

# Long Island Advocacy Center

## Overview of Achievements, 2019-2020

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 continues to focus on this population and this year we have addressed this need via parent training that served to inform, educate, and provide individual advocacy for immigrant parents and families that significantly helped to improve the educational opportunities, graduation rates, and transitional support for students who are English Language Learners. 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. An additional 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. LIAC continues to focus on reducing suspension disparities. LIAC coordinates with community service providers to provide training to staff working with potential clients and creating a space to meet with potential clients. Further, community outreach efforts have been extended to provide vital information to families in need and partner with community resources to further support families and children. Reducing suspension disparities continues to enhance LIAC's work toward disrupting the school to prison pipeline. Throughout the year LIAC has helped thousands of children and families. Generally attorney services included:

- Five hundred seventy-four (574) brief service; legal counsel and advice or limited action.
- Sixty seven (67) students received negotiated settlements without litigation.
- Twelve (12) students received litigated settlements, and
- Five (5) students received a positive administrative agency decision.

Education advocate services included:

- Nine thousand one hundred fifty-two (9,152) school age children in Nassau and Suffolk Counties received non-litigated advocacy.

**Population Served:** Low Income Children and Families

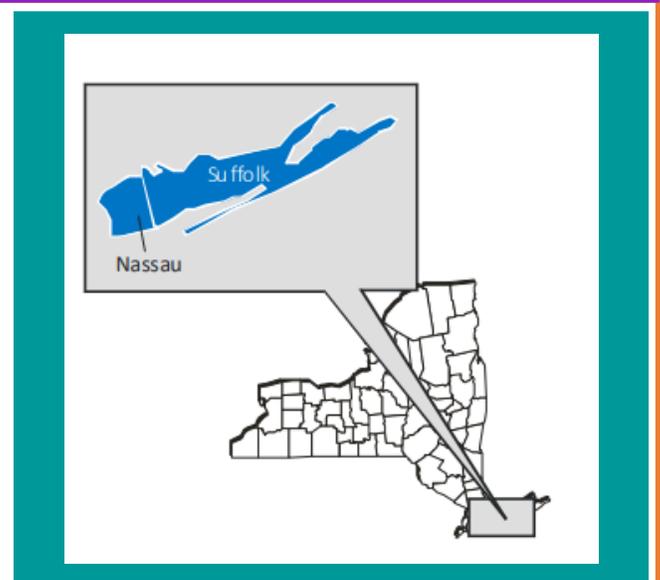
**Area Served:** Nassau and Suffolk Counties

**Total Funding:** \$2,075,814

**Total IOLA Grant:** \$150,000

**Staffing - Full Time Equivalents:**

- **Total Staff: 21.12**
- **Lawyers: 4.60**
- **Paralegals: 13.57**
- **Others : 2.95**



