

Trinity College

## Trinity College Digital Repository

---

Community Action Gateway

Center for Hartford Engagement and Research

---

Spring 2023

### **Paid Sick Days Campaign and Toolkit for College Activism with CWEALF**

Caitlin Doherty

Emily Fox

Dominque Rivera Espinosa

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalrepository.trincoll.edu/cag>

---

#### **Recommended Citation**

Doherty, Caitlin; Fox, Emily; and Rivera Espinosa, Dominque, "Paid Sick Days Campaign and Toolkit for College Activism with CWEALF" (2023). *Community Action Gateway*. 15.

<https://digitalrepository.trincoll.edu/cag/15>

# Student Activism Toolkit



A guide to getting involved in activism and social movements for college students!

**A toolkit by students at Trinity College in Hartford, CT**

Caitlin Doherty '26

Dominique Rivera Espinosa '26

Emily Fox '26

# Welcome!

Hi, welcome to our student activism toolkit! This document will help you get more involved as an advocate on your campus. We are three students at Trinity College in Hartford and have spent this academic year in the Community Action Gateway, learning about effective forms of community engagement and activism. As a part of the Gateway, we partnered with CT Women's Educational and Legal Fund (CWEALF) this semester and supported their Paid Sick Days campaign, which allowed us to grow as activists. We are actively involved with advocacy organizations on our campus as well. To help ensure that we create the most helpful guide possible, we collected survey responses from other students on our campus about their experience with advocacy and how it could be improved.

Whether you are looking to start a student organization or act as an individual, this document will offer some ideas and guidance on how to get started.

IN SOLIDARITY,

*Caitlin, Dominique, & Emily*





# About Our Toolkit

This toolkit was made in partnership with Connecticut Women's Education and Legal Fund (CWEALF), an organization that advocates for legal accessibility and equitable opportunities for Connecticut women. We have meet with CWEALF many times and participated in their legislative agenda over the past months, which has guided us in our work of creating this document. The information included here is based off of our own experiences and our class readings, as well as outside research.

## Table of Contents

- 1 Welcome From the Authors
- 2 About Our Toolkit and Table of Contents
- 3 A History of Student Activism Movements
- 4 Where to Start Your Activism Journey
- 5 Holding Events and Involving Others
- 6 Examples and Templates
- 7 Legal Rights and Civil Disobedience
- 8 Acknowledgements and Resources



It can be intimidating and overwhelming to begin your journey as an activist, but you can find inspiration and comfort from the decades of student advocates that have come before us. Below are just a few to find courage and hope in!

# A History of Student Activism Movements

## Late 1800s

### Protests Against Abusive Conditions

- Movement Against Cruel Indigenous Boarding Schools
- 1899 Newsboys Strike

## 1960s

### The Civil Rights Movement

- The Children's Crusade of 1963
- Student Sit-Ins at Segregated Restaurants
- Protests Against School Segregation

## 1970s and 1980s

### Peace Movements

- Vietnam War Protests
- Gender Equality Advocacy, including dress code boycotts
- Founding of school Gay-Straight Alliance Clubs



**A Group of Students at a Anti-Segregation Sit-in in North Carolina**

# Where to Start



When you have a deep passion for a social justice issue, it can be difficult to center that passion on a certain action and decide where to begin. Some key concepts to consider are identifying your goals, finding support, and planning kick-off events. Here we offer some first steps to take in your journey as an leader and activist on your campus!

## Starting-off Checklist

- Identify your goal(s). Will you change a policy on your campus, advocate for national change, or provide a safe space for people with similar identities/beliefs?**
- Find a faculty or staff member to guide you through your institution's particular policies and process in starting a student group or organizing a demonstration.**
- Begin planning a kick-off event like a coffee hour or evening discussion to introduce your goals.**
- Create a social media page, post flyers around campus, tell people you know - get as many people interested as possible!**
- Hold your first event and start planning your future actions from there!**

## Where to Find Support

- **Reach out to your on-campus outreach and identity organizations, like cultural groups, the community engagement office, or the women's resource center**
- **Talk to your professors! Even if they can't help, they can likely guide you to someone who can.**
- **Connect with community organizations with similar goals**



