



Welcome to the 2024-2025 Connecticut Middle School Mock Trial Competition!

We are excited to announce the release of this year's case, some rule changes, and a few other changes resulting from the completion of the transition of the administration of the mock trial programs from Civics First to the Connecticut Bar Association ("CBA"). With a great new case, a record number of new teams entering, and a new home with the CBA, this promises to be the best year yet for mock trial in Connecticut!

Mock Trial Website

As you may have seen, the Civics First website is now defunct. All materials for the Connecticut High School and Middle School Competitions, including online registration links for teams and volunteers, will be housed on the linked [CBA's Mock Trial Competitions page](#) of the CBA website. Additional content, including photographs, links to tutorials, and a list of winners, will be added in the coming months.

Release of the 2024-2025 Middle School Case

The 2024-2025 Middle School Mock Trial case is now available on the CBA Mock Trial Website. We hope you enjoy [Max Mayfield v. Benny's Burgers Corp.](#), which is a personal injury case modeled after *Liebeck v. McDonald's*, the famous "hot coffee case." Please note that the increased length of the document resulted from font and spacing changes that enhance on-screen readability. Please submit any questions to us by January 1, 2025, so that we can publish answers and a revised problem (if necessary) in plenty of time before the regional rounds.

Civility and Professionalism

Consistent with the program's move to the CBA, this year will feature a new focus on the cardinal principles of civility and professionalism. We are asking all participants to comport with the Mock Trial Lawyers' Principles of Professionalism, which are adapted from the CBA's Principles of Professionalism. As a reminder, mock trial teaches students ethics, civility and how to be ardent, but courteous advocates for their clients. The central reality of the adversary system modeled by this competition is that one party wins and the other loses, and therefore, participants need to be prepared to accept defeat and success with dignity and restraint. Judges will be asked to consider teams' professionalism, and the way they treat their adversaries and the court during the mock trial proceedings, in their assessments.

New Rules of Competition

We have made several changes to the [Competition Rules](#). There's two significant changes that affect the trials themselves:

- (1) The elimination of the Invention of Facts objection, which makes clear that impeachment by prior inconsistent statement is the sole remedy for the invention of fact.
- (2) Permitting witnesses to communicate with attorneys during recesses.

The committee eliminated the Invention of Fact objection because it was delaying trials, and raised a significant interpretive issue for our judges that resulted in inconsistent results after objections. We believed that impeachment and possible rehabilitation were a better remedy to highlight witnesses straying beyond the material in their statements, and found that this rule is consistent with the practice followed by most other states.

The committee eliminated the restriction on witness communication because that restriction furnished a constant and needless source of controversy, especially at the middle school level. In addition to fostering tensions, it also sent the unintended message that witnesses are "lesser" team members.

With respect to other changes:

- (1) We changed "Civics First" references to the "CBA Civics Education or Mock Trial Committee" ("CBA Committee").
- (2) We added a reference to the new [Mock Trial Lawyers' Principles of Professionalism](#), nearly all of which is consistent with the existing rules.
- (3) We reduced the number of teams a school may enter from four to three. It's a good problem to have, but capacity is starting to become an issue in many courthouse locations.
- (4) We made clear that schools with an insufficient number of students to compete may combine with another school to create a team.
- (5) We made clear that regional matchups are randomly assigned.
- (6) Of greater relevance to high school, we rewrote the Statewide Playoff Tournament rule to reflect our new tournament format, including the elimination of the old single elimination format, the inclusion of randomly selected 1-1 regional teams as first round wild cards to balance the field, the use of scoring differentials for tiebreakers, and the process for the progression from quarterfinal to semifinal.
- (7) We clarified that the judging panel at the final round has the discretion not to give the scoresheets to the competitors.

Middle School Regional Trial Schedule (some dates tentative)

We will release the Middle School Mock Trial regional schedule and open registration shortly. We anticipate having locations in Wallingford and West Hartford, and would love to open a Fairfield County location should demand and space permit. Regional trials will

take place in March, with a statewide tournament, including finals at the Appellate Court, to follow in April, 2025.

Registration

Registration will open shortly on the new website, including a new "pay later" option to reserve your spot pending a check from your school. The middle school fee remains \$250.00. Financial assistance remains available through the Gruendel Fund, endowed by Judge F. Herbert Gruendel and Dr. Janice Gruendel, in honor of Judge Gruendel's distinguished career as a jurist, attorney, and public school educator.

CBA Staff Contact

Should you need an invoice and purchase order to register your team, please contact Natalia Bellettiere at nbellettiere@ctbar.org. As in past years, your request to Natalia will pencil in your spot(s) pending payment.

Should you have any other questions, including requests for financial assistance, please contact Attorney Jenn Shukla, the CBA's Director of Access to Justice Initiatives, at jshukla@ctbar.org, who is working with Jon and the rest of CBA's Mock Trial Subcommittee to support the program.

CBA Civics Education Committee/Mock Trial Subcommittee

Attorney Jonathan Weiner (Chair)
Hon. Joyce Krutick Craig
Attorney Jeanine Dumont
Hon. Hope C. Seeley
Attorney Mark K. Youssef