

Advocates for Children of New York, Inc.

Queens Council Developmental Disabilities Council May 1, 2017

Advocates for Children serves New York City students from birth through age 26, focusing on students from low-income backgrounds who are struggling in school or experiencing school discrimination of any kind, including suspensions, inappropriate class placement, or denial of necessary services.

SERVICES OFFERED

- Jill Chaifetz' Education Helpline: 1 866-427-6033, Monday - Thursday, 10 AM-4PM
- Web assistance: info@advocatesforchildren.org
- Direct case assistance, workshops and impact litigation.
- Publications: Newsletter x3/year and a monthly Blackboard Bulletins

OUTREACH THROUGH WORKSHOPS AND MATERIALS

In effort to reach more families, we have started to provide borough-wide workshops – 2 in the Bronx this year on the topic of Special Education 101. We are looking to partner with a CBO to offer workshops of interest in the other boroughs as well.

We have been working closely with immigrant families, especially in light of concerns that have arisen with a new political climate

Regarding our guides and information sheets, we are working to provide more of our materials in different languages to better inform families new to NY of the educational process and their rights. We now have some of our materials in Arabic, Bengali, Chinese, French, Haitian-Creole, Russian, Spanish, Urdu

We are developing pod casts available for free download or streaming on our web site. Currently the pod casts address the topics of enrolling in schools, the high school application process and promotion policy in both English and Spanish and will be available in Chinese in the near future.

AFC ACTIVITIES

Work on important the transition points for students with disabilities: Early Intervention (EI) to the Committee on Preschool Education, from the Committee on Preschool Special Education (CPSE) to the Committee on Special Education (CSE) at Turning5 and from CSE to adulthood

Our Early Childhood Education project works closely with the DOE on the Turning 5 transition (including the Kindergarten application process) informing them of problems that arise and monitoring concerns brought to us by families.

Transition to adulthood: REACH/Resources for Employment, Access, Community living and Hope. AFC is part of a grant with parent centers from 7 northeast states addressing the issue of transition to adulthood.

Diploma Options: AFC first raised the concern regarding the term “IEP Diploma” when calls from families made it clear families did not understand that this was not a true diploma, but rather a certificate. We now lead a state-wide coalition called the Coalition for Multiple Pathways to a Diploma that advocates for alternative ways to earn a Regents or local diploma which would include superintendent’s determination and performance based assessments.

School Discipline: AFC has contributed to and monitored changes to the Discipline Code. In the course of providing students representation at suspension hearings, we have been instrumental in reducing student days suspended by over 6438 days for this past fiscal year. The DOE just issued a revised version of the Discipline Code, which, among other things, makes it harder to suspend children in grades k-2. We will be putting out information summarizing the changes in the near future.

WORK OF THE ARISE COALITION, www.arisecoalition.org:

The Coalition (a group of organizations and individuals interested in special education and coordinated by AFC) focuses on education policy related to students with disabilities in NYC. Over the past year, the Coalition has been addressing the issues of the physical accessibility in schools, literacy for all students, (AFC policy report “A is for All: Meeting the Literacy Needs of Students with and without Disabilities in the NYC Public Schools”) and the increased use of assistive technology for students to better access the curriculum.

AFC continues to run the NYS Technical and Education Assistance Center for Homeless Students (NYSTEACH). They have worked successfully to get bus service for students in homeless shelters expanded – formerly the service was only available if an appropriate route existed.

Issues addressed through our Impact Litigation activities:

- The use of Functional Behavioral Assessments (FBA’s) Behavior Intervention Plans to address students with behavioral needs.
- The availability of [free or reduced-cost meals](#) for students placed in non-public schools to meet their special needs.
- The timely [evaluation, placement and services](#) to be provided to all NYC students with disabilities.
- Addressing the issue of [push-out of high school students](#) at several NYC high schools.
- Identifying and addressing the DOE’s failure to [implement impartial hearing orders](#) for students with disabilities.
- Ensuring that [children with disabilities who have been suspended](#) or are receiving other school-related discipline are provided with the education to which they are entitled during their absence from school.
- Fighting for the implementation of procedures to ensure the timely placement of students returning to NYC schools from [juvenile justice settings](#).