# Direct Legal Services

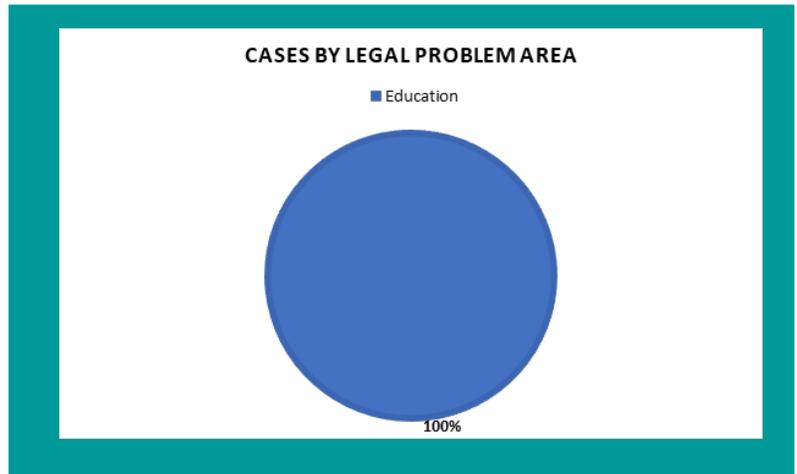
40,681 people benefitted

9,810 legal cases closed

## Breakdown of cases by Legal Problem

Total Cases Closed      **9,810 cases**

Total People Benefitted      **40,681 people**



### Example 1;

N. P-B. is a fifteen year old boy who has been a student at his District since kindergarten. He was born in the USA and his dominant language is English, although his family speaks Spanish at home. Although he was in 10<sup>th</sup> grade, he had earned only 4 credits toward graduation to date. He has a diagnosis of ADHD, depression, a severe language disorder and severe learning disabilities in Reading, Mathematics, and Written Expression. Although N. P-B was referred for special education in 2nd grade, he made virtually no progress throughout his years at the District. He was referred to LIAC through the PINS diversion program because his District considered him incorrigible. The District had never provided the legally required evaluations and services necessary for N. P-B to make progress at school. LIAC filed a due process complaint compelling the District to conduct the necessary evaluations at no cost to the family. LIAC then compelled the District to provide an appropriate educational program that included therapeutic services in an out of District program and a specific reading program. Since LIAC's interventions, N. P-B has begun to make educational progress and has become a respected member of his school's community.

### Example 2:

A student was receiving home instruction initiated by an infraction of the school code of conduct. At the commencement, it was learned that the instructional plan and venue was not in accord with the student's individualized educational plan. As such, new expedited evaluations were requested and commenced. The parents did not desire their child to return to a district school as they did not believe the student was advancing in their IEP goals. Upon completion of the evaluations, LIAC joined the parent at the CSE meeting to advocate for the needs of the student and ensure the appropriate present functioning level, needs and goals were documented. The meeting ended in consensus having been built in accord with the parent's wishes and LIAC's advocacy. The process of securing an appropriate placement is currently underway with assistance being offered by LIAC to the parent to navigate the process.

## Other Services...

### Number of People Benefitted by Services Other Than Direct Legal Representation

<b>Total</b>	<b>23,568 people</b>
Community Legal Education	2,100 people
Pro Se Assistance	368 people
Online Assistance	21,100 people

#### **Other Legal Related Services: Overview**

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 for which they are entitled. This year, a total of one thousand five hundred twenty-five (1,525) individuals including: parents, school personnel and human service agency providers received training on laws affecting students with disabilities. Topics presented included (English and Spanish): *Addressing Challenging Behavior, Know Your Rights in Discipline Regulations, Know Your Rights: Understanding Your School's Code of Conduct, IDEA, Legal Issues in Special Education, High School Diploma Options, All About IEPs, The CSE Process, Transitioning from CPSE to CSE, Transition Planning, Parent Participation: Understanding Rights under ESSA, Building Effective Educational Teams, Assistive Technology and Self Determination*. LIAC has provided support for parents of English Language Learners via trainings for immigrant parents regarding the legal educational rights to which their children are entitled. LIAC has put an emphasis this year on educating families on their rights in regards to discipline. In particular, LIAC has focused on teaching families how to read and understand their school's Code of Conduct and to inform families that School Resource Officers are not part of a school's disciplinary team. Outreach to community organizations regarding this topic continues. Additionally, LIAC continues to educate and inform families on *Transitioning to Adulthood*, in both English and Spanish since school districts are often out of compliance with the requirements of IDEA and the Part 200 Regulations.

LIAC provides Community Legal Education on an ongoing basis. Examples include:

- *"Reducing Suspension Disparities/Know Your Rights"* - A series of presentations covering the nuts and bolts of suspension and parent's rights in the suspension process.
- LIAC presented to Case Managers at Alternatives for Youth Suffolk County on Education Advocacy.
- LIAC staff presented at The Safe Center in Nassau County on *Residency, School Safety Plans and Special Education*.

## Trainings

Professional Development for our staff and Board is ongoing. LIAC presents a conference each year that serves to educate and train the public as well as our staff. This year our conference was titled “Be the One: The Impact of Personal Connections on Student Success”. Topics included: Trauma Informed Care: The Human Connection, Using Restorative Justice to Transform School Culture, Life after High School: A Transition Story/ Transition Services panel discussion and a viewing and discussion of *Pushout: The Criminalization of Black Girls in School*. Unfortunately, due to the COVID 19 pandemic, LIAC’s conference originally scheduled for March 19, 2020 had to be postponed but will be presented at a later date. Preparations for this conference included in-house learning. In addition, LIAC’s professional development continued to focus on issues of equity and disparate treatment within educational systems. Our staff continued to improve our knowledge of effective strategies for successful advocacy for marginalized populations through webinars and in-house training. In March 2020, much effort was put into attending webinars and other convenings to learn of the ways the Coronavirus closings were impacting students and schools and to keep up with the guidance coming out of the State Education and the Federal Education Departments.

