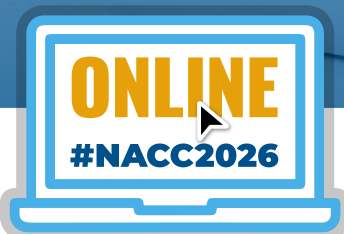


The NACC logo is displayed in a white box with a blue border. It features the acronym "NACC" in large, bold, blue capital letters.

National Association
of Counsel for Children

The background of the top half of the poster is a photograph of a young man with dark, curly hair and glasses, wearing a light-colored button-down shirt. He is sitting at a desk, smiling, and looking at a laptop screen. The image has a blue tint.

49TH NATIONAL CHILD WELFARE LAW CONFERENCE ONLINE

An icon of a laptop with a blue border. On the screen, the word "ONLINE" is written in large, bold, orange capital letters, and below it, the hashtag "#NACC2026" is written in smaller, blue capital letters.

ONLINE

#NACC2026

**FROM THE
COMFORT OF
YOUR HOME
OR OFFICE**

**OCTOBER
14-16, 2026**

[https://NACCchildlaw.org/
conference/49th-national-child-
welfare-law-conference/](https://NACCchildlaw.org/conference/49th-national-child-welfare-law-conference/)

NACCchildlaw.org

**Conference@
NACCchildlaw.org**

Solutions That Sustain: Cultivating Community, Advancing Practice

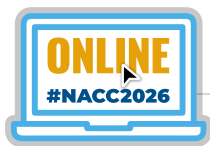
THE CONFERENCE

The annual conference brings together professionals from child welfare law and intersecting fields and further NACC's mission by exchanging ideas, information, and collective efforts.

The theme of this year's conference is **Solutions That Sustain: Cultivating Community, Advancing Practice**. This year's theme invites child welfare professionals to move beyond identifying problems and toward uplifting and co-creating systems and practices that work. Sustainable practice equips professionals to serve effectively and resiliently amid ongoing challenges, while sustainable community builds collaboration, mentorship, and shared purpose.

The conference will explore how to cultivate communities of practice that empower clients and colleagues, bridge gaps across disciplines and jurisdictions, and inspire compassionate, lasting solutions for children and families.

Conference sessions are designed for a national audience, including attorneys who represent children, parents, agencies, and kinship caregivers, as well as judges and multidisciplinary professionals working in child welfare. Sessions will expand attendees' understanding of the law, provide practical tools, and lend information and strategies for systems improvement.



NACC EXTENDS A SPECIAL THANKS TO OUR 2026 CONFERENCE SPONSORS AND EXHIBITORS!

SAPPHIRE SPONSORS



PLATINUM SPONSOR



THE ANNIE E. CASEY
FOUNDATION

GOLD SPONSORS



Dave Thomas
Foundation
for Adoption®

Forever Families for Children in Foster Care



SILVER SPONSOR

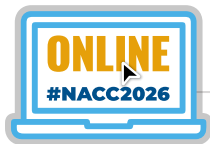


PLEASE BE SURE TO VISIT THESE EXHIBITORS



Children's
Legal Rights
Journal





ABOUT NACC

Founded in 1977, the National Association of Counsel for Children (NACC) is a nonprofit professional membership and advocacy organization dedicated to advancing justice for children, youth, and families. NACC trains and certifies attorneys who represent children, families, and agencies; supports a diverse community of professionals; and advocates for policy reform alongside young people and families.

The child welfare system often separates children from parents or guardians accused of abuse or neglect. A judge in family court determines whether to remove a child from their family and place them in the foster care system.

The court decides where a child will live, where they will go to school, and what contact they will have with their family. The system affects hundreds of thousands of young people in the United States each year — disproportionately children from low-income families and children of color.

Family separation is often traumatizing. A child involved in these proceedings needs a well-trained lawyer to ensure the court hears their voice, protects their rights, and keeps them safely with their family when possible.

With a child's safety and connection to family at stake, court proceedings work best when all parties — children, parents, and agencies — have legal representation. NACC helps lawyers do this important work. NACC is the only national organization accredited by the American Bar Association to certify attorneys as Child Welfare Law Specialists.

Our Mission NACC advances children's and parents' rights by supporting a diverse, inclusive community of child welfare lawyers to provide zealous legal representation and by advocating for equitable, anti-racist solutions co-designed by people with lived experience.

Our Vision Every child, parent, and family is well-supported in their community and has equitable access to justice through culturally responsive, client-centered legal representation.



THANK YOU TO OUR CONFERENCE ABSTRACT WORKGROUP

Currey Cook
Jayne Cooper
Shannon Felder

Maci Kean
Nina Nolen
Cathy Ouellette

Cadon Sagendorf
Kimberly Watson
Josephine Vanderhorst



CONTINUING LEGAL EDUCATION CREDITS

NACC will be applying for CLE accreditation of the online conference in nine states (CA, CO, LA, MS, OH, OR, PA, TX, and WA). Details about total available credits and sessions with special credits can be found toward the back of this program as information becomes available. Contact CLE@NACCchildlaw.org with questions.

