

Long Island Advocacy Center, Inc.

Overview of Achievements, 2016-2017

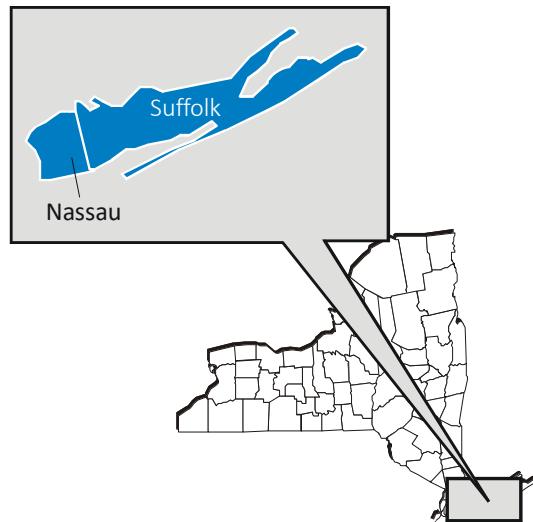
The Long Island Advocacy Center (LIAC) assists families in ensuring their legal rights in the public education system on Long Island. An area of great need surrounds the educational issues of English Language Learners. Our advocacy has been focused on this population and we propose to address this need via parent training that will inform, educate, and provide individual advocacy for immigrant parents and families that will help to improve the educational opportunities, graduation rates, and transitional support for students who are English Language Learners. Many students face barriers that put them at risk for not graduating from high school and even worse, ending up in the Juvenile Justice System. In addition to affecting their present quality of life this greatly diminishes their chances for becoming contributing members of society. The latter is at great cost to them, their families and to society. We continue to advance our goal of engaging youth in self-advocacy. As such, LIAC continues our training initiative aimed at developing the advocacy skills of youth. Another high priority initiative revolves around the significant differences in the proportion of culturally and linguistically diverse students who are receiving special education services in more restrictive or segregated programs. Our advocacy also focuses on excessive incidence, duration, and types of disciplinary actions, including suspensions and expulsions, experienced by these students as well. Throughout the year LIAC has helped thousands of children and families.

Generally our services included:

- Four thousand twenty four (4024) school age children in Nassau and Suffolk Counties received brief service; legal counsel and advice or limited action.
- Six hundred forty eight (648) students received negotiated settlements without litigation.
- Two hundred three (203) students received litigated settlements.
- Thirty eight (38) students received a positive administrative agency decision.

Specific case outcomes include:

- Two hundred twenty eight (228) students avoided, delayed or reduced the length of their suspensions.
- Six (6) school age children overcame a barrier to enrollment in school.
- Fifty eight (58) students avoided an inappropriate special education classification.
- One thousand five hundred seventy seven (1577) students with disabilities obtained an individualized educational program and/or appropriate services consistent with special education law.
- Twenty four (24) students obtained a correction of their school records.
- Two thousand one hundred fifty seven youth (2157) obtained advice and counsel on an education matter.
- Six hundred four (604) school age children obtained non-litigation advocacy services on an education matter.
- One hundred ninety two (192) students received a referral on an education matter.
- Forty six (46) obtained another benefit on an education matter.
- Twenty one (21) youth received a reversal of an illegal suspension from school.



This Provider At a Glance

Population Served: Low Income Children and Families

Area Served: Nassau and Suffolk Counties

Total Funding: \$1,662,622

Total IOLA Grant: \$90,000

Staffing - Full Time Equivalents

Total Staff: 22.60

Lawyers: 4.40

Paralegals: 13.10

Other Staff: 5.10

Types of Services Provided

Direct Civil Legal Representation

Brief Services

Extended Services

Hotlines and Other Phone-Based Services

Technology and Other Innovations

Community Legal Education

Pro Se Assistance

Collaborations With Other Service Providers

Major Cases or Other Advocacy Projects



Outcomes...

19,652 Individuals Benefited from 4,913 Closed Direct Civil Legal Cases

Extended Representation Outcomes

- 7,840 People benefited from extended representation

Brief Representation Benefits

- 8,628 People benefited from legal advice and counsel
- 2,416 People benefited from non-litigation advocacy services
- 768 People benefited by referral to other sources of help

Examples...

