

THE STATE OF CONNECTICUT
Commission on Human Rights
and Opportunities



**KIDS COURT COMPETITION
& KIDS SPEAK EVENT**

VIA ZOOM

MAY 18, 2021
9:30 AM - 1:30 PM

REGISTER FOR KIDS SPEAK AT: CHERYL.SHARP@CT.GOV

KIDS SPEAK

Kids Speak is a day for students from Connecticut to come together and discuss topics related to civil and human rights. This forum will raise students' consciousness regarding diversity, school climate and culture, anti-bullying, equal protection, neighborhood isolation and housing, educational equity, busing, individuality, and 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
- To dissuade discriminatory bullying
- To assist students in developing debating, writing, and analytical reasoning skills
- To expose students to legislative and law making processes
- To provide students with an opportunity to use interactive exercises and peer dialogue to resolve important social issues affecting them in a school setting
- To raise up the voices of students and give them an opportunity to be heard

KIDS COURT COMPETITION TOPICS

- **LGBTQ+ Resources:** #AllyAccess
Providing equal opportunities and access for all LGBTQ+ individuals
- **Anti Cyber Bullying:** #CyberCare
Creating a safe and caring environment in virtual settings
- **Housing Discrimination:** #HousingEquality
Advocating for equal housing opportunities for all
- **Racial Equality:** #EmbraceEachOther
Fighting against discrimination towards minority groups
- **Immigration:** #CultureInclusion
Taking action to increase equal access to opportunities and understand cultural differences

HISTORY

In 1993, then UConn Law School students, Cheryl Sharp and Rae Thiesfield, developed and launched the 1st 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 Speak and 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 and in local papers throughout the state.

Kids Court 2021 promises to be exciting, with several new schools participating in the event!

FOR ELIGIBILITY

All papers **must** contain a cover page, which includes the student's name, grade, school, town, email address or telephone number and title of the paper. All papers **must** be double spaced and 12 point font or legibly handwritten. Please submit via email to cheryl.sharp@ct.gov by **May 26, 2021**. Late submissions will not be accepted.

PRIZES

Students may win prizes such as: a medal, certificate, plaque, citation from the legislature or Governor, and/or cash prize in the amount of **\$250, \$150, \$100, \$50 or \$25**.

COMPETITION KICKOFF

The **Kids Court Essay Competition** kicks off on **May 18, 2021** with **Kids Speak**, an event to be held **via ZOOM**. **Kids Speak** will provide 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. Students are not required to participate in **Kids Speak** in order to compete in the **Kids Court Essay Competition**.

COMPETITION RULES

Students interested in participating 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.

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 on **June 8th via ZOOM**.

ANY STUDENT CURRENTLY ENROLLED IN 6-12TH GRADE, WHO ATTENDS A CONNECTICUT, MASSACHUSETTS, OR NEW YORK SCHOOL OR IS HOME SCHOOLED IN THESE STATES IS ELIGIBLE TO PARTICIPATE.