

ABOUT US

Community Legal Aid

is a non-profit organization that provides free civil legal services to low-income and elderly residents of Central and Western Massachusetts.

Community Legal Aid's Education Law Unit

Community Legal Aid's Education Law Unit helps students from low-income families who are having problems in school access the education to which they are legally entitled. We provide legal assistance with several issues, including special education, school discipline, bullying, language access, and protections for students experiencing homelessness.

CLA also aims to help students and their parents or guardians know their education-related legal rights through community presentations to parents, students, and social service agency staff.

Learn more:

WWW.COMMUNITYLEGAL.ORG



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KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

EDUCATION LAW



WE ARE YOUR ADVOCATES





Is your child struggling in school?

- ❓ Do you think your child should be eligible for special education but their school disagrees?
- ❓ Does your child receive special education services but you don't know if they are really making progress?
- ❓ Does your child's school frequently call you and ask you to pick your child up early due to behavior concerns?
- ❓ Is your child facing suspension or expulsion from school?
- ❓ Is your child not receiving education services that they are entitled to (the school isn't following their IEP)?
- ❓ Is the school district where you live not allowing you to enroll your child in school?
- ❓ Is your child being bullied or harassed at school?
- ❓ Is the school not communicating with you in your native language?
- ❓ Is your child homeless and the school is denying them enrollment, transportation, or special education services?

All children in Massachusetts have certain rights when it comes to education. These rights are protected by both state and federal laws.

For example, if your child receives special education:

- They have additional protections when it comes to school discipline. The school must reevaluate your child at least once every three years (but can reevaluate more often if needed).
- If you don't agree with the school's evaluation, you have the right to get an independent evaluation at the school's expense.
- You can accept or reject your child's IEP in whole or in part.
- If you reject some or all of your child's IEP, including placement, the school should meet with you to try to resolve your concerns.
- The school must educate your child in the least restrictive environment (to the maximum extent appropriate with non-disabled peers), but sometimes a child needs a different pro-program in order to make progress.

Our Education Unit is a knowledgeable, caring group of attorneys and advocates who can help you with your concerns about your child's education.

We listen and advocate for the services that will help your child succeed. We will help you understand your child's right to a *free appropriate public education*.

We represent clients from preschool through high school graduation (some clients are eligible for special education services until they turn 21, but we do not represent college students). Our services are completely *free*.

What we do:

- Request/review your child's school records.
- Provide legal advice on what the school is legally required to do.
- Attend school meetings with you to advocate for your child.
- Ensure the school is providing the services and accommodations in your child's IEP or 504 plan and advocate for additional supports if appropriate.
- Represent your child at suspension or expulsion hearings.
- Address bullying issues that impact your child at school.
- Ensure that the school is translating and interpreting information so that you can understand it.

