

Your gift in 2018 made a difference. This year, we...

Answered over 1,125 calls through our free Helpline from parents seeking legal assistance and advice regarding barriers to educational opportunity for their children.

- Advocated successfully to **increase state approved rates** for expert evaluations to help level the playing field for **low-income families** of children with disabilities to exercise their special education due process rights.
- Led advocacy efforts for significant **funding increases** in the following state budget priorities: **safe and supportive schools**; inclusive concurrent enrollment (**higher education** for students with disabilities); and the **Children's Autism Medicaid waiver**.
- Led efforts to enact legislation requiring establishment of a **state Task Force** to develop recommendations regarding the training and certification of **language interpreters** in educational settings, essential to provide **language access** for parents of children with disabilities.
- Worked with the **school discipline** coalition and DESE to identify and implement key strategies to **reduce unreported suspensions** (e.g., illegally sending children home without formally suspending them).
- Led advocacy efforts leading to DESE's issuance of a **new guidance** to districts emphasizing strategies to address the needs of **Puerto Rican students with disabilities** displaced by **hurricane Maria**.



Trained over 750 parents, professionals, and youth in **special education law and educational rights**, empowering students to advocate for themselves and parents to advocate for their own children.

- Conducted **statewide focus groups** with parents, providers, and students on barriers to schools' access to **clinically and culturally appropriate community-based services**. Barriers documented in our **Trauma & Learning Policy Initiative's (TLPI)** report to the Safe and Supportive Schools Commission included: **long waitlists**, lack of **culturally competent providers**, **geographic disparities**, and the needs of **undocumented immigrant families**.
- Concluded a two-year independent research study of five **trauma-sensitive demonstration schools** conducted by the **American Institutes for Research (AIR)** showing that schools can use the TLPI's Inquiry-Based Process to transform their cultures into **safe, supportive, inclusive learning environments**.
- Led advocacy efforts in Lawrence resulting in more **inclusive classroom** opportunities for children with **autism** and leadership development for our parent partners who now lead the **Parent Advisory Council (PAC)**.

Thank you for your support!

Matthew's story

Matthew is a young man with Down syndrome who attended his local public schools. Although Matthew enjoyed learning about adult life with his classmates through his school district's transition program, **he wanted more of a challenge.** After watching his siblings prepare for college, he wanted to do so too. As he says, **"I just wanted to have the same opportunities as everyone else."**

While Matthew was still in high school, he began attending **Salem State University** through the **Massachusetts Inclusive Concurrent Enrollment Initiative (MAICEI)** state grant program. The MAICEI program creates partnerships between high schools and institutes of higher education to provide students with **intellectual disabilities and autism** the opportunity to participate in college courses with supports and services they need to be successful with their peers. It was **established as a result of MAC's intensive legislative advocacy**, partnering with our sister organizations such as the **Massachusetts Down Syndrome Congress**, in response to a concern that students with disabilities ages 18-22 who could not pass MCAS and obtain a high school diploma were **frequently isolated** in the high school and **segregated** from their nondisabled peers. **Matthew was one of the first students** to attend the Salem State program.

While in the MAICEI program, Matthew was fully included in academic and other campus activities. He enrolled in an **honors public speaking course** and also took classes in **sports management** and **nursing**. Matthew worked as an intern at the IT department of the campus library and as a gym attendant at the fitness center – allowing him to **gain valuable work experience** and learn more about the type of career he wanted to pursue. Utilizing the skills he sharpened in college, he has advocated successfully for increasingly challenging work in his **internship at Beverly Hospital**.

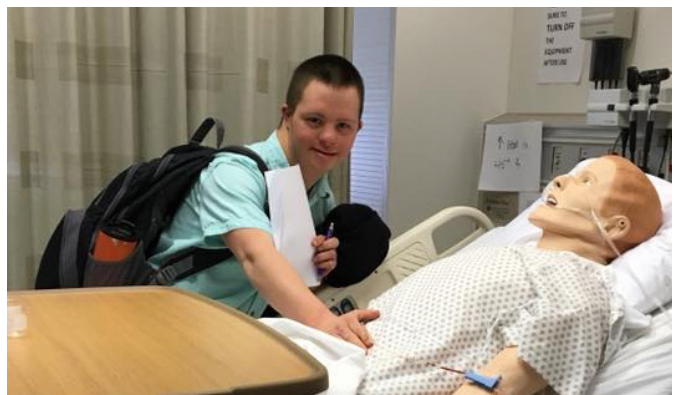
When asked how he feels about his future, Matthew stated, **"We all like to fit in and I see myself living in an apartment, working and using transportation. Being independent. I feel awesome!"**



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 and young adults 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 our campaign fund: simply check the box on your enclosed envelope to designate your gift.



Matthew interned at Beverly Hospital while attending Salem State University as part of the MAICEI program. MAC is now working to expand higher education opportunities for students like Matthew throughout the state so that all students have the opportunity to pursue their dream of going to college.

Be a force for good.

A gift in any amount to MAC helps us give children hope.

www.massadvocates.org/donate

All donations are tax deductible.

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