



THE AUTISM CENTER

MASSACHUSETTS ADVOCATES *for* CHILDREN

ANNUAL HIGHLIGHTS • DECEMBER 2018

In 2018, the Autism Center...

Provided **legal assistance and advice** to **375 parents** of children with autism, with over half from **Latino and immigrant communities**, and **specialized workshops** for **over 600** parents, medical professionals, youth, and educators.

- Conducted a successful advocacy campaign to address **transition needs of older students**, resulting in a funding appropriation of **\$1.7 million** to support **access to higher education** for older youth with autism and intellectual disabilities.
- Advocated successfully to **increase state approved rates for the expert evaluations** that are critically important to address the complex needs of children with autism and other disabilities, helping to level the playing field for low- and middle-income families unable to exercise their special education due process rights.



- Successfully advocated for a **new state advisory** focused on addressing the **communication needs of students requiring AAC**, emphasizing the importance of AAC evaluations, devices, and services for children with autism and other disabilities.

- Published a new **“Ask a Self-Advocate” blog series**, written by one of MAC’s **Young Adult Leader Fellows**, who shares his transition experiences as a young autistic man with tips regarding **IEP meetings, transition, and self-advocacy**.



- Led advocacy to enact legislation **establishing a state Task Force** to make recommendations regarding the training and certification of **interpreters in educational settings**, essential to provide **language access** for parents of children with autism and other disabilities.



- Led advocacy efforts to obtain **\$5 million** in funding for the **Children’s Autism Medicaid Waiver**, providing services to over 300 children with autism from low-income families who are **at risk of institutionalization**.

Thank you for your support!

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Believing in potential: Jomar

Jomar* is a 21-year-old Filipino student with autism and other disabilities. When he came to the Autism Center's attention, he'd been intermittently hospitalized over the course of a year for various physical ailments, where his "treatment" included **isolation and chemical and physical restraints**. Due to his limited communication skills, he resorted to **violence and self-injurious behavior** to express his pain and frustration. At one point, he refused food and showed serious signs of **starvation**. He was disengaged and almost non-verbal, although he did tell one doctor: **"I feel sad."**

Jomar's school addressed his behavior by **isolating him in a padded room** and failing to provide services necessary to prevent these behaviors in the future. Despite their own progress reports showing that Jomar was losing skills, the school **never modified his IEP** or addressed his need for services. In addition, the school erroneously listed the family's home language as English rather than Tagalog and did not provide **interpreter and translation services** as required by law – **leaving them in the dark about the mistreatment of their son**.

The Autism Center attorneys provided **intensive advocacy**, working with **language access and autism experts**, attending **IEP meetings**, and proceeding before the **Bureau of Special Education Appeals**. Our advocacy allowed Jomar to transfer from the hospital to a **new school**, where he has regained many of his lost verbal and social skills and will receive additional **special education** services after he turns 22 to make up for lost time.

Today, Jomar is happy and healthy. He is once again included as a part of the community, spending time with his family, and even attended his high school prom. **Thanks to your support, Jomar is reaching his potential - and he and his family can finally breathe a sigh of relief.**



Celebrating 50 years of removing barriers:

MAC's 50th anniversary campaign fund

In anticipation of our 50th anniversary in 2019, MAC is launching a special campaign to raise new revenue to strengthen our leadership role in the decades to come. MAC has changed thousands of lives over the past 50 years with a small team of passionate advocates and an even smaller budget. As the political landscape continues to change and impact the vulnerable children we fight for, we need your support.

We hope you will join us in celebrating 50 years of removing barriers by considering a **supplemental gift** to the Autism Center for our campaign fund: simply check the box on your enclosed envelope to designate your gift.



Pictured: Jomar (center) with his family at his school prom

Brighten a child's future.

A gift in any amount to the **Friends of the Autism Center** helps us give children hope.

Become a member with a gift of **\$250 or more**.

www.massadvocates.org/friends

All donations are tax deductible.

**Name changed to protect privacy.*

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