Children's
Justice
Fund

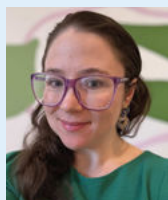
There's a lot of uncertainty these days, but what we know for sure is that we need to protect children's rights. NACC has been helping do that for nearly 50 years. Please support this vital work!





NACC CONGRATULATES THE 2026 PROMOTING EXCELLENCE AWARD RECIPIENTS!

NACC presents the **Promoting Excellence Awards** annually to individuals and organizations making significant contributions to the rights and well-being of children and families through excellence in legal representation.



"Lily Colby embodies the very best of child welfare advocacy: a leader whose work is informed not only by legal expertise and policy acumen, but also by profound lived experience, deep compassion, and an unwavering commitment to improving outcomes for children and youth impacted by foster care."

OUTSTANDING LEGAL ADVOCATE : **LILY COLBY, JD**

Founder and Director, National Network for Fostering Sibling Connections

Lily Colby is the founder and director of the National Network for Fostering Sibling Connections. She leads a network of hundreds of people across disciplines who work to improve sibling connections alongside young people experiencing the foster care system.

In less than two years – through training, community engagement, and legal research – Lily has elevated sibling connection as an essential topic in our field and influenced the work of lawyers, judges, social workers, CASA volunteers, and advocates for the better.

Lily Colby combines her legal and policy expertise with her personal lived expertise as a former youth in the system, foster parent, and kinship caregiver. She makes sure lived experience experts are not just present but the majority in rooms where decisions happen. By practicing humility and inclusivity, she has developed a powerful leadership style that has a profound effect on the community she serves.

Lily Colby's approach, expertise, and passion is a leading example of how to achieve an enormous, positive impact. She sets a bar that NACC hopes every advocate will aspire to.



"...a client who has Ms. Roberts for their attorney is being set up with the best opportunity for success."

OUTSTANDING NEW LAWYER : **SARAH ROBERTS, JD**

Attorney, Alaska Department of Public Advocacy

Sarah Roberts represents parents and children in Kenai, Alaska, with empathy and solutions-oriented advocacy. Despite only practicing since 2023, Sarah operates with the skill and nuance of a seasoned attorney, and her work has earned the respect of clients, judges, attorneys, advocates, and even opposing parties.

Her nominators noted her outside-the-box thinking, desire to collaborate toward solutions, and habit of treating everyone she meets with kindness and respect. As a nominator wrote: "Ms. Roberts' advocacy is notable because she does not merely pursue her clients' goals, interests, and needs, but does so in a way that brings constructive problem solving and resolution-focused options to the table."



OUTSTANDING LAW STUDENT : **NYOMI DAVIS**

Student, University of Colorado Law School

Nyomi Davis is a law student at the University of Colorado Law School and member of the Colorado Office of the Child's Representative Lived Experts Action Panel. Nyomi chose to pursue a career in law for the express purpose of "helping right some of the wrongs" of the system, and she has already accomplished so much.

Nyomi's work has informed how Colorado OCR interviews potential attorneys and prepares them to serve children dealing with trauma. She has developed curricula for case workers, and her advocacy has highlighted the importance of older children receiving an expressed-interest model of representation, among many contributions.

Beyond her academic, legal, and advocacy work, Nyomi volunteers to help her community. She has been a CASA for the same youth for the last 3 years. Nyomi Davis overcame long odds, and her work helps make those odds not quite as long for others.



One nominator wrote about KidsVoice: "They strive to provide each child the kind of full legal services that are generally reserved only for major corporations."

OUTSTANDING CHILDREN'S LAW OFFICE : **KIDVOICE — PITTSBURGH, PA**

SCOTT HOLLANDER, JD, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Twenty-five years ago, KidsVoice was a local children's law office in Pittsburgh with a staff of 10 and a budget of \$500,000. Attorneys had enormous caseloads, and clients did not receive help with many of the legal needs that affected their lives.

Thanks to the leadership of Scott Hollander and his dedicated team, KidsVoice has grown to a staff of more than 70, pioneered a multidisciplinary model of representation, and has become an influential organization not just in Pennsylvania, but nationally.

From timely representation, to thorough, zealous, and holistic advocacy, KidsVoice exceeds nearly every recommendation in NACC's Children's Law Office Guidebook. It is a model of full legal advocacy for every aspect of a client's life that organizations and leaders from across the country work to emulate.



One nominator wrote: "In each conversation I have with Tara, I learn about how to be a compassionate leader, how to be a courageous advocate."

DISTINGUISHED ACHIEVEMENT : **TARA FORD, JD, CWLS**

Senior Counsel, Public Counsel

For more than three decades, Tara Ford has championed the rights of children in foster care, Indigenous children, and children with disabilities.

As a lawyer, advocate, nonprofit law office founder, Stanford Law School Clinical Instructor, and now Senior Counsel at Public Counsel, she leads with humility, relentlessly drives toward justice alongside the most under-resourced children and families, and turns legal victories into lasting reform.

Through landmark cases and legal advocacy, she is a leader who changed the way states handle ICWA cases and the way Indigenous children and children with disabilities access education.

Simply, a large body of vital disability, education, and Indian Child Welfare law would not exist without Tara Ford.