Outcomes for Clients

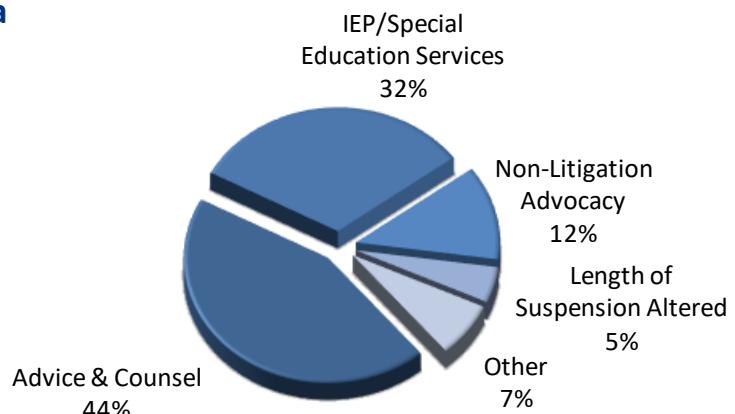
LIAC has been working with a student since the summer of 2015. At the time, she was experiencing significant anxiety which manifested not only in school phobia, but also an inability to even leave her house or her room. When LIAC started working with this family, the student had not attended school in over a year. The district called CPS on the parent several times, made harassing unannounced home visits, and on several occasions, told the parent that her daughter desperately needed psychiatric hospitalization. Not once did the district refer this student to the Committee on Special Education nor did they appropriately respond to the parent's request for help.

One of LIAC's attorneys submitted a NYSED complaint on behalf of the parent and a LIAC advocate started to work the CSE process. During the remainder of the 2016 school year, the student was found eligible for Special Education services and was placed on Home Instruction through the CSE as recommended by the district's psychiatrist. Subsequently, with intervention by the LIAC advocate, the CSE recommended a program for this student which was close to their home, very small in size (20 students in the entire school), and therapeutic in nature. The student was accepted into this program, the family toured the building, and the CSE reconvened to make this her official IEP placement.

After almost three years of not being inside any school building for an education, this student actually started to attend school in her new placement. Since February 2017, the student has had consistent weekly attendance at school, received a 94 on her English midterm, and has even participated in school field trips. She has learned significant coping skills, gained insight and awareness into her anxiety, and is learning how to manage her feelings. Three years ago she would not even leave her room. And now? She is going to school, getting good grades, making new friends, and doing things any typical teenager would do.

Breakdown of Cases by Legal Problem Area

	People	Cases
Total	19,652	4,913
Advice & Counsel	8,628	2,157
IEP/Special Education Services	6,308	1,577
Non-Litigation Advocacy	2,416	604
Length of Suspension Altered	912	228
Other	1,388	347



Other Services

Technology and Other Innovations

The Long Island Advocacy Center's website, www.theliac.org, is running quite successfully, and it gets approximately 70,000 hits per year. Our site is updated regularly by a member of our staff, and answers to frequently asked questions regarding Education Law can be found there. Clients have access to our agency email, and can post questions of personal interest onto a secure site. Intakes can be completed via the website as well. If a case needs to be opened, it is referred to the appropriate advocate. The link to information regarding IEP development and other educational advocacy concerns in Spanish is well visited. In addition, our "newsfeed" directly links our social media page to our website. This link offers the most up to date disability related articles, current events, and notifications from NYSED and the federal government. It allows individuals who are not on social media the same access to information as those who are. We provide an average of 40 posts on social media monthly reaching almost 2,000 individuals. LIAC reports regularly to a number of funding sources. All reporting is delivered electronically. Client intakes are performed via a computer program entitled "FileMaker Pro." Plans are in place to replace this program with "Salesforce," an all-encompassing system hosted by the Cloud that includes: intake, grant data and reporting, donor information and many other features. All LIAC computers are on single server. This allows all staff to share information quickly and easily. LIAC has a Virtual Private Network (VPN) connecting our two locations to ensure staff in one office can readily view and use material developed in our other office. LIAC staff all have Internet access. This allows advocates to research evidence-based practices in special education and obtain updates in Education Law, regulations and policy. LIAC has been using Google Mail and other Google applications since late 2016 with great success. In addition, LIAC holds weekly staff meeting between both offices via group conference calling and video linkages.

Legal Services Other Than Direct Legal Representation

Most LIAC trainings include PowerPoint presentations, and handouts with information on education law and advocacy techniques. This information enables individuals who otherwise do not have access to knowledge about their rights in the education process the tools necessary to ensure that their children receive the educational services they require.

This year, a total of five thousand six hundred ninety (5690) individuals including: parents, school personnel, human service agency providers, and attorneys, received training on laws effecting students with disabilities. Topics presented included: Building Effective Educational Teams, Discipline Regulations, Effective Communication and Communities of Practice, IDEA, Legal Issues in Special

Education, Parent Member Training, Preparing for Your Annual Review, Testing Students with Disabilities, The CSE Process, Transitioning from CPSE to CSE and Transitioning to the Adult World. Emphasis continues to be placed on Transitioning to Adulthood, since school districts are often out of compliance with the requirements of IDEA and the Part 200 Regulations.

