



National Association of Counsel for Children
1600 Downing Street, Suite 410
Denver, CO 80218

June 26, 2026

Dear NACC Award Committee Members,

RE: Nomination for Outstanding Children's Law Office

I am writing to enthusiastically nominate KidsVoice of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania for the award of Outstanding Children's Law Office. The KidsVoice organization has exceeded all award criteria by demonstrating long-standing excellence in practice management; exemplifying best practices for organizational representation, including multi-disciplinary representation; demonstrating leadership in impacting children's legal advocacy not only in their community, but also across Pennsylvania, as well as in other states; and by working to address race equity and anti-racism through their office practices.

KidsVoice has demonstrated excellence in practice management by consistently following best practices for the legal representation of children for more than two decades. While having served the legal needs of children in Allegheny County for over 50 years, the organization made fundamental changes in 2001 when the office transitioned from a traditional one-attorney model to an interdisciplinary team and adopting the new name for the office of KidsVoice. For the past 25 years, child clients have been served by teams that include an attorney as well as a child advocacy specialist, along with expert support. The organization has consistently adapted to changing times, offering specialized services as children's needs evolve.

Specifically in 2015, KidsVoice launched the Bootstrap Program, which provides ongoing legal representation for clients up to age 25, when representation would previously have ended at age 21. This extension of services follows research and case law which recognizes the science demonstrating how youth's brains are not fully developed at age 21. Expansion services through the Bootstrap Program include helping clients with issues related to access to employment training and education, health insurance and legal representation in criminal court proceedings.

In 2025 alone, the specialty services offered through the Bootstrap Program were provided to over 800 older youth! Such efforts demonstrate clear dedication to best practices of legal representation.

In 2019, KidsVoice staff initiated a Two-generation advocacy program to address needs of clients who became parents. Services under the 2Gen program include assistance in obtaining housing, health insurance and health care, employment, social security and public benefits, education, etc. KidsVoice has helped 185 parents with a total of 225 children. While former foster youth are among the highest risk of having their children removed, less than 4% of the 2Gen families have had children placed over the 7 years of the program.

Over the past year, KidsVoice expanded its housing advocacy to add a full-time housing attorney to address lease, eviction, and other landlord-tenant issues. KidsVoice also has advocated with the Allegheny County Housing Authority and now has a partnership that prioritizes KidsVoice clients for available housing units, including a brand-new renovation of a former school into 26 units of family housing for former foster youth with children, which just opened this month with fully furnished and technology-equipped apartments. KidsVoice helped to raise the last \$1M needed for the project, which will include on-site services not just from KidsVoice but also employment, behavioral health and mentoring services.

In 2011, KidsVoice created a dedicated education team, after recognizing a variety of complex roadblocks to education for their clients. The education team has grown to become the largest group of education attorneys in Pittsburgh. In 2025, KidsVoice education attorneys worked with 860 clients. In addition to advocating for education rights in individual cases, KidsVoice has filed class actions and complaints against school districts. In 2022, KidsVoice filed and settled a complaint against Pittsburgh Public Schools for failing to provide COVID Compensatory Services to more than 200 KidsVoice clients and 3,000 other students. After meeting with eligible students and families, it was determined that PPS would provide more than 600,000 hours of missed special education services owed.

Last year, KidsVoice enlarged its education work to continue to provide special education representation to clients even after their dependency cases closed through their clients' last year of school enrollment, regardless of how many years that may be.

Through a variety of initiatives, KidsVoice has demonstrated strong leadership to impact systemic efforts to improve child welfare field not only in Allegheny County but throughout Pennsylvania and other states. KidsVoice staff took an active role in developing standards of practice for lawyers practicing in child welfare dependency cases in Pennsylvania. Also, multiple KidsVoice staff are involved in a variety of activities with the state bar association with reach statewide. Furthermore, as evidenced by the attached letters of support, KidsVoice has reached out to other states providing critical technical assistance.