Proskauer

PRESIDENT'S AWARD : **WILLIAM C. SILVERMAN, JD, AND PROSKAUER ROSE LLP**

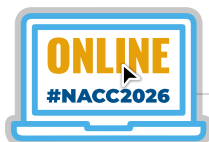
William C. Silverman and Proskauer Rose LLP have championed causes that are critical to the work of attorneys for children and the family court system.

Through his leadership, Proskauer has become an extraordinary pro bono partner, dedicating significant legal talent and resources to advancing the rights of vulnerable children and families. NACC has had the privilege of experiencing this partnership firsthand and has witnessed the firm's unwavering commitment to justice.

Most notably, Proskauer is serving as pro bono counsel in litigation seeking to halt the emergence of a troubling trend across the country: the development of so-called "shadow" or "hidden" foster care systems.

The firm's willingness to lend not only legal expertise but also strategic vision and institutional influence has strengthened the child advocacy community and amplified efforts to create a more just and equitable family court system. Through his leadership, generosity, and unwavering commitment to public service, William Silverman exemplifies the very best of the legal profession.

Read more about the awardees at NACCchildlaw.org/2026-awardees/.



justice for kids®



A Division of
Kelley Kronenberg
ATTORNEYS AT LAW

Who We Are? *We fight for children*

Justice for Kids®, a division of Kelley Kronenberg, is the premier law practice dedicated to protecting abused, disabled, and injured children who are harmed in child welfare and disability systems. Our mission is to be fierce advocates for children's rights and to drive systemic change in child welfare throughout the United States using innovative legal strategies. Unlike most personal injury law firms, JFK specializes in representing children who've been injured by the very child protection and disability systems meant to protect them. We bring personal injury and civil rights claims on behalf of children, through their guardians and next friends, including attorneys ad litem, guardians ad litem, biological parents, adoptive parents and others, against the child welfare agencies who were responsible to protect them but failed through their negligent or intentional conduct. Our mission is to give these children a voice and a chance at the future they deserve.

JUSTIN D. GROSZ

Co-Founder and Lead Partner

STACIE SCHMERLING

Co-Founder and Lead Partner

HOWARD M. TALENFELD

Co-Founder and Lead Partner

10360 W. State Road 84 | Fort Lauderdale, FL 33324 | 844-4kidlaw | 844-454-3529 | justiceforkids.com



Online Conference | Registration

From the comfort of your home or office

REGISTER BY SEP 30 TO SAVE \$100! [↗](#)

	EARLY REGISTRATION THROUGH 9/30/2026	REGULAR REGISTRATION STARTING 10/1/2026
NACC Member	\$ 300	\$ 400
CWLS	\$ 275	\$ 275
Nonmember	\$ 500	\$ 600



Online Conference | Schedule

ONLINE Conference Day 1: Wednesday, Oct 14, 2026

8:00am – 8:15am PACIFIC 9:00am – 9:15am MOUNTAIN 10:00am – 10:15am CENTRAL 11:00am – 11:15am EASTERN	WELCOME PRESENTERS DAWNE MITCHELL, JD – NACC Board President KIM DVORCHAK, JD – NACC Chief Executive Officer
8:15am – 9:45am PACIFIC 9:15am – 10:45am MOUNTAIN 10:15am – 11:45am CENTRAL 11:15pm – 12:45pm EASTERN	ONLINE PLENARY 1 OP1 Calling All Hope Dealers, Part II: Sustaining Justice through Humanity and Practice PRESENTER HASAN DAVIS, JD We operate in high-stakes environments where decisions carry lifelong consequences. But these systems can drift toward valuing efficiency over humanity. Let's reframe sustainability as policy endurance, workforce retention alone, AND a daily practice of hope-centered leadership carried out by multidisciplinary court professionals. Picking up the conversation from last year's Calling All Hope Dealers conference session and drawing on lived experience inside these systems and years of systems leadership, Hasan will challenge participants to recognize the quiet/powerful role they already play as "hope dealers" within the legal process. Here, hope is not optimism detached from reality – but a practice rooted in humanity, clarity, accountability, and belief in growth. When hope disappears, systems may continue to function, but they stop healing, engaging, or sustaining the people within them.
10:15am – 11:45am PACIFIC 11:15am – 12:45pm MOUNTAIN 12:15pm – 1:45pm CENTRAL 1:15pm – 2:45pm EASTERN	ONLINE BREAKOUT A OA1 Supporting Kids at Court: Access and Inclusion for Youth with Disabilities PRESENTERS YESHEMEBET LEGESSE, MSW – Northeast Treatment Center SHANNON SHERWOOD, JD – Support Center for Child Advocates The session will support the trauma-responsiveness of children's lawyers and equip them with tools to communicate more effectively with children who must attend court and who have challenges or differences in communication, including physical, cognitive, or developmental disabilities; d/Deaf children; children with vision impairment or low vision; and children with mental health challenges. Presenters will base the curriculum and discussion on data, best practices, and lessons learned from a 2025 statewide conference initiative in Pennsylvania that had the goal of supporting children's court experiences, with a focus on access and inclusion for youth with disabilities.