Additionally, LIAC proposes to provide support for parents of English Language Learners via trainings for immigrant parents regarding the legal educational rights to which their children are entitled. The trainings will be led by education advocates in conjunction with skilled interpreters, in the families' native language.

Collaborations With Other Service Providers

LIAC's history is rich with collaboration. In January 1986, we started our journey in assisting students involved with the Juvenile Justice System. We were asked to collaborate with the Suffolk County Probation Department to provide educational advocacy for the PINS Diversion (Person In Need of Supervision) Program. The hope behind this collaboration was to resolve instances of truancy and incorrigibility without Family Court involvement. The relationship between LIAC and the Suffolk County Probation Department started out as a single program working with 300 unserved and underserved Long Island families in 1986 and has expanded into a three-program project serving approximately 800 unserved and underserved Long Island families annually. The implementation of educational advocacy in the Suffolk County Juvenile Justice System was regarded quite highly; LIAC received an additional grant in 2005 and the Alternatives for Youth (AFY) Educational Advocacy Program began. Through the Suffolk County Department of Social Services, the AFY Program pairs immediate and home-based crisis intervention with educational advocacy to promote stability within the family structure and ongoing support and services in the community and school. In 2006, at the request of Family Court judges, a new grant was funded for LIAC and the Juvenile Delinquency (JD) Educational Advocacy Program was created. A LIAC attorney appears in Family Court to advise the judges of the individual's educational needs and the procedures that school districts must follow in order to meet those needs. The judges weigh this information heavily before ruling on a

Number of People Benefited by Legal Services Other Than Direct Legal Representation...

Total:	<u>504,216 People</u>
Community Legal Education and Pro Se Assistance:	8,334 People
Web Usage:	495,882 People

Other Services, continued

residential placement through Family Court. As a result of our work with Suffolk County, especially our involvement with the PINS Diversion Program, LIAC was asked to provide trainings to the Nassau County Department of Social Services, the agency responsible for the implementation of PINS. These trainings led to a contract with the Nassau County Department of Social Services in 2008, enabling LIAC to provide advocacy, training, and technical assistance to PINS Diversion workers and the unserved and underserved Long Island families involved in the PINS Diversion Program in Nassau County. Additional collaborations include: ACCES-VR, Asperger's and High Functioning Autism of NYS, EAC Dispute Resolution, Empire Justice Center, Hofstra University Law Clinic, The Interagency Coordinating Council of Long Island, LILAC Education Committee, Long Island Language Advocates Coalition, NY Civil Liberties Union (Nassau/Suffolk Branch), NYSDRA, NYS DCDT, OPWDD, SEQA, and The Self Advocacy Association of NYS (Long Island Chapter).

Pro Bono Volunteer Involvement

Law students perform community service work at the Long Island Advocacy Center's offices, and volunteer attorneys do intakes and participate in trainings in order to increase their knowledge of education laws and regulations. As their knowledge base increases, these attorneys perform pro bono work for the agency and represent families at superintendent disciplinary hearings. LIAC attorneys act as a resource to Legal Aid Law Guardians in Family Court to assist in assessing the educational programs of children whose parents before the court on charges of educational neglect and juvenile delinquency.

LIAC attorneys provide training to volunteer attorneys who want to learn more about Special Education Law. LIAC provides Summary of Education Law to pro bono attorneys and is a resource for any questions or concerns they may have regarding school district policies and practices.

LIAC staff attorneys participate in the Suffolk Bar Association Education Law Committee and help to plan the Long Island Bar Association Conferences. LIAC staff attorneys are part of committee in Nassau County that provides trainings to attorneys and families. In this way, attorneys are provided with the information they need to provide pro bono representation for education issues.

Pro Bono Statistics

During 2016-2017, the following volunteers provided services in our program:

• Attorneys:	3 Volunteers	900 Hours
• Law Students:	2 Volunteers	600 Hours
• Other Volunteers:	4 Volunteers	1,200 Hours
• <i>Total Cases Completed by Attorneys:</i>		9 Cases
• <i>Dollar Value of Attorney Services*:</i>		\$225,000

*estimated at \$250 per hour

Sources of Funding

Total	\$1,662,622
IOLA Grant	\$90,000
City and County Funding	\$984,014
State Funding	\$306,108
Other Federal Programs	\$250,000
Other	\$32,500