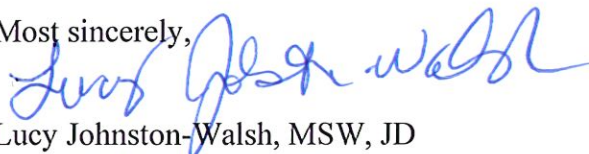
Through the years, KidsVoice has consistently worked to combat social justice and racial disproportionality within the child welfare system. For example, because of the disproportionate impact of magisterial fines and criminal charges for youth of color, KidsVoice initiated a program to provide legal representation to youth in municipal-type

hearings. KidsVoice has a 90% success rate in their representation of clients in these hearings. Success for these youth is so critical, as criminal charges can be very problematic when pursuing employment background checks, as well as housing applications. To address capacity and need, KidsVoice expanded their reach in this area by incorporating pro bono partnerships with local law firms who can also represent youth in these proceedings. Legal representation of young clients who are disproportionately involved in the criminal system is one example of active anti-racism efforts of KidsVoice.

On a personal level, KidsVoice organization's staff, particularly Scott Hollander and Jonathan Budd, have provided critical mentorship to me throughout the past 20 years. When I created the Children's Advocacy Clinic program at Penn State Dickinson Law, I turned to KidsVoice for support. Before creating our clinic, I visited with KidsVoice staff and spent time reviewing their model of representation to replicate the programming in our law school clinic setting. As years have passed by, law students who participated in the Children's Advocacy Clinic have later been hired and continue to work at KidsVoice. Within the past few years, I have even further extended my connections to KidsVoice staff through the development of an initiative to provide representation to dependent youth in magisterial hearings. With guidance and training provided by KidsVoice staff, such as Tom Welshonce, my office began expanding our services to provide representation of foster youth in magisterial hearings in our region. KidsVoice continues to be not only a resource to me but many others throughout the state, leading efforts statewide to improve legal representation of children involved in the child welfare system.

For the aforementioned reasons, as well as for the children they represent, I zealously nominate KidsVoice for the NACC Outstanding Children's Law Office award. Attached please find four letters of support of my nomination. From these letters, you will see widespread support of the outstanding work of KidsVoice. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions.

Most sincerely,



Lucy Johnston-Walsh, MSW, JD

Clinic Director, Associate Professor of Law

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Dear NACC Award Committee,

I am very honored to be writing this letter of support for the nomination of KidsVoice for Outstanding Children's Law Office. I have followed the work of KidsVoice for almost 20 years and during that time have seen them grow from a small staff to a large, multidisciplinary team focused on providing wholistic legal representation to their more than 3,000 clients.

What impresses me most about KidsVoice, and the reason I leapt at the opportunity to write this letter of support, is the way they listen to their clients and use that input to guide the work they do. Many offices create a program and then expect their clients to fit into that work. KidsVoice turns that model on its head by creating programs in response to the needs their clients communicate to them. For example, KidsVoice represents their clients through the age of 24 which they began doing after hearing from clients about the many challenges they faced upon turning 18. This is almost unheard of in the children's law office field, staying with clients as they transition into adulthood, but KidsVoice does this work – including securing funding for it – because it is what their clients need.

There are many other examples of the robust and innovative work that KidsVoice does for their clients. The KidsVoice team advocates for the physical, mental and developmental health of their clients, including assisting their clients in securing benefits such as Social Security disability. They have developed expertise in education to assist their clients with their special education and school discipline needs, and they work hard to keep their clients in their home school district. Upon realizing the financial needs of their clients, KidsVoice now focuses on their clients' credit histories and Social Security overpayments to ensure that their clients do not enter adulthood saddled with extra financial challenges.

The work KidsVoice does with their adult clients is nothing short of extraordinary. They provide housing advocacy and support to ensure their clients are receiving all of the benefits to which they are entitled. In 2019, they began a "Two-generation advocacy" program to assist former dependent youth who are parents to ensure that these young families are receiving job training, childcare, housing, social security, SNAP, and other public benefits, and assessments of developmental delays for their children. Less than 4% of the families have had children removed and the success of the program led KidsVoice to extend eligibility through age 29.

KidsVoice is extremely generous with their expertise, presenting at conferences, being available for consults and even hosting people from other jurisdictions to share the work they are doing. They also advocate for policy changes to benefit their clients at the local, state and national level.

It is for these reasons that I believe that KidsVoice is worthy of this award. Listening carefully to clients and responding to the needs they identify is the very heart of being a children's lawyer, and KidsVoice manages to do this on an office-wide level. Thank you for considering this nomination.