0A2 Strategies to Combat Family Separations for Immigrant Families in Child Welfare

PRESENTERS **RACHEL KONRAD, JD** – Casey Family Programs
KELLY KRIBS, JD – The Young Center for Immigrant Children's Rights

Casey Family Programs and The Young Center for Immigrant Children's Rights both provide stakeholder education on topics at the intersection of immigration and child welfare. In 2025, the Young Center's Technical Assistance Program provided case consultation and support for 107 engagements involving families at the intersection of immigration and child welfare. Common themes emerged, such as challenges engaging counsel for non-citizen parents and children, risk of TPR, and challenges with international and domestic family reunification. In this session, participants will also learn about changes in immigration policy and practice impacting children and families in child welfare, examine systemic barriers to permanency, and brainstorm solutions through hypothetical exercises.

12:15pm – 1:45pm **PACIFIC**
1:15pm – 2:45pm **MOUNTAIN**
2:15pm – 3:45pm **CENTRAL**
3:15pm – 4:45pm **EASTERN**

ONLINE BREAKOUT B

0B1 Navigating Normalcy: Youth Voice and the Reasonable and Prudent Parenting Standard

PRESENTERS **JENA BRAUNSBURG, JD** – Voce
JOSEPH MAHONEY, PHD – University of Pittsburgh, School of Social Work, Pennsylvania Child Welfare Resource Center
ASHLEIGH REEDY – University of Pittsburgh, School of Social Work, Pennsylvania Child Welfare Resource Center

This session focuses on the Reasonable and Prudent Parenting Standard and how normalcy is experienced by youth in care. In 2025, youth at Pennsylvania's Older Youth Retreat participated in focus groups to share what normalcy means to them, how it affects mental health, and the role of family, friends, and Independent Living workers. Youth also reflected on how their understanding of normalcy has changed over time. Incorporating these perspectives, this session explores how attorneys, judges, and child welfare professionals can apply the standard in ways that support youth development and well-being while remaining consistent with legal requirements.

0B2 More Information Coming Soon

2:15pm – 3:45pm **PACIFIC**
3:15pm – 4:45pm **MOUNTAIN**
4:15pm – 5:45pm **CENTRAL**
5:15pm – 6:45pm **EASTERN**

ONLINE PLENARY 2

0P2 Labeled Mature, Left Vulnerable: Adulthoodification, Parentification, and Systemic Vulnerability Among Black Girls in Child Welfare

PRESENTER **LALA ELEPANO, PHD, LPC, NCC, CCTP** – The Children's Assessment Center

Black girls are disproportionately represented in the child welfare system and are frequently perceived as more mature, more capable, and less vulnerable than their peers. Research shows that adulthoodification bias leads Black girls to receive less protection and support, even when experiencing significant trauma (Epstein et al., 2017). Within multidisciplinary team settings, these perceptions shape clinical assessments, investigative decisions, and court narratives in ways that increase harm. This session examines how adulthoodification and parentification influence MDT decision making, contribute to reduced protective responses, and heighten vulnerability to continued abuse, misdiagnosis, and exploitation.



SAPPHIRE SPONSOR



Spend more time
on what matters.

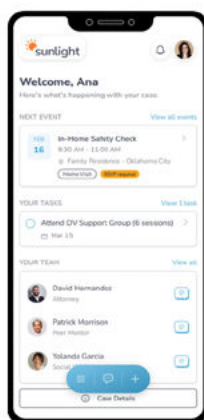


Connect. Communicate. Collaborate.

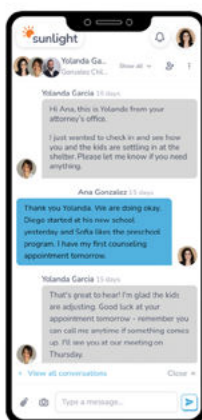
High-quality legal representation is the difference-maker for children and families navigating the child-welfare system.

Sunlight supports your commitment to child, youth and parent clients with a safe, secure place to connect and communicate.

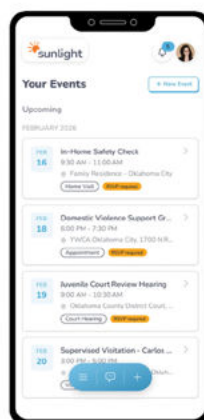
With Sunlight your clients can:



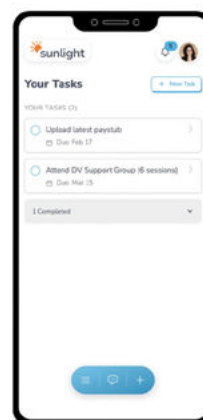
See their case team and what's happening at-a-glance.



Securely message, call or video call from a mobile device or web browser.



Stay on top of hearings and other key dates, and get automated reminders.



Know what they need to do to stay on track.





