



Center for Children's Advocacy and Yale Child Study Center Create First Medical-Legal Partnership on East Coast in Children's Behavioral Health Setting

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The Center for Children's Advocacy (CCA) and Yale Child Study Center (YCSC) have joined forces to open a Medical-Legal Partnership on-site at YCSC. The collaboration is the first Medical-Legal Partnership (MLP) on the east coast dedicated exclusively to interdisciplinary advocacy in a children's behavioral health setting.

The new partnership will provide critical legal interventions for children suffering from family trauma and health-harming environmental stressors that disproportionately impact children of color and have grave impact on their lives.

Working with YCSC clinicians, CCA attorney Kathryn Meyer will provide direct legal support to patients with the goal of improving health equity and outcomes relating to mental health services, educational supports, and public benefits for children in the New Haven region.

The collaboration will also provide unique interdisciplinary behavioral-health related education and training opportunities to pediatric providers and behavioral health clinicians throughout Connecticut.

"Having on-site support from CCA MLP colleagues focused on social/legal problems that have an impact on overall health will help us meet families' needs in a more comprehensive way," said Dr. Linda Mayes, Director of the YCSC and the Arnold Gesell Professor of Child Psychiatry, Pediatrics, and Psychology. "We're excited to bring our disciplines together so that we may learn from one another and better raise public awareness about the mental and behavioral health needs of children, adolescents, and their parents."

Attorney Meyer will supervise Yale Law School student volunteers and will help conduct educational programs that foster interdisciplinary teamwork as law students learn alongside trainees and fellows in psychiatry, psychology, and social work.

"We are delighted to inaugurate this ground-breaking initiative," said Anne Alstott, the Jacquin D. Bierman Professor at the Yale Law School. "I look forward to working with Kathryn to introduce law students to the legal and policy issues facing children and families with mental health needs." The Oscar Ruebhausen Fund at the Yale Law School helped sponsor the initiative.

Born and raised in Connecticut, Attorney Meyer joined the Center for Children's Advocacy in 2009 as an Equal Justice Works Fellow. In addition to her work with the new MLP collaboration, she directs CCA's

Speak Up initiatives, promoting youth-led advocacy and youth voice to teach youth about their legal rights so they can advocate for themselves in their schools and communities.

Attorney Meyer has co-counseled systemic and legislative efforts including statewide complaints, Office of Civil Rights complaints, and legislation concerning the education of vulnerable children. She is a graduate of Columbia Law School.

“Children suffer from access issues that can be alleviated with our help,” said Meyer. “Our on-site presence at YCSC brings legal advocacy and support directly to families who need help to secure services that can relieve enormous emotional, educational, and environmental stressors.”

MLPs provide tangible relief to families who live in poverty. Since opening the first Connecticut MLP office in 2000, CCA has worked with healthcare partners to help thousands of children and families. MLPs also address systemic issues, provide support, education, and insights to the state’s healthcare teams, and seek to address the ever-growing disparities in health outcomes that affect the state’s poorest children and children of color.

“The Center’s work with YCSC will be groundbreaking,” said Jay Sicklick, Deputy Director of CCA and director of the Center’s MLP Project. “Yale Child Study Center is renowned for its research, clinical services, training programs, policy work, and collaborations. The Center for Children’s Advocacy is proud to collaborate with YCSC on this new initiative.”

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The [Center for Children’s Advocacy](#) protects the legal rights of children who suffer from abuse, neglect, and lack of access to critical services. It is the largest children’s legal rights organization in New England, and has legal offices in Hartford, Bridgeport, on site at Yale New Haven Hospital and Connecticut Children’s Medical Center, and now on-site at YCSC. CCA’s mobile legal office travels to meet the needs of at-risk children and youth, and CCA attorneys provide legal services at additional community locations.

The [Yale Child Study Center](#) improves the mental health of children and families, advances understanding of psychological and developmental needs, and treats and prevents childhood mental illness through the integration of research, clinical practice, and professional training.

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