

Advocacy Tips



- Read everything before you sign it! Don't sign anything you don't understand, and always keep copies.
- Get a folder and keep your education records together. If you don't have your education records, get them.
- When talking to people in the Department of Education, the Court System, or other city agencies, write down their name and phone number and some notes about what you discussed. You may need to get in touch with them later.
- Always be polite, but make sure you are being heard. If you feel yourself getting upset, step away and take a break.
- Ask questions when you need more information or something explained a second time. Never be afraid to ask for help.

Remember, you can be your own best advocate!

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Check us out on Facebook!

Contacts

A Few Good Websites

<http://www.youthsuccessnyc.org/>

Resources for and stories by youth in foster care

http://www.nyc.gov/html/acs/html/support_youth/support_youth.shtml

Announcements about ACS housing, employment, finance, and other programs for youth

<http://www.nycareerzone.org/>

Career exploration based on your personal strengths and interests

<http://www.insideschools.org>

Read reviews of NYC schools, or post your own!

<http://www.acces.nysed.gov/vr/>

Free vocational training/counseling for people with disabilities

<http://www.casey.org/Youth/>

National website with resources for and stories by young people in foster care

Need Help?

If you are having trouble in school or need a different school setting, don't be afraid to ask for help. Tell your caseworker, your attorney, or your foster parent. ACS also has an Education Unit that can help; you can find the phone numbers for the people who work there at: <http://www.nyc.gov/html/acs/education/home.html>.

Advocates for Children helps students get the services they need to succeed in school. **If you are a student in foster care and need help with school, please contact Erika Palmer by phone or email.**

Phone: (212) 822-9504

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AFC'S

Knowledge Is Power

A GUIDE TO THE
EDUCATIONAL RIGHTS OF
NEW YORK CITY STUDENTS

2011



Advocates for Children
of New York
Protecting every child's right to learn

KNOW YOUR RIGHTS!

Push-out

You have the right to be in high school until you graduate or through age 21, whichever comes first. You cannot be asked to leave school because you're too old for your grade or you don't have enough credits. If you do leave school, you have the right to go back at any time until you're 21.



You have the RIGHT to be in school until age twenty-one!

Discipline

You cannot be suspended, kicked out, or excluded from school without written notice to your foster parent or caseworker and a chance to tell your side of the story. Suspensions for more than 5 days require a full hearing. Whenever you are suspended, you have the right to get your class work and take your tests, including your Regents or RCTs.

Transfers

You have the right to stay in the same school or transfer to a closer school when you come into foster care or move between foster homes. You have the right to voice your opinion about school, so speak up! You also have the right to request a transfer for safety or medical reasons.

Pregnant and Parenting Teens

Girls who become pregnant have the right to stay in their school during their pregnancy and after giving birth. You cannot be excluded from school or school activities just because you're pregnant. You also have the right to medical accommodations as long as you have paperwork from your doctor. The Department of Education offers free daycare for parenting students at LYFE centers, located in some schools. You do not need to attend these schools to use the LYFE center.

DID YOU KNOW?

Students must earn 44 credits and pass 5 Regents exams to graduate from high school. To get an Advanced Regents Diploma, students need 8 Regents and 3 years of a foreign language. Students who get special education services who have trouble passing their Regents exams have the option of getting a local diploma if they earn 44 credits and pass 6 Regents Competency Tests (RCTs).

Extra Help

You have the right to extra help in school if you need it. If you are struggling with your class work, attendance, or controlling your behavior, you have the right to extra tutoring, help managing your behavior, or counseling services.

Special Education

If you have a disability, you have the right to special services and accommodations to help you in school. This includes accommodations on tests, like your Regents, RCTs, SATs or ACTs. You also have the right to receive all of the services on your Individualized Education Program (IEP). If those services aren't working, or if you think you're not in the right placement, you have the right to be re-tested to get a new placement or services.

College

All students who are in foster care, or who were in foster care when they were 16, have the right to an Educational Training Voucher (ETV) to help pay for college or vocational training. If you go away to college, you have the right to housing and food on campus paid for by ACS, at least until you turn 21 years old. You also may qualify for financial aid or scholarships. Talk to your caseworker or Independent Living department to make sure all of your paperwork is filled out on time.

Alternative Schools

Don't like your community high school? Feel like you need more attention or are too old for the classes you're in? Traditional high schools don't work for everyone, so you don't have to stay — there are alternatives!

Transfer Schools

These schools serve older students who have been in high school for at least one year and are behind in credits. Many transfer schools help you catch up by earning credits more quickly. They also have smaller classes and can offer more attention to students.

Young Adult Borough Centers (YABCs)

YABCs are evening programs designed for students who can't go to class during the day. Students must be at least 17 and a half, have 17 or more credits, and have been in high school for at least 4 years to be eligible.

GED Programs

The Department of Education and many community-based programs have GED classes designed specifically for young people. Typically, you have to be at least 18 and pass an entrance test. The GED is not an easy test or a quick fix, so make sure you are prepared to do the necessary work.

Co-op Tech

Co-op Tech is a technical school for students who want to learn a trade like cooking, computer programming or electronics. Students attend their home high school for part of the day and Co-op Tech for the rest of the day.

Learning To Work

Learning to Work is a career exploration and job training program offered at many transfer high schools, YABCs, and GED programs.

For more information on any of these programs, talk to your guidance counselor or go to:
<http://schools.nyc.gov/ChoicesEnrollment/AlternativesHS/>