



Empowering families with high-quality legal representation

Issue 7 – June 2026

Director's Message: From Reunification to Family Unification

June has long been recognized as National Family Reunification Month, a time to honor the successful return of children to their families. That recognition remains important. At the same time, our focus is expanding—from celebrating reunification after separation to strengthening the support that help families remain safely unified from the start.

Family unification calls us to look upstream and invest in the conditions that keep families connected, stable, and supported before crises lead to separation. Courts, social workers, community partners, peer mentors, advocates, and local programs all have a role to play, but the work must also reach beyond formal systems into trusted relationships, neighborhood networks, and culturally responsive supports that families can access early.

As we mark this month, I invite each of us to reaffirm our commitment to family integrity, prevention, and meaningful partnership. Keeping families unified is not only a system responsibility, it is a community responsibility. Together, we can build a stronger flow of care that centers wellness, promotes healing, reduces unnecessary separation, and honors the dignity and strengths of every family.

Wendy Sotolongo
Executive Director, Family Defense Council

Let me know your thoughts! WendyS@getsunlight.org

Resources — New + Newly Discovered

Focus on Prevention

- The mission of the [National Family Support Network](#) is to promote positive outcomes for all children, families, and communities by leveraging the collective impact of state networks and championing quality family support and strengthening practices and policies.
- Access current and approved state [Title IV-E Prevention Program Plans](#).

Focus on Engaging Fathers

- Casey Families: [Engaging Fathers](#)
- [National Fatherhood Initiative](#)

Family Defense in the News

 The Social Security Administration issued a memo directing state and tribal child welfare agencies to apply for SSA and SSI benefits on behalf of youth in foster care and encouraging agencies to manage benefits in the youth's best interest.

<https://www.ssa.gov/news/en/advocates/2026-06-16.html>

 Court Improvement Program will prioritize initiatives that safely decrease the number of children entering foster care through effective prevention, while also increasing the number of foster homes through diligent recruitment, prioritizing kin, and improving retention of existing caregivers.

<https://acf.gov/sites/default/files/documents/cb/pi-26-05.pdf>

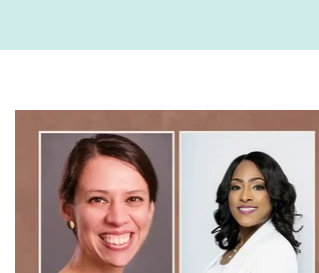
Illinois sends [HB 4966](#) to the Governor to protect the rights and benefits of children in out-of-home placement, especially children placed out of state.

Colorado's [HB26-1227](#) clarifies that children/youth have standing regarding all matters related to their interests and the right to have their GAL or Children's Attorney fully represent those interests.

Listen in

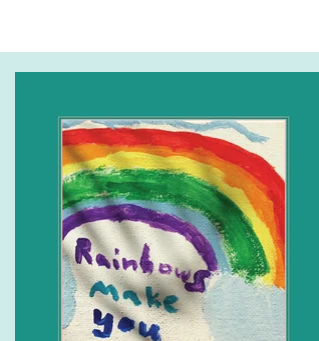
EPPiC Broadcast [Expanding Access to Counsel](#) for Children in Child Welfare Cases.

Hosted by Michael Ramey, President of the Parental Rights Foundation



The Think Tank

Family Justice Group's Journal [Summer 2026](#) issue is here!



Dates & Deadlines

NACC seeks visionary leaders, advocates, professionals, and individuals with lived experience to serve on its [Board of Directors](#).

Applications accepted through July 30, 2026

2026- Conferences Snapshot

Jul 19–22: NCJFCJ Annual Conference (Nashville, TN), **Presenting Sponsor** -  [Sunlight](#) 

Aug 11–14: NACC National (Portland, OR)

Sept 16-17: ABA 2026 Virtual National Conference on Parent Representation

Oct 14–16: NACC Virtual (Virtual)

Apr 4-7: NICWA Protecting Our Children

Do you have news, a podcast or event to share?

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