



*Championing laws, policies and rights
for children with autism.*

With your support, the Autism Center brightens futures for students by advocating for individual children and improving systemic policy. Your gift changes lives...

Justice for Armando

How your support provided essential services, language access, and inclusion for a child with autism

Armando* is a creative, playful little boy with autism who was out of school without any special education services when his mother, Isabel, contacted MAC. Isabel immigrated to the United States from the Dominican Republic and speaks only Spanish. She secured early intervention services for Armando at a young age so that he could develop social and communication skills during his critical early years. But those services ended when Armando turned three.



Federal and state law – laws that MAC has helped to create, expand, and protect – require school districts to ensure a smooth transition from early intervention services to public school. Although Isabel submitted a referral for these services well ahead of time, the school lost the paperwork and never followed up with Isabel about services for Armando. When Isabel reached out to the school district, she was told that Armando would be placed on a waitlist—a *clear violation of the law*. A delay in services for Armando could have a long-term negative impact on his development and future opportunities.

Concerned about her son, Isabel reached out to MAC’s Autism Center. The Autism Center attorney effectively advocated with the district, and as a result **Armando was placed in an early childhood classroom** with the services he needed to succeed. We also successfully advocated for the school to provide additional education services to make up for the delay.

“I didn’t know what rights Armando had and I was very confused about what the next steps were...

He is in an inclusive classroom now and is doing well, thanks to MAC’s help.”

–Armando’s mom

But Armando and his mother continued to face barriers. The Autism Center’s Spanish-speaking attorney attended IEP meetings with Armando’s mother, who was unable to fully participate in the meetings due to the district’s unqualified interpreter. MAC filed a complaint and the state ruled that the district was out of compliance, and ordered the district to address its process for assigning interpreters to team meetings with all of their staff.

Because of you, the system was changed. MAC’s Autism Center received justice for Armando – today, he spends

half of his school day in an inclusive classroom, where he is gaining communication, social, and pre-academic skills. His special education team is working towards full inclusion. We also ignited a cultural shift at Armando’s school so they would be more supportive and inclusive of other children with autism and non-English speaking families. **Your support changes the lives of countless children like Armando who need us on their side.**

*Names changed to protect privacy.

MAC’s 2017 Impact[±]



1,129 Calls

Our Helpline staff & volunteers empowered families to advocate for their children.



33 Cases

MAC represented low income children in 2017 to help them get access to services they needed to achieve.



6 Priorities

We advanced equal education policy for children at the statehouse and in Boston Public Schools in six priority areas.

[±]12 mos. ending 11/27/17

Autism Center's 2017 Annual Accomplishments for Children with Autism

- Provided **legal assistance and advice to over 420 parents** experiencing difficulty obtaining necessary special education services for their children with autism, with almost one third of these parents from Latino and other immigrant communities.
- Provided **legal representation and intensive legal technical assistance to 81** children with autism whose families called the Center's helpline, with one half of the families from Latino, Haitian, Asian, African, and other immigrant communities.
- Provided **specialized workshops for over 900 parents, medical professionals, and educators, including webinars** targeting Spanish-speaking families and professionals working with these families.
- Successfully led advocacy campaign resulting in the state's overdue launch of new **Medicaid coverage for non-dedicated AAC devices and software, including tablets such as iPads.**
- Advocated successfully with the state Board of Education to **expand availability of the new Autism Endorsement to general education teachers.**
- Led advocacy efforts with the state Office of Medicaid to fully implement coverage of ABA services, benefiting **over 2,000 low-income children** this year, working closely with the Autism Insurance Resource Center and Massachusetts Law Reform Institute.
- Advocated to address transition needs of older students, resulting in **\$1.4 million in state funding to increase access to higher education for older youth with autism and intellectual disabilities**, with over 200 students included on college campuses this year. In addition, the state's **first inclusive resident life initiative was successfully launched**, as Bridgewater State University fully included two students with autism in dormitory living.
- Secured an agreement by the **Lawrence Public Schools to move the first 12 children with autism from its segregated special education school to regular education elementary and middle schools**, implementing the first stage of its inclusion initiative with simultaneous hiring of autism inclusion experts and input from the parent group.
- Launched a **new Latino and Special Education Coalition**, comprised of attorneys and advocates focused on language access, special education, and rights of undocumented students and families who have children with autism and other disabilities.
- Led a new statewide advocacy campaign focused on **legislation to establish standards for interpreters working in school settings, to ensure language access** for immigrant families.
- Launched with our partners Boston ICAN for 25 Boston Public School seniors with autism and other disabilities to receive career exploration and skill development with seven major employers (including CVS and State Street) as part of MAC's **B-SET for Career Network.**
- Continued to **successfully support Young Adult Leader Fellows at MAC**, who provide youth, parents, educators, and legislators with vital information about the potential of individuals with autism and other disabilities.

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.



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