ONLINE Conference Day 2: Thursday, Oct 15, 2026

8:00am – 9:30am **PACIFIC**
9:00am – 10:30am **MOUNTAIN**
10:00am – 11:30am **CENTRAL**
11:00am – 12:30pm **EASTERN**

ONLINE BREAKOUT C

OC1 Educational Advocacy for Foster Youth in Institutions: Individual and Systemic Advocacy Strategy and Perspectives

PRESENTERS **ANDREW CONE** – Legal Aid Society of Southwest Ohio
SARAH FLOHRE, JD, MPH – Legal Aid Society of Greater Cincinnati
CAROLYN LIPP, JD – ABA Center on Children and the Law

This session will provide advocates with tools on how to support the education of children in foster care when they are placed in institutional settings. The presenters will provide an overview of the educational rights of foster youth, including rights to school stability and special education rights. The session will also highlight relevant federal guidance on serving youth in foster care and dually involved youth in institutional settings. The session will discuss individual and systemic advocacy strategies for supporting these youth by learning about the “Kids in School Rule!” model in Ohio, including securing appropriate assessments and transition services, monitoring and retrieving credits, and navigating educational advocacy across jurisdictional and state lines.

OC2 Understanding the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of LGBTQIA2S+ Youth: How Providers Can Collaborate to Build Inclusive Services & Spaces

PRESENTERS **ARIEL BUSTAMANTE, BA**
MARÍA CONTRERAS, MPP – National Center for Youth Law
ERIN FRENCH NAFEKH, JD

Data show that LGBTQIA2S+ youth are overrepresented among those impacted by commercial sexual exploitation (CSE). While there is growing attention to the needs of LGBTQIA2S+ youth as well as those experiencing CSE, there is rarely a recognition of the intersection of the two, and the unique needs and strengths of these young people. Presenters, including a survivor, will share prevalence data and youth examples, key takeaways from listening sessions with youth and service providers, and recommendations for how service providers can better identify and tailor services for youth impacted by CSE who identify as LGBTQIA2S+. We will also share a new Issue Brief highlighting practical strategies and examples of collaborations that demonstrate how to come together to meet youth's intersecting needs.

10:00am – 11:30am **PACIFIC**
11:00am – 12:30pm **MOUNTAIN**
12:00pm – 1:30pm **CENTRAL**
1:00pm – 2:30pm **EASTERN**

ONLINE BREAKOUT D

OD1 Medication-Assisted Treatment and Child Welfare: Bridging Evidence, Practice, and Court Decision-Making

PRESENTERS **ANDREA SIVANICH, JD, PHD** – National Center on Substance Abuse and Child Welfare
EMILY SVOBODA, MS – National Center on Substance Abuse and Child Welfare

Medication-Assisted Treatment (MAT) is a widely accepted, evidence-based approach to treating substance use disorders, yet it remains frequently misunderstood. These misunderstandings can influence case planning, court orders, and family engagement in ways that might influence child safety and long-term stability. This session is designed for judges, attorneys, and multidisciplinary professionals seeking a clearer understanding of how MAT intersects with child welfare decision-making. Presenters will share common misconceptions about MAT, explore how stigma and cross-system misalignment affect families, and examine practical implications for court-involved cases through applied scenarios and discussion.

OD2 More Information Coming Soon



12:00pm - 1:30pm **PACIFIC**
1:00pm - 2:30pm **MOUNTAIN**
2:00pm - 3:30pm **CENTRAL**
3:00pm - 4:30pm **EASTERN**

ONLINE PLENARY 3

OP3 Unlocking Family Connections: Strategies for Legal Professionals to Improve Outcomes through Support of Kinship Care

PRESENTERS MARGARITA HUGHES, MPA – National Center for Diligent Recruitment at AdoptUSKids
PAMELA ROBBINS, MPA – National Center for Diligent Recruitment at AdoptUSKids

This session provides child welfare, legal, and court professionals with practical strategies to identify, assess, and support kinship caregivers in foster care cases. Participants will explore evidence-based family finding tools, legal and ethical considerations, and approaches to reduce barriers to kin-first placement. Through case examples and interactive discussion, attendees will gain actionable skills to strengthen family engagement, improve outcomes, and promote stability for children involved in the child welfare system.

2:00pm - 3:30pm **PACIFIC**
3:00pm - 4:30pm **MOUNTAIN**
4:00pm - 5:30pm **CENTRAL**
5:00pm - 6:30pm **EASTERN**

ONLINE BREAKOUT E

OE1 Beyond Bias: Equity-Centered Lawyering in Child Welfare Courts

PRESENTER KENISHA COON-SANTIAGO, PHD, LIVED EXPERIENCE EXPERT – Kenisha Coon Consulting

Child welfare litigators and attorneys play a critical role in shaping outcomes for children and families, yet legal systems often reproduce racial, disability-based, and structural inequities. This interactive training equips attorneys, guardians ad litem, and legal professionals with practical, equity-centered tools to examine how bias, power, and “neutral” legal practices show up in advocacy, case strategy, and courtroom decision-making. Grounded in antiracist and systems-change frameworks, participants will engage real-world scenarios and leave with actionable strategies to strengthen ethical, culturally responsive, and justice-oriented lawyering in child welfare courts.

OE2 Communities Working Upstream: Collaboration to Strengthen Prevention and Intervention for Children and Families

PRESENTERS TERI DEAL, PHD – National Center for State Courts
ANGELA SAGER, MPA – National Center for State Courts

This session introduces the National Center for State Courts’ Upstream framework and explores how communities work together – judicially led and collaboratively driven – to strengthen prevention and early intervention strategies, like pre-petition representation for families. Rather than responding independently after court involvement, Upstream aligns courts, attorneys, child welfare, juvenile justice, behavioral health, schools, and community partners to address social determinants of health. Through facilitated, community-driven mapping, stakeholders identify gaps, leverage local strengths, and develop shared action plans to support families before, during, and after system involvement. Join us to learn how to implement Upstream in your community.



