

The Student Advocacy Center was established in 1975 to focus on students' in-school experiences, identify policies and practices that work — and those that don't work — and help eliminate barriers to effective services. Michigan's only organization advocating on behalf of public school students in general and special education programs, the Student Advocacy Center serves children having difficulties accessing needed educational services, explores the effects of their circumstances and offers information about possible remedies to policy makers, educators and the public. Using a strength-based approach, the center works in partnership with parents to encourage and promote school policies and practices that work for children and challenge those that, however well intentioned, have a hurtful impact.

The Student Advocacy Program

A strategic approach to support families with limited resources.



Among the multiple and complex challenges facing youth, low educational achievement has the most troubling consequences for adult quality of life. An involved advocate can enhance school performance by providing the following services:

- ④ Help youth develop the habits, attitudes and skills they need to succeed in school
- ④ Minimize disruption to educational progress
- ④ Monitor school enrollment, attendance, performance, course selection and educational goals
- ④ Identify those children with disabilities, both diagnosed and undiagnosed
- ④ Serve as a catalyst to start evaluations, support services and accommodations to prevent school disengagement and failure
- ④ Represent the student at court hearings and school meetings
- ④ Develop a strength-based, youth-centered transitional plan and have it in place for every student by age 14.
- ④ Provide creative curriculums to help youth graduate on schedule and prepare for college and post-secondary training
- ④ Improve communication between school personnel and parents

Advocates can also serve as community experts, to:

- ④ Teach parents to navigate the special education system
- ④ Train school personnel on each system's rules, regulations and roles
- ④ Increase teacher skills for managing student behaviors resulting from childhood trauma
- ④ Consult with attorneys and judges
- ④ Promote available community resources, educational programs, enrichment and supplementary educational experiences and information about post-secondary educational options and funding
- ④ Recruit and train educational mentors
- ④ Educate community groups about the special challenges youth face and the importance of a "village" philosophy for successful life outcomes

To schedule trainings, obtain an educational advocate or request additional information, please contact:

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The case for investing in efforts to help youth while they are in school and to help young adults who are leaving home to pursue educational opportunities is clear: education is essential for obtaining and maintaining employment. Through employment, young adults can meet other needs, such as housing and health care, and can become productive and self-supporting citizens. When the costs of homelessness, incarceration and welfare are considered, investment in educational support for low-income children makes a great deal of sense.

~ *The National Resource Center for Youth Development*

