

MASSACHUSETTS ADVOCATES *for* CHILDREN



Changing conditions for many . . . Helping one at a time.

Massachusetts Advocates for Children is a private non-profit organization dedicated to being an independent and effective voice for children who face significant barriers to equal educational and life opportunities. MAC works to overcome these barriers by changing conditions for many children, while also helping one child at a time.

For over 30 years, MAC has responded to the needs of children who are vulnerable because of poverty, race, limited English or disability.

MAC 2005 Highlights

Changing Conditions for Many

- ◆ MAC played the lead role in the state **mobilizing parents and legislators** to stop the Department of Education from implementing changes in the special education regulations that would have eroded key rights and protections for children with disabilities.
- ◆ MAC's Trauma and Learning Policy Initiative released a landmark report and policy agenda, *Helping Traumatized Children Learn*, endorsed by state education leaders and trauma experts, and reviewed favorably in a Boston Globe editorial. The report is being distributed to educators, policy makers and advocates, statewide and nationally. It offers a "flexible framework" that enables schools to create trauma-sensitive environments and to support classroom teachers to help children overcome learning and behavior problems due to trauma.
- ◆ MAC successfully advocated with the Massachusetts legislature to expand the "**safe and supportive learning environment**" **grant program**, under the leadership of Rep. Alice Wolf. Framingham received one of the grants and is adapting the "flexible framework" in *Helping Traumatized Children Learn* to all schools in its district. Twenty other grants were made to schools throughout the state.

(over)

- ◆ Through the Boston School Reform project, MAC has continued its strong advocacy with the Boston Public Schools to **improve parent involvement**. Its advocacy with Boston Parents Organizing Network led to the creation of 15 new positions for family and community outreach coordinators, the separation of the family engagement from the school assignment function, and the restoration of six positions in the department of family and community engagement that the administration tried to cut.
- ◆ The Boston School Reform project is also organizing Latino parent groups in East Boston and South Boston, and is conducting training on special education to Latino parents in Jamaica Plain, in conjunction with MAC's special education attorneys, BPON and City Life/Urbana Vida.
- ◆ The Boston School Reform project has organized community leaders into the **Community Partners for a New Superintendent** which has met with the mayor and school committee chair to seek input into the recruitment and selection process of a new superintendent. MAC is also working closely with Hubie Jones to support the **Citizen Commission on Academic Success for Boston Children** that he has formed to critically assess reform efforts in the Boston schools and provide recommendations to the new superintendent.
- ◆ MAC successfully advocated with the legislature to pass a bill directing the administration to seek a **children's autism Medicaid waiver** which would provide Medicaid reimbursement for in-home intensive behavioral services for children with autism spectrum disorder.

Helping One at a Time (through 11/15/05)

- ◆ MAC responded to 538 parents and others through its **intake** line. We opened 20 cases for **full representation** through our staff in the Somerville Special Education Action Project, the Autism Special Education Legal Support Center, and in partnership with the Harvard Law School's Hale and Dorr Legal Support Center. We **referred** 109 parents for case representation or brief advice to legal services or pro bono attorneys and advocates.
- ◆ MAC provided 54 **trainings** to 804 parents on topics related to autism, MCAS, special education, discipline, and trauma and learning. MAC provided 22 **trainings** to 616 attorneys, advocates, educators, health professionals and others on topics related to autism, the McKinney-Vento homeless assistance act, special education and trauma and learning.