



Johnathan Smith is Managing Director, Education & Federal Strategic Advocacy at the National Center for Youth Law, where he helps guide the organization’s education advocacy efforts as well as its work to advance civil rights and equal justice for young people on the federal level.

From July 2021 to April 2024, Johnathan served as Deputy Assistant Attorney General in the Civil Rights Division at the U.S. Department of Justice. In that role, he helped oversee the Division’s investigatory, enforcement, and policy efforts. He previously served in the Civil Rights Division as Senior Counsel to the Assistant Attorney General from October 2014 to January 2017.

Johnathan also served in the administration of New York Governor Andrew M. Cuomo from January 2019 to July 2021. During his tenure in New York State government, Johnathan served as the Governor’s Deputy Secretary for Civil Rights and Workforce and as the Interim Commissioner for the New York State Division of Human Rights. He has also previously worked as the Vice President and Legal Director at the MacArthur Justice Center, legal director at Muslim Advocates, a staff attorney at the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, and a litigation associate at Fried Frank Harris Shriver & Jacobson LLP. Johnathan started his legal career as a law clerk to the Honorable Carl E. Stewart of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit.

Johnathan has also previously served as a lecturer at the University of Michigan Law School.

Johnathan is a graduate of Harvard College, the Harvard Graduate School of Education, and NYU School of Law.