

Long Island Advocacy Center, Inc.

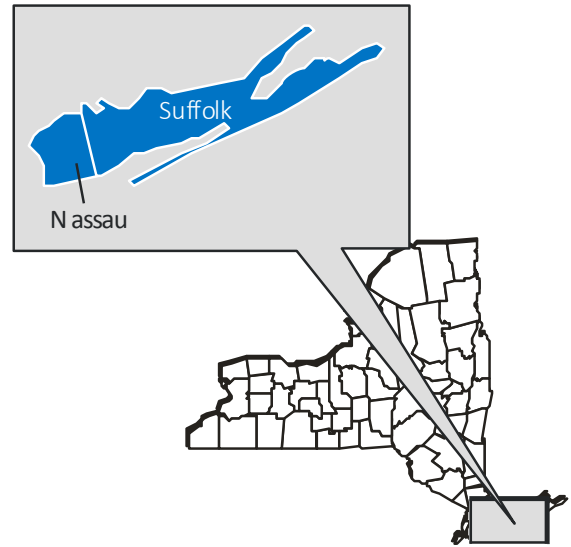
Overview of Achievements, 2014-2015

The Long Island Advocacy Center (LIAC) assists families in ensuring their legal rights in the public education system on Long Island. Many students face barriers that put them at risk for not graduating from high school and even worse than that 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. This year LIAC continued our training initiative aimed at developing the advocacy skills of youth. This reinforces LIAC's goal of engaging youth in self-advocacy. Additionally, LIAC has created a "Trauma Task Force" inviting agencies and individuals who are supportive of this initiative. Our goal is to start to infiltrate the terms, research, and practice of trauma sensitive schools to the community and juvenile justice system for sustainable change. Children who have faced chronic trauma face many difficulties impacting their ability to learn. Unless teachers understand the nature of such re-enactments, they are likely to label the child as "oppositional," "rebellious," "unmotivated," or "antisocial." Throughout the year LIAC has helped thousands of children and families. Generally our services included:

- Three thousand eight hundred seventy eight (3878) school age children in Nassau and Suffolk Counties received brief service; legal counsel and advice or limited action.
- Six hundred twenty four (624) students received negotiated settlements without litigation.
- Two hundred one (201) students received litigated settlements, and
- Thirty seven (37) students received a positive administrative agency decision.

Specific case outcomes include:

- Two hundred twenty (220) students avoided, delayed or reduced the length of their suspensions.
- Seven (7) school age children overcame a barrier to enrollment in school.
- Fifty seven (57) students avoided an inappropriate special education classification.
- One thousand five hundred twenty (1520) students with disabilities obtained an individualized educational program and/or appropriate services consistent with special education law.
- Twenty five (25) students obtained a correction of their school records.
- Two thousand eighty two youth (2082) obtained advice and counsel on an education matter.
- Five hundred eighty two (582) school age children obtained non-litigation advocacy services on an education matter.
- One hundred eighty (180) students received a referral on an education matter
- Forty five (45) obtained another benefit on an education matter, and
- Twenty two (22) 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: \$1,579,603

Total IOLA Grant: \$85,000

Staffing - Full Time Equivalents

Total Staff: 24.55

Lawyers: 4.20

Paralegals: 10.80

Other Staff: 9.55

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...

18,960 Individuals Benefited from 4,740 Closed Direct Civil Legal Cases

Extended Representation Outcomes

- 7,584 People benefited from extended representation

Brief Representation Benefits

- 8,328 People benefited from legal advice and counsel
- 2,328 People benefited from non-litigation advocacy services
- 720 People benefited by referral to other sources of help

Examples...

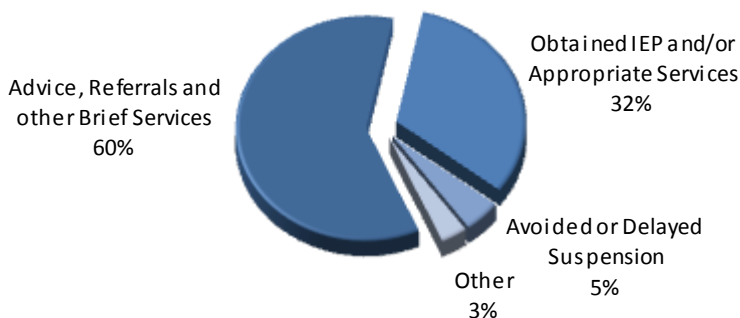
Outcomes for Clients

LIAC has been providing advocacy for Matt and his parents for the last four years consistently. Our advocacy started when Matt entered the PINS Diversion program for school truancy and incorrigibility. Although his PINS Diversion case closed two years ago, LIAC has continued working with the family to ensure Matt receives appropriate educational services. In October 2014, Matt was arrested and subsequently incarcerated for two months. LIAC worked with the parent and the school district to ensure Matt received an appropriate education during his incarceration. Upon his release, LIAC again worked with the parent and the district to make sure Matt's transition back into his BOCES placement was as seamless as possible. In March 2015, the parent contacted LIAC looking for assistance with gaining access to transition services through ACCES-VR. LIAC contacted the school district and the appropriate ACCES-VR representative to facilitate Matt's application and services. Since his return to BOCES, Matt has passed his last Regent's Exam to fulfill his graduation requirements, has not had any behavioral infractions, has continued to pass all of his academic classes, and is scheduled to graduate with a high school diploma in June.