# Other Services

## Significant Collaborations

LIAC has continued a significant collaboration with the Suffolk County Probation Department this year by providing educational advocacy and attorney representation for at-risk and court involved youth. Through our collaboration with the AFY (alternatives for youth), PINS Diversion and JD programs, LIAC has been able to significantly impact the educational services for these youth. LIAC ensures that our students receive appropriate educational evaluations and appropriate educational services and programs. LIAC represents youth facing out of school suspensions and compels schools to provide appropriate interventions instead of excluding them from school. Our work in this area prevents youth from being sent to Family Court on a PINS petition for truancy, incorrigibility or parent PINS allegations. In addition, our work with JD cases impacts sentencing, including preventing out of home placements and prevents violations of probation. The *Raise the Age* legislation has led to an increase in our caseloads of JD clients this year.

Similarly, LIAC collaborates with the Nassau County Department of Social Services, the lead agency for the Nassau County PINS Diversion program. Here, as in Suffolk, LIAC is able to divert cases from Family Court by advocating for appropriate educational services and by defending students accused of school misconduct at school discipline hearings.

This year LIAC began collaborating with SOBLI and the Urban League. SOBLI - State of Black Long Island Equity Council and the Urban League have partnered with LIAC to address the disparities in school discipline as it affects African American Youth. Similarly, LIAC has begun collaborating with MLK Center of Long Beach and Rockville Centre, EOC of Nassau County, Littig House (Port Washington), Choice for All (Roosevelt), Hispanic Brotherhood of RVC, Hispanic Civic Association (Hempstead), Safe Center/Child Advocacy Center, Safe Haven/Homeless Youth, Long Island Progressives, Legal Aid Society, Make the Road New York, Erase Racism and STRONG/Uniondale.

LIAC extended our collaboration with the New York Civil Liberties Union in both Nassau and Suffolk this year regarding education issues. Specifically, LIAC has participated in the NYCLU-Suffolk chapter Pathways to Racial and Education Equity Mentoring Program. Here, a LIAC attorney provides ongoing trainings in education law to NYCLU volunteer mentors. This program is meant to leverage support to parents experiencing obstacles in obtaining appropriate educational services at their public school. In addition, LIAC collaborates with NYCLU on individual cases regarding education issues.

LIAC has also been a member of the Suffolk County Access to Justice committee of the Permanent Commission on Access to Justice. Our involvement includes participation on the task force in Suffolk to ensure that low income families have access to legal advocacy and representation. LIAC's involvement is to ensure that education issues are included in Suffolk's plan. LIAC has been part of the planning and implementation of the Community Legal Help Project.

## Pro Bono Volunteer Involvement

Law Students from local law schools routinely work at LIAC as interns and externs. LIAC participates in Job Fairs at the local law schools to recruit new interns. In addition, LIAC has postings in the Career Centers at the law schools. Potential interns are interviewed by LIAC attorneys, and once hired, law students assist LIAC in expanding our mission to reach greater numbers of clients. Interns are trained by LIAC attorneys in basic Education Law and have the opportunity to shadow LIAC attorneys. Under the supervision of LIAC attorneys, law students assist with research, client interviews, client follow-up, outreach and trainings. LIAC attorneys participate in the Bar Associations of Nassau and Suffolk Counties, Education Subcommittees. In addition, LIAC attorneys act as a resource to the Attorneys for the Child in Family Court cases where education issues can impact the case. We also have other volunteers who assist the Intake Coordinators in various duties. The college interns will learn the intake process and how to enter the information into the Google forms. They sometimes attend CSE meetings with advocates upon client approval. We also have volunteers who are assisted by a Job Coach to do some administrative tasks such as copying, shredding, scanning and data entry.

### Pro Bono Statistics

<b>Law Students :</b>	<b>1 Volunteer</b>	<b>350 Hours</b>
<b>Others:</b>	<b>6 Volunteers</b>	<b>218 Hours</b>

### Sources Of Funding

<b>Iola Grant:</b>	<b>\$150,000</b>
<b>Foundations:</b>	<b>\$39,300</b>
<b>State Funding</b>	<b>\$340,331</b>
<b>Other:</b>	<b><u>\$1,546,183</u></b>
<b>Total:</b>	<b>\$2,075,814</b>

