

AUTISM SPECIAL EDUCATION LEGAL SUPPORT CENTER HIGHLIGHTS

All advocacy work by the Autism Center is done in partnership with others, such as non-profits, parents, educators, legislators, legal aid and law firms, advocates or universities, We thank them all and our funders for the vital contributions to these successes that benefits so many children.

Since 2002, the Center has made great strides responding to the needs of children with ASD. Some of the Center's major accomplishments include:

- ◆ Over **1,400 parents of children with ASD** have received free legal advice, technical assistance and/or representation.
- ◆ Over **2,600 parents of children with ASD** have been trained to be better advocates for their child.
- ◆ Over **2,000 medical professionals and educators** working with children on the autism spectrum have been trained to better understand the special education law and the rights of the children they serve.
- ◆ The cultural and linguistic barriers affecting **Haitian and Latino parents of children with autism** in Boston and Lawrence have been overcome through intensive outreach, training and successful litigation.
- ◆ Over 100 low-income young children with ASD have received free intensive home-based services through the state's **Children's Autism Medicaid Waiver** program, which MAC's leadership helped to create and fund.
- ◆ Over 100 students age 18-22 with severe disabilities (including students with ASD) have been able for the first time to take inclusive courses in state colleges in partnership with school districts in order to improve their prospects for self-sufficiency as adults, through the **Inclusive Concurrent Enrollment** grant program that MAC played a leadership role in creating and funding over the past five years.

Key leadership was provided to secure enactment of the following bills:

- ◆ **Augmentative and Alternative Communication Act** ensures that new teachers of students with moderate and severe disabilities receive instruction about the appropriate use of augmentative and alternative communication devices and other assistive technologies.
- ◆ The Autism Anti-Bullying bill supported by MAC -- **H.3804: An Act Addressing Bullying of Children with Autism**-- was incorporated into the highly-publicized bullying bill signed by the Governor in May. The new law ensures that IEP Teams address bullying of children on the autism spectrum, specifically focusing on the skills necessary to help them avoid and respond to bullying, harassment, or teasing. Requiring IEP teams to address bullying as it impacts individual students with ASD, coupled with new provisions requiring school-wide bullying prevention programs, will help work towards effectively mitigating the instances and effects of bullying for children with ASD. The new law also added IEP anti-bullying protections for children with other types of disabilities as well.
- ◆ Massachusetts **Autism IEP Act** requires the IEP Team to consider and address the full range of a child's complex communication, social, behavioral, and academic needs resulting from ASD to help ensure provision of state-of-the-art supports and services.
- ◆ **Parent Observation Act** ensures that parents and independent evaluators have access necessary to observe special education programs.
- ◆ **Transition at Age 14 Act** maintains the requirement in Massachusetts to initiate special education transition planning and services at age 14.