Sincerely,

Cathy Krebs, Committee Director
American Bar Association Section of Litigation Children's Rights Litigation Committee
Cathy.krebs@americanbar.org



June 1, 2026

National Association of Counsel for Children

Re: Outstanding Children's Law Office Award for KidsVoice

NACC Board and Evaluation Committee:

I am writing to express my enthusiastic support for the nomination of KidsVoice as the 2026 Outstanding Children's Law Office. KidsVoice, under the leadership of Scott Hollander, has become the definition of excellence in advocacy for children. I have personal experience and a unique understanding of how far the organization has come because I was one of the first attorneys Scott hired.

It was the year 2000, and I was a corporate lawyer at a large law firm in Pittsburgh. I had done some pro bono work in Atlanta and reached out to Scott to volunteer. Somehow, by the end of breakfast, he had convinced me to come work for him at Legal Aid for Children (now known as KidsVoice) as a staff attorney. At the time, the office represented about 5,000 children with nine lawyers and one secretary. And unfortunately, that is not a typographical error. Even though the career change was a huge leap of faith for me, something told me that Scott would take this organization where it needed to go, and he exceeded every expectation I had at the time.

Within two years of my arrival, Scott had already created one of the earliest multidisciplinary offices in the country. Transitioning to a team model was no easy task, but Scott stuck with it through the difficult times to make this dream a reality. The timing of this nomination is perfect because it has been 25 years since Scott implemented the multidisciplinary model at KidsVoice.

Thanks to Scott's fundraising ability, KidsVoice now has over 70 staff serving clients. There are programs to address most any need that comes

up for a child client. The accomplishments of KidsVoice over the last 25 years are stunning. What was once a struggling non-profit where attorneys had over 500 clients at a time, is now a model of advocacy that extends to other key aspects of their clients' lives. The Bootstrap Project and Two-Generation Advocacy are just two examples of how KidsVoice is always reaching to address the needs of its clients in and out of court.

Scott and the staff at KidsVoice don't just keep their success in Pittsburgh. They have helped numerous offices wanting to improve advocacy for children. Scott and his team have been an invaluable resource to me throughout my career, including when I served as the first executive director of the Florida Guardian ad Litem Program. KidsVoice staff have been generous with their time and resources with individuals like me, but also with offices around the country through staff participation in the writing of The Children's Law Office Handbook.

I can't think of a more qualified recipient of the 2026 NACC Outstanding Law Office Award than KidsVoice, under the leadership of Scott Hollander. I have watched KidsVoice evolve from a struggling non-profit known as Legal Aid for Children, to a model law office that many seek to emulate. And their generosity with other law offices has influenced representation in many areas around the country. Thank you for considering KidsVoice. It would be a well-deserved award.

Sincerely,

Angela Orkin

Angela Orkin, JD
Child Advocacy Consultant
Host & Producer of The Children's Law Podcast
angela@childrenslaw.org
404-772-8052



June 29, 2026

National Association of Counsel for Children

Re: Outstanding Children's Law Office - KidsVoice

Dear NACC Committee:

With great pleasure and enthusiasm, I join in recommending KidsVoice of Pittsburgh, PA for the 2026 Outstanding Children's Law Office award. I have known KidsVoice since Scott Hollander took over the office in 1999, renamed it, reorganized it, infused it with a new and ambitious mission, and lead it to become one of the most outstanding children's' law offices in America.

NACC has promoted Child Welfare Law Offices since before adoption of the 2008 Child Welfare Law Office Guidebook and are now working on CLOP 2.0, to further improve delivery of legal services to children. KidsVoice has consistently provided direction and inspiration to the NACC goals. It is interesting to compare the recommended elements of a Child Welfare Law Office to what KidsVoice has been doing over these years. Right down the line, they have met or exceeded the goals set by NACC's document.

KidsVoice began as the urban office designated to provide legal representation to children alleged to be abused and neglected in Allegheny County. KidsVoice case and system advocacy was crucial to reducing the number of child welfare cases in the county. KidsVoice now serves over 3000 such children per year. KidsVoice has far exceeded its basic mandate. It has innovated and improved the situation of children through case advocacy, impact litigation, and systems advocacy. It has provided direction and inspiration for other legal child advocacy agencies for 20 years. This year, 2026, marks 25 years since KidsVoice became one of the first child advocacy organizations to assign a multidisciplinary team to its clients. A NACC award might be an appropriate recognition of this anniversary.

What distinguished KidsVoice in its early days was its recognition of the need for interdisciplinary, team representation of children in child abuse and neglect cases. The office pairs an attorney with a Child Advocacy Specialist, a social services professional recruited from other relevant service systems (education, foster care, mental health) etc. The two work as equal partners to reach consensus on their recommendations for placement and services.