# What Events Should I Hold?



## If you want to change a campus policy

- Organize a march around campus
- Draft a petition letter, get signatures, and send it to your administrators
- Write an op-ed for your student newspaper

## If you want to advocate on a local or national level

- If you are near a capital city, attend public hearings and lobbying days
- Organize phone and email banking events where students contact their government representatives

## If you want to foster a safe space for discussion

- Schedule regular meetings to connect as a group
- Plan panel discussions to educate your campus
- Reach out to local organizations to partner on events

**There are a lot of different ways to involve your campus community members. Here are some places to start:**

- Create an email list of members and interested people to share regular updates and meeting times. You can share an online interest form to gather a list of people to send emails to with updates and reminders.
- Design a flyer to post around campus - in the dining hall, outside of dorms, in classroom buildings. We like using Canva to design posters and graphics!
- Manage a social media page to gain followers.
- Ask your professors to share information with their colleagues and other dedicated students.

# Getting People Involved



# Examples from our Experiences!



## Online Interest Form Sample Questions:

- What is your email?
- Please select activities that you would want to participate in (rally, discussion panels, calling your representatives, partnering with community organizations, lobbying at the Capitol)
- What is a good meeting time for you?

**A Message from One of the Authors!**

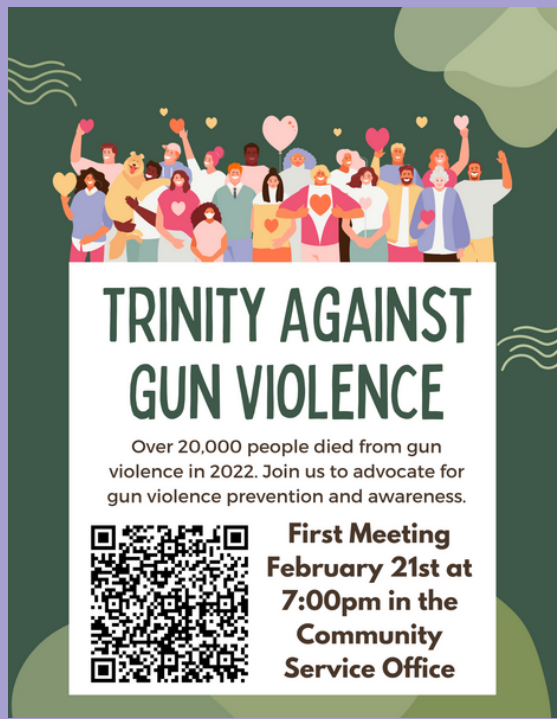
This year, I (Caitlin) have been working to start a gun violence prevention organization at Trinity! Starting a student activism organization definitely takes a lot of dedication, but it is completely worth it when you are able to bring a community of students together to advocate for what you're all passionate about! I've incorporated a lot of what I have learned throughout this year into this toolkit, and I hope that it helps you in your own activism journey. On this page I'm sharing some of the actual posters, Google Forms, and social media posts I've created this year, which I hope will offer some guidance!



# SOCIAL MEDIA

- Post meeting reminders
- Announce events
- Support other organizations!
- Share national and local news updates about your issue
- Gain more interest and members!

# POSTERS



**TIP!**  
 Add QR codes to your posters so people can get more information as they walk by.  
 The one pictured here links to our interest form.



# Your Legal Rights

While we aren't lawyers, we thought it would be important to include a section in this toolkit with some baseline information about your legal rights as a student activist and where to find more details. Of course, a lot of this depends on whether you attend a public or private institution and the specific policies at your school. Be sure to consult professors or administrators who are more familiar with those individual policies. Knowing and exercising your rights (or engaging in civil disobedience) is a very powerful aspect of activism. We hope this helps you get started!



