Overview of Achievements 2018-2019

The Long Island Advocacy Center (LIAC) assists families in ensuring their legal rights in the public education system on Long Island. An area of great need surrounds the educational issues of English Language Learners. Our advocacy has been focused on this population and this year we have addressed this need via parent training that served to inform, educate, and provide individual advocacy for immigrant parents and families that significantly helped to improve the educational opportunities, graduation rates, and transitional support for students who are English Language Learners. LIAC continues our training initiative aimed at developing the advocacy skills of youth. Another high priority initiative revolves around the significant differences in the proportion of culturally and linguistically diverse students who are receiving special education services in more restrictive or segregated programs. Our advocacy also focuses on excessive incidence, duration, and types of disciplinary actions, including suspensions and expulsions, experienced by these students as well. Throughout the year LIAC has helped thousands of children and families.

Attorney and Education Advocate services included:

- Five hundred thirty-two (532) brief service; legal counsel and advice or limited action.
- Twenty six (26) students received negotiated settlements without litigation.
- Seventeen (17) students received litigated settlements, and
- One (1) student received a positive administrative agency decision.
- Four thousand seven hundred ninety (4,790) school age children in Nassau and Suffolk Counties received non-litigated advocacy.

Specific case outcomes include:

- Two hundred thirty (280) students avoided, delayed or reduced the length of their suspensions.
- Forty-seven (47) school age children overcame a barrier to enrollment in school.
- Fifty-three (53) students avoided an inappropriate special education classification.
- Two thousand one hundred two (2,102) students with disabilities obtained an individualized educational program and/or appropriate services consistent with special education law.
- Twenty-one (21) students obtained a correction of their school records.
- Two thousand two hundred eighty (2,280) youth obtained advice and counsel on an education matter.
- Five hundred seventy-six (576) school age children obtained non-litigation advocacy services on an education matter.
- Seven (7) youth received a reversal of an illegal suspension from school.

Population Served: Low Income Children and Families

Area Served: Nassau and Suffolk Counties

Total Funding: $1,934,479

Total IOLA Grant: $200,000

Staffing - Full Time Equivalents:

- Total Staff: 22.20
- Lawyers: 3.60
- Paralegals: 14.60
- Other: 4.00
A 16-year-old female student attended a private school for 9th and 10th grades where, according to her mother, she had been racially targeted and the mother feared that a traumatic incident had occurred. Following the student’s return to her home district, she began to display negative behaviors including verbal aggression and physical violence. She began to miss school, her grades suffered, and school disciplinary incidents increased. Unfortunately, the private school refused to release this student’s school records to the parent, LIAC or the school, claiming that a contractual agreement had been broken. As a result, there was no way of knowing just how close this 11th grade student was to meeting the requirements for graduation or what accommodations her 504 plan had provided. LIAC recommended a referral to the Committee on Special Education for evaluations to help identify the student’s abilities and needs, and gave the parent was contact information for OCR to present her claims of racial discrimination and receipt of her private school records. A CSE Meeting was held and the student was found eligible for the District’s new alternative program which provided smaller class sizes and a structured environment where ultimately, the student was successful. In March, LIAC received an email from the mother stating that her daughter is expected to graduate in June. After that, she plans to attend a CUNY school in September for two years, leading to a spot at John Jay College of Criminal Justice.

A LIAC advocate began working with student in May 2017 through the PINS Diversion Program. The school social worker wrote an entire page describing the student as one of the most incorrigible students she had ever seen and school had done everything possible: called CPS, suspended her multiple times, etc. LIAC assisted the parent with the CSE process, appropriate evaluations, a goal driven IEP, and developed creative and collaborative thinking with the CSE administrators. The District provided home instruction as an interim placement pending a therapeutic school placement. Additionally, they agreed to provide her access to online credit recovery program for credits she was deficient in from past years. She ended up earning 11 credits in one year, and applied for the Floyd Academy for her senior year. She was accepted pending her performance and attendance at the summer school program. She had perfect attendance at the summer program, earned more credits, and started Floyd Academy in September 2018. Amber graduated a semester early in January 2019. She applied to and has been accepted at Suffolk Community College where she plans to study psychology or social work.
Number of People Benefitted by Services Other Than Direct Legal Representation

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service</th>
<th>Number</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>23,841 people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Legal Education</td>
<td>1,951 people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pro Se Assistance</td>
<td>255 people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online Outreach</td>
<td>21,635 people</td>
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Other Legal Related Services: Overview

Most LIAC trainings include PowerPoint presentations, and handouts with information on education law and advocacy techniques. This information enables individuals who otherwise do not have access to knowledge about their rights in the education process the tools necessary to ensure that their children receive the educational services they require. This year, a total of one thousand seven hundred fifty-one (1751) individuals including: parents, school personnel, human service agency providers, and attorneys, received training on laws affecting students with disabilities. Topics presented included: Building Effective Educational Teams, Discipline Regulations, Effective Communication and Communities of Practice, IDEA, Legal Issues in Special Education, Parent Member Training, Preparing for Your Annual Review, Testing Students with Disabilities, The CSE Process, Transitioning from CPSE to CSE, Transitioning to the Adult World. LIAC has provided support for parents of English Language Learners via trainings for immigrant parents regarding the legal educational rights to which their children are entitled. The trainings were led by bilingual education advocates in conjunction with skilled interpreters, in the families’ native language. Additionally, emphasis continues to be placed on Transitioning to Adulthood, in both English and Spanish since school districts are often out of compliance with the requirements of IDEA and the Part 200 Regulations.