KidsVoice has been identified many times as an innovative and effective child advocacy office. From 2009-2016, it was my privilege to serve as Director of the National Quality Improvement Center on the Representation of Children in the Child Welfare System (QIC). One of the QIC goals was to

identify organizational structures that support the achievement of good legal service delivery for children. After a careful national search and consultation with our Advisory Committee and many other recognized leaders in the child welfare field, the QIC identified five “Notable Child Welfare Law Offices”, of which KidsVoice was one. These offices were recognized nationally for setting and achieving high standards.

The QIC did site visits and used a standardized protocol structured to analyze the advocacy services delivered. KidsVoice was exemplary in:

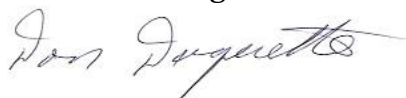
- Timely appointment
- Meeting with the child to promptly assess the child and his needs
- Thorough investigation
- Advocate knowledge of case strategy and goals
- Supports and expertise
- Active in-court representation

KidsVoice has strict initial training requirements and requires ongoing training. Their management structure is sophisticated, with hands-on supervision of attorneys. Caseloads are reasonable. KidsVoice makes a variety of other supports available to their staff, including administrative support, specialized experts, and computer tools, such as electronic case management.

KidsVoice continues to innovate. They strive to provide each child the kind of full legal services that are generally reserved only for major corporations. They handle Social Security and other claims for the child. They advocate for the child’s mental health and dental and physical health needs. They advocate in the school system to assure that every child receives an appropriate education with the needed resources. They specialize in special education advocacy and school discipline. A recent program extends advocacy services to aging out foster youth to age 25 (and to age 30 if they are parents), aided in part by former dependent youth. These children are no longer left without an advocate as they transition to full adulthood.

An important component of KidsVoice success is fund-raising. Under the leadership of Scott Hollander, KidsVoice combines public and private philanthropy dollars to further their mission. The annual budget grew from \$500K to over \$9 million; the staff from 10 to over 70. This is truly an amazing history and a model for other Children’s Law Offices. We all know the importance of resources for our child clients.

In short, KidsVoice remains the innovative, passionate, and smart child advocacy program that the National Quality Improvement Center identified in 2010. Selecting KidsVoice for this honor would also reflect well on the NACC and promote the cause of improving the delivery of legal services for children throughout America.



Donald N. Duquette

Clinical Professor Emeritus of Law

Founding Director, Child Advocacy Law Clinic

Former Director, National Quality Improvement Center on the Representation of Children in the Child Welfare System

Carolyn Signorelli
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June 28, 2026
NACC Awards Committee
899 N. Logan Street, Suite 208
Denver, CO 80203

Re: KidsVoice Nomination for Outstanding Law Office

Dear NACC Awards Committee:

Please accept this letter of support for the nomination of KidsVoice to receive the honor of Outstanding Law Office from the NACC. From 2006 to 2011, in my role as Chief Child Protection Attorney for the State of Connecticut, I had the opportunity to observe the organization and commitment of KidsVoice, its leaders, Scott Hollander and Jonathan Budd, and several of the professionals working there to provide the best child representation possible.

Scott and Jonathan, and their IT Team, were instrumental in helping my office create a comprehensive Case Assignment, Management and Billing system for Connecticut's child protection attorneys, enabling us to assign counsel within a day of petition filing, offer a case management system to our attorneys, and streamline the billing process promoting hourly work and timely payments. More importantly, it helped us track important data to ensure results-based accountability for our program and our attorneys. I saw first-hand Scott and Jonathan's advocacy efforts on the federal level, always pushing to garner support and funding to enhance representation for kids and improve outcomes in child welfare cases, not just in their state but nationally. KidsVoice was instrumental in the formation of three model child welfare law offices in Connecticut covering 5 of the state's 11 Juvenile Courts. These offices were quickly demonstrating the model's promise and although they did not survive our state's budgetary downturn in 2011, the Public Defender's Office, legal aid offices and some private attorneys providing child representation continue to use an attorney/social worker team approach.

The fact that KidsVoice continues to provide exemplary representation to children in Pennsylvania is a testament to just how tenacious, committed and outstanding its leadership and all its employees are, and I hope they receive this much deserved honor.

Sincerely,

Carolyn Signorelli

Carolyn Signorelli