LIAC has been working with Daniel the spring of 2014. At Daniel's initial eligibility determination meeting, he was found ineligible for Special Education services. At that point, as the parent suspected a Learning Disability, and wanted the district to further evaluate Daniel, LIAC assisted her in requesting in writing, a neuropsychological evaluation. Although the district stated Daniel did not have a learning disability, they ultimately accepted the written request and Daniel went for a neuropsychological evaluation. Additionally, the district previously sent Daniel for a psychiatric evaluation and the parent did not agree with the results. Again, LIAC assisted the parent in requesting in writing, an Independent Educational Evaluation and a psychiatric evaluation, and the district agreed. The neuropsychological evaluation resulted in Daniel being diagnosed with severe dyslexia, Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder, and a Learning Disorder in the area of Mathematics; the evaluator recommended Special Education services for Daniel, and made the connection between Daniel's disability and his school refusal. LIAC is currently awaiting a CSE date to review the evaluations and determine eligibility and the appropriate level of services required for Daniel to benefit from an education.

Breakdown of Education Cases by Legal Problem Area

	<i>People</i>	<i>Cases</i>
Total	18,960	4,740
Advice, Referrals and other Brief Services	11,376	2,844
Obtained IEP and/or Appropriate Services	6,080	1,520
Avoided or Delayed Suspension	880	220
Other	624	156



Other Services

Technology and Other Innovations

The Long Island Advocacy Center's website, www.theliac.org, is running quite successfully, and it gets approximately 40,000 hits per year. The link to information regarding IEP development and other educational advocacy concerns in Spanish is well visited. In addition, we have now added a "newsfeed" that 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 26 posts on social media monthly reaching almost 1,300 individuals. 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. If a case needs to be opened, it is referred to the appropriate advocate. 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." The program allows for complete control over data and enables LIAC Administrators to sort data and determine current trends. All LIAC staff all has Internet access. This allows advocates to research evidence-based practices in special education and obtain updates in Education Law, regulations and policy. 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. In addition, LIAC holds weekly staff meeting between both offices via group conference calling.

Legal Services Other Than Direct Legal Representation

A total of five thousand forty one (5041) individuals including: parents, school personnel, human service agency providers, and attorneys, received training on laws effecting students with disabilities. Topics presented included: Transitioning from CPSE to CSE, Transitioning to the Adult World, The CSE Process, Testing Students with Disabilities, Preparing for Your Annual Review, Parent Member Training, Legal Issues in Special Education, IDEA 2004, Effective Communication and Communities of Practice, Discipline Regulations and Building Effective Educational Teams. 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. 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.

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 residential placement through Family Court. As a result of our work with Suffolk County, especially our involvement with the PINS Diversion Program, LIAC

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

Total:	444,876 People
Community Legal Education and Pro Se Assistance:	7,271 People
Web Usage:	437,605 People

Other Services, *continued*

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, The Interagency Coordinating Council of Long Island, LILAC Education Committee, Long Island Language Advocates Coalition, SEQA, OPWDD, NYSDRA, NYS DCDT and The Self Advocacy Association of NYS (Long Island Chapter).

Major Cases or Other Advocacy Projects

Long Island Advocacy Center filed a complaint to New York State Commissioner of Education on behalf of two students and others similarly situated, alleging that a Suffolk County School District was not complying with the NYS Commission's Regulations as it pertains to the Committee on Special Education (CSE) process. Specifically, the complaint alleged that the district was failing to make timely referrals to the CSE for students who were suspected of having an emotional disability but rather were systemically doing incomplete assessments, failing to review the assessments at a CSE meeting and were telling parents that they were not entitled to a referral to the CSE based on the results of these assessments. The complaint alleged that this practice violated several sections of the NYS Commissioner's Regulations and summarily denied students in the District a Free Public Appropriate Education. The State agreed with the LIAC attorney's assertions that the two named students had been denied their right to complete evaluations in a timely manner and ordered the District to conduct full evaluations and convene a CSE meeting to offer the students appropriate educational services. The State also ordered compensatory services for one student who was referred for a psychiatric evaluation and was

never offered a CSE meeting to review the findings of the evaluation. The State further directed the District to change their policies, practices and procedures to ensure that future students are not similarly denied these rights.

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 staff attorneys participate in the Suffolk Bar

Pro Bono Statistics

During 2014-2015, 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
• Total Cases Completed by Attorneys:	10 Cases	
• Dollar Value of Attorney Services*:	\$0.23 million	

**estimated at \$250 per hour*

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.

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 attorneys provide training to volunteer attorneys who want to learn more about Special Education Law.

LIAC attorneys act as a resource to Legal Aid Law Guardians in Family Court to assist in assessing the educational programs of children whose are parents before the court on charges of educational neglect and juvenile delinquency.

Sources of Funding

Total	\$1,579,603
IOLA Grant	\$85,000
City and County Funding	\$991,706
Other Federal Programs	\$285,000
State Funding	\$192,342
Other	\$25,555

