or expelled for behavior that is a manifestation of their disability. It also confirms the steps schools must take

before imposing disciplinary sanctions, helping ensure that students with disabilities are not discriminated against or denied the supports they need.

Read the State Department of Education's special education discipline guidance: https://portal.ct.gov/sde/the-bureau-bulletin/2026/bse-newsletter-may-2026?blm_aid=46631#policy

Improving School Transportation Safety for Younger Students

CCA learned that young children with emotional disabilities in New Haven Public Schools (NHPS) were being transported to an out-of-district placement on the same bus as much older students. CCA raised concerns with the school district that this arrangement was developmentally inappropriate and exposed younger students to behaviors that were not suitable for their age or needs. In response, NHPS agreed to work with the school to separate students by grade level and arrival time.



Addressing Illegal Suspensions and Forced Parent Pickups

CCA's advocacy also helped lead to a new State memorandum warning against the unlawful use of informal out-of-school suspensions and forced parent pickups - when schools require a parent or guardian to repeatedly pick up their child from school due to behavioral concerns. These removals frequently function as school suspensions, even though they are not recorded that way, causing students to lose instructional time and miss needed services without the legal protections required for evaluation of unmet educational needs or disabilities and without adhering to state law regarding student discipline.

The State's memorandum clarifies school districts' legal responsibilities and reinforces that students cannot be removed from school outside of required discipline procedures. The memo from state officials emphasizes that informal mandatory "pick ups," often occurring with the youngest students, may run afoul of state law protections that prohibit suspension of PreK students, and limit suspension of students in kindergarten through second grade to rare instances when a child causes serious physical harm.



Read the State Department of Education's technical guidance on suspensions and forced parent pickups: https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/digest/2025-26/memo--in-school-suspensions-and-forced-parent-pick-ups-april-2026.pdf?rev=faf0eba673ce40ce97525457ef500d79&hash=F85C7B02EDB6B0202FAB426399C3F76F&blm_aid=4663

Education Rights Q&As:

What Families Should Know

Families often have questions about what schools are required to do when a student is struggling with attendance, behavior, emotional needs, or access to support services. CCA's education advocacy team is answering a few common questions to help families better understand their rights.

Can a school refuse to evaluate a student based on attendance challenges?

No! If a student has inconsistent or unsatisfactory attendance, the school must hold a Planning and Placement Team (PPT) meeting to consider evaluating the student to determine if they have a disability and need special education.

If my child only has emotional/

behavioral needs but does not have a learning disability, can they have an IEP?

Yes! An Individualized Education Plan (IEP) can be for any kind of disability that affects your child's progress in school. If an emotional or behavioral disability is preventing your child from making adequate progress in their education, then an IEP would be appropriate. IEPs include specific learning goals, such as behavioral goals or goals for emotional regulation skills that your child would work on with a school social worker. IEPs also include accommodations and modifications, related services, and indirect supports for school staff to ensure they can properly deliver all the services your child needs to learn.

Pro Bono Partner Spotlight:



Andrew Keller

CCA would like to recognize Andrew Keller, an attorney at Keller Law and a valued pro bono partner whose unique background strengthens his advocacy for children with complex needs. Before becoming an attorney, Andy practiced as a licensed Connecticut physician and cardiologist. Today, he brings that medical expertise into his pro bono and legal work, providing a rare and powerful perspective when advocating for students with medically complex diagnoses who need appropriate educational supports and services.

His experience as both a physician and education law attorney allows him to understand the intersection of health, disability, education, and legal rights in a way that is especially meaningful for the children and families CCA serves.

If you're interested in becoming a pro bono partner, contact Attorney Kathryn Meyer for pro bono education advocacy opportunities and Attorney Sabrina Tavi for pro bono Special Immigrant Juvenile Status advocacy opportunities.

CCA In Community



Spring for Kids! 2026 Triumphs for CT's children!



Spring For Kids!

On June 3rd, a powerful network of nearly 250 advocates, sponsors, foster families, and community partners united for Spring for Kids! 2026.

Together, we honored our 2026 Champions of Children, Beth Bye and Judy McBride, alongside Sustainability Award honoree Preston Tisdale.

Celebrating Our Village

In addition to our vital sponsorship and ticket income, the room's incredible generosity pushed us well past our auction and donation goal before the night even ended! Our goals were championed and exceeded thanks to

the leadership roles of our three Presenting Sponsors: Dalió Education, Options Employment and Educational Services, and Shipman & Goodwin.

Throughout the evening, we heard powerful stories from youth and recognized the tireless work of foster parents, advocates, and community leaders. Looking around the room, it was clear just how strong our village is. Thank you to our CCA community for standing up for Connecticut's children!

Read the full **Spring for Kids! 2026** recap on our blog and view more photos from the evening: https://cca-ct.org/spring-for-kids-2026/?blm_aid=46631



CCA's Education Success Attorney Ilana Ofgang joins in the Celebration of Community hosted by Fairfield County's Community Foundation this spring.