ONLINE Conference Day 3: Friday, Oct 16, 2026

8:00am - 9:30am **PACIFIC**
9:00am - 10:30am **MOUNTAIN**
10:00am - 11:30am **CENTRAL**
11:00am - 12:30pm **EASTERN**

ONLINE PLENARY 4

OP4 Who Decides? The Impact of the Growing Parents' Rights Movement on Child Welfare

PRESENTERS **REBECCA GUDEMAN, JD, MPA** – National Center for Youth Law
JEAN STROUT, JD – National Center for Youth Law
KRISTEN WEBER, JD – National Center for Youth Law

There is a growing “parents’ rights” movement in the U.S. that has the potential to impact all aspects of child advocacy. Cases disputing the extent of parents’ constitutional rights in healthcare and education are before the Supreme Court, and many states have passed or are considering “parents’ rights” legislation that will have a direct impact on healthcare, education, privacy, due process, and family integrity. But is this movement really about parents and families, and where does it leave youth? Grounding the discussion in historical context, this workshop will review current parents’ rights legislation and litigation across the country, explore the movement’s implications for family integrity, healthcare, and education, and discuss advocacy strategies to support youth and families.

10:00am - 11:30am **PACIFIC**
11:00am - 12:30pm **MOUNTAIN**
12:00pm - 1:30pm **CENTRAL**
1:00pm - 2:30pm **EASTERN**

ONLINE BREAKOUT F

OF1 From Victimization to Incarceration: Disrupting the Sexual Abuse-to-Prison Pipeline

PRESENTERS **BRIAN ATKINSON**
JOCELYN CRUMPTON, LMSW – Wilbanks CEASE Clinic - University of Georgia School of Law
YASMIN VAFA, JD – Rights4Girls

Join us and explore the pervasive sexual abuse-to-prison pipeline, which is the criminalization of survivors of gender-based violence, particularly girls of color, within the child welfare and juvenile justice system. Drawing from national research and policy insight, Rights4Girls will illuminate how systemic responses to trauma and abuse often lead to punitive rather than protective outcomes. The CEASE Clinic will provide insight from their direct representation of survivors, whose early abuse and state system involvement contributed to their incarceration. Together, the presenters will examine how systemic failures intersect to funnel survivors from care to custody, and share legal and policy strategies for disrupting this trajectory.

OF2 Help That Harms: Challenging Medical Diagnoses of Abuse – A New Policy and Law to Prevent Unnecessary Removals

PRESENTERS **DARICE GOOD**
COLLEEN PUCKETT

In this session, attendees will hear directly from many of the families, and the attorney spotlighted in the investigative series, “Help That Harms” reported by 11Alive News’ Investigative Reporter, Rebecca Lindstrom. We will discuss “Ridge’s Law” (Georgia Senate Bill 259) allowing families the right to a second medical opinion when facing allegations of abuse diagnosed by Child Abuse Pediatricians, and the new DFCS policy supporting this second opinion. Attendees will learn how this series, policy, and code can help end unnecessary removal of children in these cases, and how to investigate cases involving medical diagnosis of abuse.

12:00pm - 1:30pm **PACIFIC**
1:00pm - 2:30pm **MOUNTAIN**
2:00pm - 3:30pm **CENTRAL**
3:00pm - 4:30pm **EASTERN**

ONLINE PLENARY 5

OP5 More Information Coming Soon



2:00pm - 3:00pm **PACIFIC**
3:00pm - 4:00pm **MOUNTAIN**
4:00pm - 5:00pm **CENTRAL**
5:00pm - 6:00pm **EASTERN**

CLOSING AND AWARDS



Developing Solutions

to build a brighter
future for children,
youth, families
and communities



THE ANNIE E. CASEY FOUNDATION



**A Permanent Family is
Possible for Every Child
Waiting in Foster Care**



Dave Thomas
Foundation
for Adoption

Join our community for free
resources to support your
life-changing work.



[davethomasfoundation.org/
forprofessionals](https://davethomasfoundation.org/forprofessionals)



LOIS

The Intelligence
Your Firm Has
Always Deserved

Built with Filevine



How can I help you today?

Ask LOIS anything



See LOIS in action



The Imprint

YOUTH & FAMILY NEWS



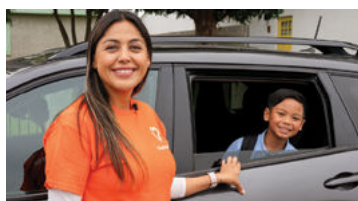
The Imprint is an independent daily news outlet focused on the nation's child welfare and youth justice systems.

GET 10% OFF A SUBSCRIPTION

NACC2026

USE THIS CODE BY 9/30/2026

CONTACT US FOR BULK SUBSCRIPTIONS
sales@imprintnews.org



HopSkipDrive is the leader in safe,
fast, and simple supplemental
student transportation.



