

## **COMPETITION KICKOFF**

Prior to the pandemic, the CT Kids Court Essay Competition would kick off in May with Kids Speak, an event held at the University of Connecticut school of law. Kids Speak provided an opportunity for students to participate in group exercises, improvisations, debates, and to hear from a panel of experts on diversity issues, educational equity, anti-bullying, and school climate. Unfortunately, due to the pandemic, Kids Speak will not take place in 2025. We look forward to the return of Kids Speak in 2026...stay tuned. The Kids Court Competition will proceed without a kickoff.

## **COMPETITION RULES**

Students interested in participating in Kids Court must select one of the five topics listed in this brochure and write a short paper about their chosen topic. Paper length varies depending on division. **Papers that don't meet page length requirements will not be reviewed.**

**Division A**– Grades 9-12 papers must be no fewer than two pages and no longer than three pages.

**Division B**– Grades 6-8 papers must be no fewer than one page and no longer than two pages



## **COMPETITION JUDGING**

The papers will be judged on the student's understanding of the topic, consistency of argument, persuasiveness, civil rights issues addressed, creativity, and thoughtfulness. The five Division A and five Division B students receiving the highest scores on their paper will have an opportunity to compete for prizes in the Oral Kids Court Competition to be held remotely on June 4, 2025 at 4:30 via Teams.

## **PRIZES**

Students may win prizes such as: a medal, certificate, plaque, citation from the legislature or governor, and/or cash prize ranging from \$25.00 to \$350.00.

## **FOR ELIGIBILITY**

All papers must contain a cover page, which includes the student's name, grade, school, town, email address (or telephone number if the student does not have an email address), and title of the paper. All papers must be double-spaced and 12-point font or legibly handwritten. Please submit via email to the addresses provided below by 5:00 p.m. May 2, 2025.

Late submissions will not be accepted.

Cheryl.Sharp@ct.gov AND  
[Kellye.Hudson@ct.gov](mailto:Kellye.Hudson@ct.gov)

# **Commission on Human Rights & Opportunities**



**Presents:  
2025**

## **Kids Court Competition**

Tanya A. Hughes, Executive Director

Attorney Cheryl A. Sharp, Deputy  
Executive Director

Ana Mitchell, Outreach Coordinator &  
Project Manager

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Please send your  
submissions to

Cheryl.Sharp@ct.gov AND  
Kellye.Hudson@ct.gov

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## **KIDS COURT 2025**

Kids Court is an essay Competition related to the topic of civil and human rights and social justice. The Competition is for middle and high school students in the state of Connecticut. The Competition will raise students' consciousness regarding civil and human rights, diversity, school climate and culture, anti-bullying, equal protection, neighborhood isolation and housing, educational equity, health equity, individuality, and much, much more!

## **PURPOSE**

- To support the development of youth leadership and raise consciousness about civil and human rights for all within Connecticut and New England;
- To reduce prejudice and create school environments that encourage mutual respect among students and faculty alike;
- To dissuade discriminatory bullying;
- To assist students in developing debating, writing, and analytical reasoning skills;
- To expose students to legislative and law-making processes.



## **HISTORY**

In 1993, then UConn Law School students Cheryl Sharp and Rae Thiesfield, developed and launched the first Kids Court Competition in the greater Hartford area to educate students about diversity and civil and human rights issues.

After receiving approval from the governor's office in 1996, Attorneys Sharp and Thiesfield-Vann co-chaired the first statewide Kids Court Competition and Kids Speak event. The Competition, sponsored by the Connecticut Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities, successfully ran for five straight years, allowing thousands of students to participate.



In 2000, Kids Court was selected by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development as one of the best practice award winners, and received the "Simply the Best" award. Kids Court has been featured on Fox 61 news, WFSB 3 and in local papers throughout the state. The CT Bar Association recognized the CT Kids Court program at the 2023 Celebrate with the Stars award celebration.

The 2025 CT Kids Court Competition promises to be an exciting Competition, as social justice and civil and human rights are at the forefront of national conversations.

## **KIDS COURT TOPICS**

### **#CivilRightsUnites**

Civil and human rights connects us all! How can you connect and be a connection?

### **#BeKindYou'reAFriendofMine**

Stop bullying in our schools. Mutual respect goes a long way. How do we stop the hate?

### **#HousingHoundFitMeIn**

Housing access for all people including undocumented, marginalized, poor and homeless people is a must! How can you help?

### **#OpportunityGapsFillItIn**

There are multiple gaps in opportunity that lead to unfair outcomes. How do we fill in the cracks?

### **#EnvironmentalJusticeMyHealthDependsOnIt**

Health outcomes can be determined by zip code; How do we change this phenomenon?



Any student currently enrolled in grades six through twelve, who attends a Connecticut, Massachusetts, or New York school, or is home schooled in these states, is eligible to participate.