CCA Joins Fairfield County's Celebration of Community

On June 5, CCA joined more than 250 nonprofit leaders, donors, advocates, elected officials, and community members for Fairfield County's Community Foundation's first annual Celebration of Community. The event brought together organizations and partners working to expand opportunity and strengthen communities across Fairfield County. Throughout the morning, attendees reflected on the relationships, shared purpose, and collaboration that makes meaningful change possible. CCA was honored to be recognized among the nonprofit partners supported by Fairfield County's Community Foundation this year, with grant funding for both community-led advocacy efforts and education work.

As Community Foundation President & CEO Mendi Blue Paca shared, community is not only a place, it is a practice. CCA is grateful to be part of a community of partners committed to showing up for children and families to create a stronger Fairfield County.



Stella Rose Duge and Sarah Eagan at the commencement celebration of Tow Youth Justice's Transforming Youth Justice program.

Congratulations, Stella!

CCA's Speak Up! Coordinator Stella Rose Duge was celebrated as a graduate of the Tow Youth Justice Institute's Transforming Youth Justice Program's 2025-2026 Cohort on June 12. Throughout the program, cohort members learned from juvenile justice experts, engaged in conversations about youth justice in Connecticut, and completed capstone projects focused on improving outcomes for the young people they serve. Stella partnered with Tommy Battle, Director of Outreach and Programming at Full Citizens Coalition, and Paul Gordon, Deputy Director of Operations, Juvenile Residential Services for the Connecticut Judicial Branch, to develop a pilot project that will connect pre-trial youth with credible messengers - mentors and community leaders who use their own lived experience to offer guidance and advocate for young people. This work addresses an important gap: youth who are awaiting adjudication often have access to fewer services and supports than youth who are post-adjudication.



CCA In Community

CCA Recognized by Robinson+Cole as Nonprofit Partner of the Year

CCA was honored to be recognized by Robinson+Cole as the firm's nonprofit partner at its annual event, sponsored by the DEI+B Committee, on June 17 at the Hartford Stage. Each year, the gathering brings together clients and community partners committed to advancing diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging;



L to R: Michael Orce, COO at R+C; Rhonda Tobin, Chair, Lateral Partner Growth Committee R+C; Stacey Violante Cote, CCA Deputy Director; Sarah Eagan, CCA Executive Director; and, Virginia McGarrity, Practice Chair at R+C

strengthening community partnerships; and supporting the arts. CCA was selected in recognition of its social justice mission, long-standing partnership with Robinson+Cole, and its mission-driven work enforcing the legal rights of children and youth across Connecticut.

As part of the recognition, Robinson+Cole presented CCA with a donation in support of its advocacy for children and families. CCA is grateful for this meaningful recognition and for Robinson+Cole's continued partnership!



Director of CCA's Racial Justice Project Nieka Thompson and School Justice Project Attorney Zoe Masters presenting at the Dismantling Systemic Racism Conference this spring.

CCA at the Dismantling Systemic Racism Conference

CCA attorneys Nieka Thompson, Director of CCA's Racial Justice Project, and Zoe Masters, Staff Attorney with CCA's School Justice Project, presented at the State Education Resource Center's 2026 Dismantling Systemic Racism Conference. Their session, Data-Based Collaboration, Outreach and Legal Advocacy to End the School-to-Prison Pipeline, highlighted racial, ethnic, and other disparities in school discipline, arrests, detention, and incarceration across Connecticut communities. Attorneys Thompson and Masters also shared CCA's work inside Manson Youth Institution, where they teach incarcerated youth about their legal rights and advocate to improve conditions of confinement.



Stand With Children and Youth Across Connecticut



Children and youth should not have to fight alone to access the services, protections, and opportunities they are entitled to. With your partnership and support, CCA can continue advocating for even more children whose needs are being overlooked, whose rights are being denied, and whose futures depend on systems being held accountable.

Join our community of advocates fighting for the rights of CT's low-income children today:

https://secure.qgiv.com/for/centerforchildrensadvocacy/?blm_aid=46631

Summer Resources for Children and Families

Free Summer Meals for Children and Teens

CT Summer Meals provides children and teens 18 and under with nutritious meals during the summer at no cost. No ID is required, and no questions are asked. Young people under 21 with disabilities who participate in an eligible state education program may also qualify. Meal sites are available across Connecticut from now until August while school is out.

Find a summer meal site near you or call 2-1-1.: https://endhungerct.org/summer-meals/?blm_aid=46631#



Housing and Utility Concerns



As temperatures rise, safe housing and access to utilities become even more important for children's health and well-being. If your family is struggling to keep utilities on, manage AC- or heat-related utility costs, or work out an affordable payment plan, CCA may be able to help.

Contact Attorney Bonnie Roswig for confidential support.

Call: (860) 545-8581 **Call or text:** (860) 566-0836

Email: Broswig@cca-ct.org

Food, Formula, and Diaper Support



Families who need help affording food, formula, or diapers can access support through statewide programs.

Find food assistance through CT Foodshare/SNAP: https://www.ctfoodshare.org/snap?blm_aid=46631

Learn more about WIC: https://dphsubmissions.ct.gov/CTWIC_Interest_Form?blm_aid=46631

Find diaper support near you.: https://thediaperbank.org/ddn-member-directory/?blm_aid=46631