HopSkipDrive

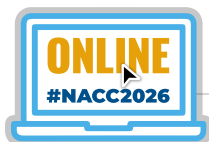


#1 in Proving Sobriety
for Family Law

Handle alcohol concerns with confidence.



Book a Free
Lunch & Learn



Children's Advocacy Institute

Did you know that your client may be entitled to thousands of dollars in federal benefits?

If your client has a disability or a deceased parent, they may be entitled to Social Security benefits. But across the nation, child welfare agencies intercept these benefits and use foster youth's funds to reimburse themselves for the youth's care. This is money that could help a youth transition successfully to adulthood — providing the means to rent an apartment, fund their education, or buy a car. The Children's Advocacy Institute at the University of San Diego School of Law is working to stop states from taking foster youth's money, rather than using or conserving the funds to benefit the child.



University of San Diego
SCHOOL OF LAW

To learn more about this issue, our advocacy, and how YOU can help protect your client, please scan the QR code.

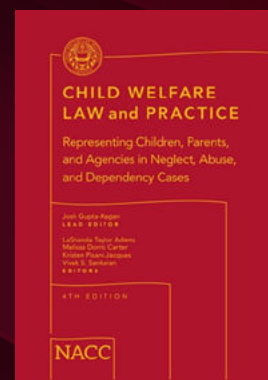


info@caichildlaw.org
www.caichildlaw.org

Child Welfare Law and Practice is Now Available Digitally

NACC and PLI have partnered to bring you the same essential Red Book content in a digital format.

- Search the entire book
- Bookmark, take notes, and highlight sections
- Access from wherever you are



PLI PLUS

Order your digital copy at pli.edu/NACC



Washington State
Office of
Public
Defense

Parents Representation Program

CELEBRATING OVER 25 YEARS OF MULTIDISCIPLINARY, ANTI-RACIST FAMILY DEFENSE

We are looking for attorneys and social service professionals to join our team!

Attorney Contracts:

- \$210,000/year
- 45 client or 60 case caseload*

Social Service Contracts:

- \$99,000/year
- 24 case caseload

*For attorney contractors, the State Supreme Court has created a rule on caseloads that will reduce caseloads to no more than 35 clients and 40 cases by July 1, 2028.

If you are interested in practicing in Washington state:

- Stop by our table located in the lobby to learn more, OR email Sharea.Moberly@opd.wa.gov, for social service professionals email Michael.Heard@opd.wa.gov to setup an informational interview
- Interested attorneys can also submit a letter of interest and CV to our year-round applicant pool to ParentsRepAdmin@opd.wa.gov

Upcoming available contracts will be posted at <https://opd.wa.gov/>

SAVE THE DATE FOR A GALA EVENT!

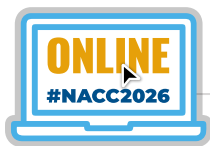
IN 2027 THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF
COUNSEL FOR CHILDREN IS HOSTING OUR

50TH

ANNIVERSARY GALA CELEBRATION
FRIDAY, AUGUST 6, 2027

NACCchildlaw.org/NACC-at-50

NACC



NACC BOARD OF DIRECTORS

PRESIDENT

Dawne Mitchell, JD
Attorney in Charge, Juvenile
Rights Practice | The Legal
Aid Society | NEW YORK, NY

VICE PRESIDENT

Currey Cook, JD
Director of the Youth in Out-of-Home Care
Project | Lambda Legal | NEW YORK, NY

SECRETARY

Sheri Freemont-Castañeda, JD
Managing Director | Casey Family
Programs Judicial and National
Engagement | DENVER, CO

MEMBERS

Mickey Aberman, JD, MBA
James, McElroy, & Diehl, P.A. |
CHARLOTTE, NC

Kathryn Banks, JD
Associate Dean for Experiential
Learning | Saint Louis University
School of Law | SAINT LOUIS, MO

Hon. Karen Braxton, CWLS
Presiding Judge, Juvenile Section |
Third Circuit Court | DETROIT, MI

January Contreras, JD
PHOENIX, AZ

LilCrystal Dernier, MS, MNM
Family Visitation Supervisor | Children's
Home of Florida | MIAMI, FLORIDA

Justin Grosz, JD
Co-Founder | Justice for Kids | FLORIDA

Amy Harfeld, JD
National Policy Director & Senior Staff
Attorney | Children's Advocacy Institute,
USD School of Law | WASHINGTON, DC

TREASURER & HISTORIAN

Janet Bledsoe, JD, LLM, CWLS
Director, Attorney ad Litem
Program | Administrative Office
of the Courts | FORT SMITH, AR

PAST PRESIDENT

LaShanda Taylor Adams, JD
Legal Director | Children's Law Center
of Washington, DC | WASHINGTON, DC

Leslie Starr Heimov, JD, CWLS
Executive Director |
Children's Law Center of
California | MONTEREY PARK, CA

Priya Konings, JD
Managing Director of Organizational
Infrastructure | National Latina Institute
for Reproductive Justice | WASHINGTON, DC

Yali Lincroft, MBA
Vice President, Philanthropic Services
| Whittier Trust | SEATTLE, WA

Clark Peters, PhD, JD, MSW
Associate Professor | University of
Missouri School of Social Work | MISSOURI

