



# Advocates for Children of New York

## Protecting every child's right to learn

### Students, Know Your Rights!

***If you are being pushed out of school or already left school and want to go back, don't wait to ask for help! Go to your Borough Referral Center or call our Helpline.***

#### **You Have the Right to Stay in School**

- You have the right to attend school until the age of 21. If you turn 21 during the school year, you can go to school until the end of June in that year.
- If you leave school, you have the right to go back at any time until you earn a diploma or turn 21.
- You cannot be made to leave school because you are too old, don't have enough credits, or have poor grades.
- You cannot be suspended or excluded from school without written notice 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 tests, including Regents exams. If you receive special education services, you are entitled to a suspension plan, which includes many of the services on your IEP.

#### **My school told me I had been taken off the register because I was absent too much. Is this legal?**

Schools can only ask students to leave ("discharge" a student) for a limited number of reasons, including a transfer to another school, full-time employment if you are over 16, or moving out of the city. A student who is over 17 *can* be discharged if he or she is absent for at least 20 days in a row. Cutting class does not count as an absence if you attend school for part of the day. The school must notify you and your parent in writing about your absences, the possibility of being asked to leave, and holding a planning interview with you before you can be discharged from the school.

#### **What is a planning interview and when does one happen?**

A planning interview must be scheduled before the school can discharge you. The purpose of the interview is to discuss your future, including what interventions you may need to help you succeed in school. You may also discuss other educational options, such as attending a transfer school or a GED program. The school must inform you and your parent of your right to stay in school until you are 21 and the right to return to school if you decide to leave. The school must ask for consent from you and your parent in order to discharge you after the interview. If you want to remain in your school, don't sign the consent, and your school must allow you to stay.

#### **Can my school make me transfer because I'm pregnant?**

Students who become pregnant have the right to stay in their school during their pregnancy and after giving birth. You cannot be kept out of school or school activities just because you're pregnant. You also have the right to medical accommodations if you need them, 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 in order to use the LYFE center.

#### **How can I get help if I am struggling with my school work?**

- If you are struggling with your class work, attendance, or controlling your behavior, you have the right to academic interventions, counseling, or attendance improvement services. In some cases, you may need to be evaluated for a disability. Speak to your guidance counselor for more information.
- If you have special education needs, you have the right to services and accommodations to help you in school. This includes accommodations on tests, like your Regents exams, RCTs or SATs. 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 consider a different placement or other services.
- Students can get free tutoring, called Supplemental Educational Services (SES), if they attend an eligible school and receive free or reduced-price lunch. To see if you are eligible, go to <http://schools.nyc.gov/RulesPolicies/NCLB/SES>.

#### **If I have been discharged from high school, how can I re-enroll?**

You can re-enroll at any Enrollment Center. To locate an Enrollment Center near you and learn how to register, visit <http://schools.nyc.gov/ChoicesEnrollment/NewStudents/Peak+Enrollment.htm>.

# Students, Know Your Options!

***You have an absolute right to stay in school until you turn 21 or graduate, whichever comes first; however, if you are struggling in a traditional high school and want to explore other settings, there are alternatives.***

## **What are 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 can help you catch up by earning credits more quickly. They also have smaller classes and can offer more individualized attention and support services to their students.

## **What are 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.

## **What vocational or career training programs are available in the public schools?**

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

## **What help is available to pass the GED test?**

The Department of Education and many community-based programs offer classes to help young people pass the test. Additionally, if you received special education services in school, you should apply for testing accommodations. A list of some programs is available at <http://schools.nyc.gov/ChoicesEnrollment/AlternativesHS/FullPtGED/default.htm>.

## **What do I need to do to get my GED?**

Typically, you have to be at least 18, although there are exceptions for some students. The GED test consists of 5 subject tests and a writing assessment. You need to score at least 410 in each subject area, with an overall average score of at least 450. Test-takers should have at least a 9<sup>th</sup> grade reading level. The GED is not an easy test or a quick fix, so make sure you are ready and able to do the necessary work. Tests are administered regularly at locations across the five boroughs. For more information, visit [http://www.acces.nysed.gov/ged/nys\\_map/counties.html](http://www.acces.nysed.gov/ged/nys_map/counties.html).

## **Where can I get help enrolling in one of these schools or programs?**

If you need extra support to complete your education, the Referral Centers for High School Alternatives are a good place to start. Staff at these centers can refer students to transfer schools or YABCs, help students enroll in a GED program, if appropriate, or help you get back into a community high school. There is a Referral Center in each borough.

### **Bronx Referral Center**

#### **@ Bronx Regional High School**

1010 Reverend James A. Polite Avenue, 3rd Floor  
Bronx, NY 10459  
(718) 842-9200

### **Brooklyn Referral Center**

#### **@ Marcy Avenue Complex**

832 Marcy Avenue, Room 501A  
Brooklyn, NY 11216  
(718) 636-5770

### **Manhattan Referral Center**

#### **@ Alternative Learning Complex**

269 West 35th Street, 7th Floor  
New York, NY 10001  
(212) 244-1274

### **Queens Referral Center**

#### **@ Jamaica Learning Center**

162-02 Hillside Avenue, Room 109  
Jamaica, NY 11432  
(718) 739-2100

### **Staten Island Referral Center @ St. George**

450 St. Marks Place  
Staten Island, NY 10301  
(718) 273-3225

**If you can't get through to a Referral Center, call or email the District 79 Office of Student Support Services at: (917)521-3639 or [youthhelp@schools.nyc.gov](mailto:youthhelp@schools.nyc.gov).**

**For more information on any of these programs, talk to your guidance counselor or go to:**

**<http://schools.nyc.gov/ChoicesEnrollment/AlternativesHS/>**

**Need help? Contact Advocates for Children's Education Helpline at 1-866-427-6033.  
The helpline is open Monday-Thursday from 10:00am to 4:00pm.**