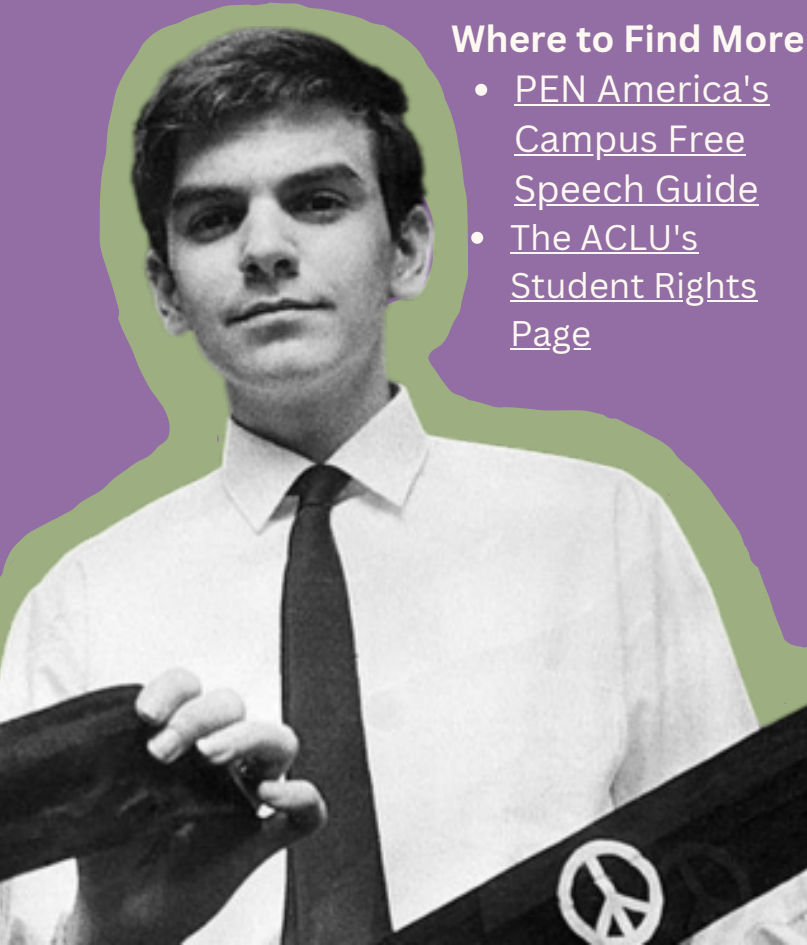
## The Tinker Test:

Your First Amendment rights as a student stem from a 1968 Supreme Court case, *Tinker v. Des Moines*. A group of students, including Mary and John Tinker (pictured below!), wore black armbands to advocate for an end to the Vietnam War and were suspended because of their protest. In this case, the Supreme Court ruled in favor of young people, deciding that students retain their First Amendment rights as long as it does not provide significant disruption to the educational experience of other students.



## Civil Disobedience:

Civil Disobedience is a form of activism in which one consciously breaks a law as a demonstration of protest. While one might face punishment for this, it can be a very powerful form of advocacy, especially if you are working to change a specific policy. Civil Disobedience was a guiding value of the Civil Rights Movement as activists intentionally violated segregation rules.



## Where to Find More

- [PEN America's Campus Free Speech Guide](#)
- [The ACLU's Student Rights Page](#)

# Acknowledgements and Resources

## THANK YOU

to CWEALF for partnering with us this semester and trusting us with this project. Special thanks to our partnership contact Jeniffer Perez Caraballo, CWEALF's Director of Community Organizing, who was always supportive, welcoming, and open to answering all of our questions. Thank you to our instructor Erica Crowley, Trinity's Director of Community Learning, and to all of our peers who answered our college activism survey and discussed their experiences with us. And thank you to anyone who reads this! We hope that it inspires you to start your activism journey and gives you some ideas about where to begin.

**"We write history with our feet  
and with our presence and our  
collective voice and vision...  
Together we are very powerful,  
and we have a seldom-told,  
seldom-remembered history of  
victories and transformations  
that give us confidence that yes,  
we can change the world because  
we have many times before."**

Excerpt from *Hope in the Dark*  
by Rebecca Solnit

## RESOURCES

- CWEALF's 2023 Legislative Change Toolkit
- *Teen Vogue's* "The History of Student Activism in the United States"
- PEN America's Campus Free Speech Guide
- The ACLU's Student Rights Page
- Survey Responses Collected from Trinity College Students
- "Tinker v. Des Moines - Landmark Supreme Court Ruling on Behalf of Student Expression" (ACLU)
- Canva Website and Designs