

Ex-student of prestigious boarding school awarded \$41.7M after she caught illness on trip to China that left her unable to SPEAK

- **Cara Munn, 20, was 15 when she made class trip to China**
- **She was bit by a tick and caught tick-borne encephalitis, leaving her brain damaged and unable to speak**
- **Hotchkiss School says they're going to appeal jury's decision**

By [Beth Stebner](#) and [Associated Press](#)



Won: A jury awarded former Hotchkiss student Cara Munn, now 20, more than \$40million after a tick-borne illness left her brain damaged and unable to speak

A former student of a prestigious Connecticut boarding school was awarded \$41.7million by a jury after she said she contracted a tick-borne illness on a school trip to China that left her brain damaged and unable to speak.

Cara Munn, now 20, was 15 at the time of the 2007 Hotchkiss School class trip to China. Her attorney said that she was bitten in a remote part of the Asian country.

However, the college preparatory school announced today that it intends to appeal the jury award.

Munn, of New York City, was a ninth-grader at Hotchkiss when she joined a school-supervised trip to China during the summer of 2007, according to her lawsuit.

The then-15-year-old suffered insect bites that led to tick-borne encephalitis, her attorneys said.

The school failed to ensure that the students take any precautions against ticks and allowed them to walk through a densely wooded area known to be a risk area for tick-borne encephalitis and other tick- and insect-transmitted illnesses, her attorneys said.

'Hotchkiss failed to take basic safety precautions to protect the minor children in its care,' Munn's attorney Antonio Ponvert III said.

'I hope that this case will help alert all schools who sponsor overseas trips for minors that they need to check the CDC for disease risks in the areas where they will be traveling, and that they must advise children in their care to use repellent and wear proper clothing when necessary.

'Cara's injuries were easily preventable.'



Prestigious: The Hotchkiss School in Connecticut is a college prep boarding school, costing more than \$45,000 per year in tuition

Attorneys for the school argued that tick-borne encephalitis is such a rare disease that it could not have foreseen a risk and could not be expected to warn Munn or require her to use protection against it.

Hotchkiss officials said they remain very saddened by Munn's illness and hope for improvements to her health.

'We care deeply about all our students,' the school said in a statement. 'We make every effort to protect them, whether they are here or participating in a school-sponsored activity off-campus.'

'We put great care and thought into planning and administering off-campus programs, and we extend the same care to students on these trips as to students on campus.'

Historically, Hotchkiss students have undertaken study, service projects and travel in the United States and throughout the world and derived great benefit from the opportunities, the school said.

The case lasted eight days, and the jury deliberated for about eight hours before returning their verdict.

Room and board for the college preparatory school was \$46,775 for the 2012-2013 school year, not including laundry, health, and technology fees.

It has one of the largest endowments in the country.