

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 2006 Highlights

- ◆ The state legislature passed a number of important bills that MAC played a lead advocacy role in, including the following:
 - A new \$2 million Concurrent Enrollment for Students with Disabilities line-item that would enable young adults, age 18-21, with severe disabilities to attend classes in community and state colleges with their non-disabled peers while still attending school and receiving special education services.
 - A new Autism IEP bill that requires all IEP Teams to consider and *specifically address* the full range of a child's complex needs resulting from Autism Spectrum Disorder, including verbal and nonverbal communication needs, sensory needs, social needs, academic needs, and the need for positive behavioral services. This bill has the potential for being a national model to help ensure the provision of state-of-the-art supports and services designed to enable children with ASD reach their full potential.
 - A \$2 million appropriation to the state Division of Autism to implement the Children's Autism Medicaid Waiver that will maximize federal reimbursement for intensive in-home services, critical to support children diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder in their homes and communities.

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- A second year of \$1.25 million for the Alternative Education bill which includes a grant program for “safe and supportive learning environments” to schools that will create “trauma-sensitive” environments as described in MAC’s 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. Over 7000 books have been distributed to educators, policy makers and advocates, statewide and nationally. The report was the centerpiece of a statewide conference held by the Department of Education in May on, “Removing Trauma as a Barrier to Learning,” attended by over 200 educators who met also by region to discuss ways to create a trauma-sensitive environment in their school.

- ◆ MAC has been deeply engaged with advocacy efforts to assure a community voice in the selection of a new superintendent for the Boston Public Schools in the following ways:
 - We have played a lead role on the membership and staff of the Citizen Commission on the Academic Success for Boston Children, headed by MAC founder, Hubie Jones. The report, *Transforming the Boston Public Schools: A Roadmap for the New Superintendent*, was released on June 27 and makes an urgent call for transformative change and greater accountability and transparency in order to close the achievement gaps, reduce the drop-out rate, and achieve excellence for all students.

 - We initiated and are staffing Community Partners for a New Superintendent, a diverse group of over 30 community leaders who developed a set of guidelines and hiring criteria that they presented in meetings with the mayor, school committee chair, and the search firm. One of its members was selected to serve on the official Search Committee.

- ◆ MAC published a manual for advocates, *The Educational Rights of Children Affected by Homelessness and/or Domestic Violence*, which covers special education, educational rights under the McKinney Vento Homeless Assistance Act, shelter rights and restraining orders. As such, it is of value to a broad swath of legal services and private attorneys who practice in the fields of housing, benefits, family law and education. The manual was distributed to legal service offices and family shelters across Massachusetts, as well as many community groups.

- ◆ MAC provided technical assistance, advice, referrals and/or case representation for the 630 children on whose behalf their parents or other care givers called MAC’s intake HelpLine.