

THE POWER OF CEA'S LEGAL TEAM IN YOUR CORNER



"They are strong and there for you." Greg DeNies, Manchester teacher

"With CEA, you become part of an organization that exists to improve your profession and protect you. There is always someone who has your back." Katy Gale, Darien teacher

"Knowing that I have strong support whenever I need it is extremely important. CEA provides representation when we need it." Mary Rao, Madison teacher



Being a member of the Connecticut Education Association gives you a voice at the table when it comes to education policy, access to hundreds of benefits, and the power of CEA's legal team in your corner.

CEA's legal experts are available to members—at no cost—for assistance with a wide range of issues that impact your career. We represent you in unfair labor practice litigation, dismissal cases, unemployment, licensure issues, DCF investigations, and more.



Presented throughout the school year by CEA's legal team, **Teachers and the Law** workshop covers everything you need to know, including

- State mandatory reporting laws
- DCF investigations
- Weingarten meetings
- Physical assaults on teachers
- Freedom of information
- Social media safety
- And much more



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To schedule a workshop in your district, contact your local president, email myprofession@cea.org, or call (860) 525-5641.



Your Union Protects Your Job

Real cases—resolved by CEA’s legal team

Teachers rarely imagine themselves in a situation where their reputation is at risk or their career is in jeopardy. But it happens more than you think, to some of the best educators. Facing false accusations, workplace illnesses or injuries, DCF investigations, or potential termination can be among the most devastating and frightening experiences of your professional life.

“These cases are like lightning strikes,” says CEA attorney Melanie Kolek, “and it is critically important to know where to turn and how to respond.”

With CEA’s legal team behind you, you will never have to go it alone.

WORKERS’ COMPENSATION RESOLVED

ISSUE: After 34 years in the classroom, Naugatuck teacher Mark Callahan suffered a tragic school accident that caused a traumatic brain injury, putting an end to the career he loved.

CEA’S RESOLUTION: CEA’s legal team took on this complicated case, guiding Mark at every step and advocating on his behalf. They successfully resolved his workers’ compensation matter for close to \$300,000.

“You don’t know how much you need the union until something terrible happens to you. I don’t know where I’d be right now without CEA.”

Mark Callahan



DCF SUBSTANTIATION REVERSED

ISSUE: A teacher became ill in the classroom and proceeded to the bathroom in an emergency. Before doing so, the teacher left a student in the capable hands of a certified co-teacher, in a one-on-one situation. Nevertheless, allegations of physical neglect were brought against the teacher, and DCF investigators made a determination that the allegations were “substantiated”—a claim that can be devastating to an educator’s reputation and career.

CEA’S RESOLUTION: CEA’s Member Legal Services team stepped in immediately, argued the case before the DCF principal attorney in the region, and had the wrongful

substantiation reversed, sparing the teacher the angst of filing a lengthy formal appeal.



CAREER RESTORED

ISSUE: A highly regarded teacher and beloved coach in the midst of a family crisis was suspended after raising his voice to administrators. While the 20-year veteran teacher was on leave, the superintendent sought to have him fired from the job he loved.

CEA’S RESOLUTION: CEA represented the teacher through the nearly 12-month termination process, conducting extensive interviews with fellow teachers, community members, and students.

“They worked tirelessly combing through police and other investigatory statements,” he says, “finding discrepancies within those statements and preparing thoroughly for my case. They were caring, hard-working, honest, and ethical. Every decision in my case was a collaborative one and given serious consideration. Over the course of six hearing dates spanning four months, they cross-examined witnesses, showcased discrepancies and untruths, and questioned witnesses to highlight the important parts of the issue at hand to the impartial hearing officer.”



CEA Member Legal Services brought dozens of character witnesses forward, using every instrument at their disposal to fight for the embattled teacher/coach and his career. After half a dozen hearings, CEA won the case for the teacher, who returned immediately to the classroom and his coaching duties. The teacher paid no attorneys’ fees, because CEA’s legal representation in cases like these is a free member benefit.

“CEA provided me with strong legal representation in my fight to maintain my teaching position,” he says. “I would urge all teachers to join and support your union. I would have lost my career if not for my union’s representation. Know your rights and understand that being a tenured teacher does not ensure that your superintendent cannot attempt to terminate you from your teaching position. In my case, in my 20 years of teaching, I had never been disciplined for any reason. And I found myself with my job on the line.”

CHARGES REVERSED AND CAREER RESTORED

ISSUE: A second-career teacher, beloved by his colleagues, students, and administrators, was falsely accused of inappropriate behavior by a student. Charged with four felonies and two misdemeanors—including impairing the morals of a minor and public indecency—he was placed on DCF’s abuse and neglect registry, his school district initiated termination proceedings, and he faced 10-15 years in prison if convicted.

CEA’S RESOLUTION: CEA worked around the clock to successfully return the innocent teacher to the classroom, reverse all DCF charges, and stop the State Department of Education from revoking his certification. CEA further exposed a police detective’s bias against teachers, sustained by the police department’s Internal Affairs Department, which resulted in discipline of the officer and a prohibition against any action against teachers in that district.

“CEA provided continuous and meaningful assistance throughout this entire unfair ordeal. Their representation has allowed me to begin to recover and find joy once again in the classroom.”