Other Legal Related Services: Examples

LIAC provides Community Legal Education on an ongoing basis. Examples include:

1. “Know Your Rights in Schools” - a series of presentations in Spanish provided in several different communities (Hempstead, Uniondale, Huntington, Patchogue, Wyandanch) covering Residency/Enrollment, Special Education Process, Rights of English Language Learners, and Bullying.

2. LIAC presented to staff at South Oaks Hospital staff on the CSE Process, Special Education, and Mental Health Issues in Schools.

3. LIAC presented to staff of Nassau Department of Social Services Child Protection Staff on Residency, Suspension and Special Education laws.
**Significant Collaborations**

LIAC has continued a significant collaboration with the Suffolk County Probation Department this year by providing education advocacy and attorney representation for at-risk and court involved youth. Through our collaboration with the AFY (Alternatives for Youth), PINS Diversion and JD programs, LIAC has been able to significantly impact the educational services for these youth. LIAC ensures that our students receive appropriate educational evaluations and appropriate educational services and programs. LIAC represents youth facing out of school suspensions, and compels schools to provide appropriate interventions instead of excluding them from school. Our work in this area prevents youth from being sent to Family Court on a PINS petition for truancy, incorrigibility or parent PINS allegations. In addition, our work with JD cases impacts sentencing, including preventing out of home placements and prevents violations of probation. The Raise the Age legislation has led to an increase in our caseloads of JD clients this year. Similarly, LIAC collaborates with the Nassau County Department of Social Services, the lead agency for the Nassau County PINS Diversion program. Here, as in Suffolk, LIAC is able to divert cases from Family Court by advocating for appropriate educational services, and by defending students accused of school misconduct at school disciplinary hearings. LIAC extended our collaboration with the New York Civil Liberties Union in both Nassau and Suffolk this year regarding education issues. Specifically, LIAC has participated in the NYCLU-Suffolk Chapter Pathways to Racial and Education Equity Mentoring Program. Here, a LIAC attorney provides ongoing trainings in education law to NYCLU volunteer mentors. This program is meant to leverage support to parents experiencing obstacles in obtaining appropriate educational services at their public schools. In addition, LIAC collaborates with NYCLU on individual cases regarding education issues. LIAC has also been a member of the Suffolk County Access to Justice Committee of the Permanent Commission on Access to Justice. Our involvement includes participation on the task force in Suffolk County to ensure that low income families have access to legal advocacy and representation. LIAC plans to ensure that educational issues are included in Suffolk’s plan. LIAC has also been part of the planning and implementation of the Community Legal Help Project. Other ongoing collaborations this year include ACCES-VR, Asperger’s and High Functioning Autism of NYS, EAC Dispute Resolution, Empire Justice Center, Long Island Language Access Coalition, OPWDD, SEQA, NYSDRA, NYS DCDT and The Self Advocacy Association of NYS (Long Island Chapter).

**Technology and Other Innovations**

Our website, [www.theliac.org](http://www.theliac.org), is running quite successfully, and receives thousands of hits. Our site is updated regularly by a member of our staff, and answers to frequently asked questions regarding Education Law can be found there. Intakes can be completed via the website as well. If a case needs to be opened, it is referred to the appropriate advocate. The link to information regarding IEP development and other education advocacy concerns in Spanish is well visited. Clients have access to our agency email, and can post questions of personal interest onto a secure site. In addition, our "newsfeed" directly links our social media page to our website. This link offers the most up to date disability related articles, current events, and notifications from NYSED and the federal government. It allows individuals who are not on social media the same access to information as those who are. We provide an average of 40 posts on social media monthly reaching almost 2,000 individuals. LIAC reports regularly to a number of funding sources. All reporting is delivered electronically. Currently, client intakes are performed via a computer program entitled “FileMaker Pro.” Plans to update our intake system are in process.
Pro Bono Volunteer Involvement

Law Students from local law schools routinely work at LIAC as interns and externs. LIAC participates in Job Fairs at the local law schools to recruit new interns. In addition, LIAC has postings in the Career Centers at the law schools. Potential interns are interviewed by LIAC attorneys, and once hired, law students assist LIAC in expanding our mission to reach greater numbers of clients. Interns are trained by LIAC attorneys in basic Education Law and have the opportunity to shadow LIAC attorneys. Under the supervision of LIAC attorneys, law students assist with research, client interviews, client follow-up, outreach and trainings. Similarly, LIAC’s volunteer attorneys assist with intakes and participate in trainings on education law and regulations. LIAC attorneys also provide information and technical assistance to pro bono attorneys. LIAC attorneys provide trainings to volunteer attorneys who want to learn Education Law. LIAC attorneys participate in the Bar Associations of Nassau and Suffolk Counties, Education Subcommittees. In addition, LIAC attorneys act as a resource to the Attorneys for the Child in Family Court cases where education issues can impact the case.

Pro Bono Statistics

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Sources Of Funding

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<td>Other:</td>
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<td>TOTAL</td>
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