

Education Advocacy

A child's academic potential should not be limited by his/her experience in state custody.

For All Students:

- School Board Policy - Check the local school board policy for the rules and policies that govern the school in which your assigned youth is enrolled.
- Enrollment - Pursuant to O.C.G.A. § 20-2-133(b), schools or (LEAs) are required to immediately enroll a student who is in the physical or legal custody of the Department of Human Services (DHS) or the Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ). Ensure that a written request for the transfer of the youth's school records is made at the time of enrollment.
- State Longitudinal Data System (SLDS) - Contact the school in which the youth is enrolled and request access to the SLDS/ Parent Portal. This online system allows you to view current academic information about the youth as well as historical test data.
- E.P.A.C. Collaboration- Ask the DFCS caseworker to refer the youth for an E.P.A.C. evaluation. Monitor the status of the evaluation and any E.P.A.C. interventions.
- School Placements - Ask for the youth to remain in his/her school of origin whenever it is in the best interest of the youth to do so. Advocate for fewer school placements and associated logistical considerations (timing, distance, transportation, etc.).
- Advocate for youth participation in extracurricular, sports and supplemental activities.
- Provide the court with detailed education related information and recommendations.

For Students with Special Needs:

- Surrogate Parent - Request to have a surrogate parent assigned for all students with an Individual Education Plan (IEP) under IDEA.
- IEP and Section 504 Plans - Both types of plans are required to be reviewed at least once a year. Check the date on the plan and make sure the required yearly meeting is being held.
- IEP and Section 504 Meetings - Attend the meetings whenever possible and advocate for the academic needs of your assigned youth. Ask questions about any information that you do not understand.
- Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP) - Ask to have a BIP for all children with disabilities or illnesses that may cause disruptive behaviors.

Student Discipline:

- Student Handbook - Review the student handbook and make sure that the school is abiding by its stated progressive discipline plan.
- School Exclusions and Suspension - Ask for documentation whenever a child is excluded or suspended from school.
- Disciplinary Hearings - Hearings, often called Tribunals, are required to be held when the principal recommends expulsion or suspension of greater than 10 days. If a disciplinary hearing or tribunal is scheduled for your assigned youth, notify your volunteer supervisor/ coordinator immediately.