Meghna Roy, MBA
Vice President, Product
Management | Ontic | TEXAS

Dan Wilde, JD
Attorney | Wyld Law Office |
CHEYENNE, WY

NACC EMERITUS BOARD

Candace Barr, JD
Legal Aid Center of Southern
Nevada | HENDERSON, NV

Donald C. Bross, JD, Ph.D.
Professor of Pediatrics (Family Law),
Associate Director for Pediatric Law,
Policy and Ethics | Kempe Center for
the Prevention and Treatment of Child
Abuse and Neglect | AURORA, CO

John B. Ciccolella, JD
Ciccolella Family Law, P.C. |
COLORADO SPRINGS, CO

Robert Fellmeth, JD
Executive Director / Professor |
University of San Diego Law
School, Children's Advocacy
Institute | SAN DIEGO, CA

Gerry Glynn, JD, MS, LLM
Child Advocate and International
Volunteer | Retired Lawyer and
Law Professor | ORLANDO, FL

Candi M. Mayes, JD, MJM, CWLS
Supervising Attorney | Dependency
Legal Services | FAIRFIELD, CA

John Myers, JD
Visiting Professor of Law |
UC College of Law | SAN FRANCISCO, CA

Henry J. Plum, JD
Attorney & Consultant | NEW BERLIN, WI

Janet G. Sherwood, JD
Deputy Director | Advokids |
CORTE MADERA, CA

John H. Stuenkel, MD (Retired)
Associate Professor, Child Protection
Team | Children's Hospital at OU
Medical Center | OKLAHOMA CITY, OK

Sonia C. Velazquez
Consultant | CHICAGO, IL

Chris Wu, JD (Retired)
Director of Government Relations |
National Center for State Courts |
SEATTLE, WA

NACC STATE COORDINATORS

AK : Samantha "Reux" Stearns, JD
AL : Stephen "Steve" Schofield, JD
AR : Chrishuana Taggart, JD
AZ : Rachel Metelis, JD
CA : Dean Conklin, JD, CWLS
CO : Sheri Danz, JD CWLS
DC : Emily Petrino, JD
DE : Stephanie Reid, JD, CWLS
FL : Taylor Sartor, JD
GA : Emma Hetherington, JD, CWLS
IA : Magdalena Reese, JD
ID : Jessalyn Hopkin, JD
IL : Kathy Gordon, JD CWLS
IN : Rachel Vilensky, JD, CWLS
KS : Grant Brazill, JD
LA : Kirby Casciato, JD CWLS
MD : Richard A. Perry, JD
ME : Taylor Kilgore, JD
MI : Esther F. Flowers, JD
MO : Katie Wiehl, JD, CWLS
MS : Jennifer Morgan, JD, CWLS
MT : Sarah Chase Rosario, JD, CWLS
NH : Lisa Wolford, JD
NJ : Alexis Pollock, JD
NM : Beth A. Gillia, JD, MA
NV : Angela Cook, JD
NY : Salihah Denman, JD
OH : Jennifer Reed, JD
OK : Gwendolyn Clegg, JD
OR : Cathy Ouellette, JD, CWLS
PA : Nesta N. Johnson, JD
SC : Michelle Pappas, JD,
TN : Stacie Odeneal, JD, CWLS
TX : Crystal Leff-Pinon, JD
UT : Dianne Balmain, JD, CWLS
VA : Valerie L'Herrou, JD
VT : Matthew Bernstein, JD
WA : Bailey Zydek, JD
WI : Adam Zaiger, JD
WV : Cathy Bond Wallace, JD
WY : Tamara Candelaria, JD

NACC STAFF

Kim Dvorchak, JD
Chief Executive Officer

Ginger Burton
Certification Manager

Shannon Felder, JD, CWLS
Training Director

Allison Green, JD, CWLS
Chief Legal Officer

Edenne Gross
Membership and Sales Associate

Evan Molinari
Communications Manager

Olivia Riggs
National Law School Student Organizer

Breanna Smith, MSW
Policy and Communications Associate

Daniel Trujillo
Sales and Technology Director

Josephine Vanderhorst, MFP, JD, CWLS
Senior Staff Attorney

Nataleece Washington, JD, CWLS
Policy Counsel

Sara Willis, MA
Senior Business and Conference Manager

NACC NATIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL ON CHILDREN'S LEGAL REPRESENTATION

Lakota Dawn
Badheartbull-Clark | CALIFORNIA

Alexis Borgesen | MINNESOTA

Kayana Bradley, PSS, MHFA | LOUISIANA

Michael D. Davis-Thomas | MICHIGAN

Nicolas (Nick) Guzmán | WASHINGTON

Maci Fae-Morales Kean | FLORIDA

Rimy Morris | INDIANA

Cadon Sagendorf | UTAH

WE ARE
NACC
TOGETHER WE ARE
PROMOTING EXCELLENCE
BUILDING COMMUNITY
ADVANCING JUSTICE



In 2027, NACC is Celebrating Our 50th Anniversary!

Save the Date for the 50th National Child Welfare Law Conference.

Pre-Conference: Wednesday, August 4, 2027

Conference: Thursday–Saturday, August 5–7, 2027

HYATT REGENCY DENVER

