

PACER Center State Legislative Priorities 2017

School Discipline: Develop and support legislation limiting use of extreme disciplinary measures for all students.

The Coalition will work to enact legislation that will: limit suspension and expulsion of young students ages 4-8 years; require schools to exhaust strategies for re-engaging students before suspension, expulsion, or police involvement is utilized; expand the use of positive behavior interventions; ensure that students who are suspended have continued opportunity to make academic progress; uphold the recent MN Supreme Court decision that intent be considered when determining appropriate disciplinary actions; and require schools to notify parents immediately if police become involved or a student is taken to a police station.

Special Education Funding: Secure increased and adequate funding stream for special education.

Minnesota's funding commitment to educate students with disabilities has historically been strong. However, schools continue to rely on some of their local operating budgets in order to cover all special education costs. The Coalition will advocate for increased state funding for special education. The Coalition will also monitor the recently implemented pupil-driven funding formula for special education to assure it has no adverse impacts on children with disabilities.

Assistive Technology: Improve the use of assistive technology for children and youth with disabilities, beginning at birth.

Assistive technology (AT) can make a significant difference in students' ability to learn and communicate, even with children as young as birth-5 years. The Coalition will promote improved implementation of AT through increased funding, training of educators and families, and promoting the use of Assistive Technology Plans as part of Individual Family Service Plans and Individualized Education Programs.

Children with Emotional Behavioral Disorders: Improve training and funding.

The Coalition will look for ways to improve educational services for young children with emotional or behavior disorders by developing language requiring increased training for early childhood educators about challenging behaviors and mental health concerns. In addition, the Coalition will continue to pursue other opportunities to improve mental health services, including supporting increased funding for school-linked mental health programs.

Special Education Policies: Uphold Minnesota's laws and rules for students with disabilities.

Minnesota students with disabilities benefit from an education system that supports their unique learning needs. The Coalition will actively work to ensure that Minnesota's strong laws and rules on special education are maintained. The Coalition will also monitor implementation of the newly passed Every Student Succeeds Act (formerly No Child Left Behind) to ensure that accountability for academic achievement includes students with disabilities.

Increase funding for early childhood education.

The Coalition supports increasing early childhood education funding because of its research-based positive impact on all students, including children with disabilities.

Bullying Prevention: Uphold Minnesota's strengthened bullying prevention law.

The Coalition will monitor implementation of the Safe and Supportive Schools Act, including the development of local district and school policies, training of school personnel and volunteers, provision of safe and supportive schools programming, and impact of the law's enactment on students with disabilities and all students.

Restrictive Procedures: Ensure safe and appropriate use of seclusion and restraint for students with disabilities, including eliminating the use of prone restraint.

The Coalition will continue to support limiting the use of seclusion and restraint and oppose any attempt to restore use of prone restraint. The Coalition will also continue to support the expansion of positive behavior intervention strategies to reduce the need for restrictive procedures.

Priority Monitoring Issues

- Access to special education services for students in mental health day treatment and the juvenile justice systems.
- Health care financing supports and services for children with disabilities and special health care needs, especially as they impact the education of children with disabilities.
- Access to home health nurses for families relying on 24-hour care as nursing shortages have resulted in lost work hours for families and increased admissions to institutional health care settings.