



## Changing the School-to-Prison Pipeline to a Cradle-to-College Pipeline

*It is easier to build strong children than to repair broken men.* —Frederick Douglas

Prior suspension is more likely to cause a child to drop out of high school than any other factor, including low socioeconomic status, not living with both biological parents, a high number of school changes, and having sex before age 15.<sup>1</sup> Approximately 82 percent of the adult prison population is composed of high-school dropouts.<sup>2</sup> What can you, as a lawyer, do to make a difference?

### **Number 1: Get Involved in ABA Efforts on the School-to-Prison Pipeline**

- Join the Children's Rights Litigation Committee of the Section of Litigation to learn more about the school-to-prison pipeline and join other lawyers in making a difference for these youth.
- Check to see if your local or state bar association has adopted relevant ABA Policy on these issues (see reverse side) and, if not, bring these policies to your local body for adoption.

### **Number 2: Volunteer for Pro Bono Work on this Issue**

- Check with your local children's law center or agency to see if it is representing children in expulsion matters and if there might be a role for pro bono lawyers in that work. To find a children's law center in your area, visit the ABA Directory of Children's Law Programs at <http://apps.americanbar.org/litigation/committees/childrights/directory.html>.
- Locate and reach out to local organizations that are concerned with the effects of zero tolerance policies. Local organizations can provide lawyers with the opportunity to provide information and legal guidance on working with local school districts in reforming their policies and work with the group members to provide training on how to effectively advocate for children charged with disciplinary infractions.

### **Number 3: Work to Change Local Discipline Policies in Your Jurisdiction**

- Work with your local school district to reform discipline policies if needed.
- Convene a meeting with your local judges, educators and law enforcement to share the protocols spearheaded by Judge Steven Teske to stop the school-to-prison pipeline track. <http://www.stopschoolstojails.org/clayton-county-georgia.html>

*Questions on how to get involved? Need assistance in starting a pro bono program through your law firm, bar association or children's law center? Contact the Children's Rights Litigation Committee at [Cathy.Krebs@americanbar.org](mailto:Cathy.Krebs@americanbar.org) or (202) 547-3060.*

---

<sup>1</sup> Suhyun Suh, Jingyo Suh, & Irene Houston, "Predictors of Categorical At-Risk High School Dropouts," 85 *Journal of Counseling and Development* 196, 196–203 (Spring 2007).

<sup>2</sup> Coalition for Juvenile Justice, *Abandoned in the Back Row: New Lessons in Education and Delinquency Prevention* (2001).

# American Bar Association: Education Policies

The ABA, through its House of Delegates, has been active in addressing issues and enacting policy resolutions related to the intersection of education and the law. The ABA has considered, passed, and promulgated more than 20 resolutions and recommendations in the last 30 years, encouraging Congress, the States, and lawyers everywhere to protect the rights of children in schools for a high-quality education as well as the right of children to counsel at critical junctions in their lives. Lawyers are often essential in the process to ensure that children have access to a safe, appropriate, and high-quality education.

## Highlights from Recent Policies Related to Education

- RESOLVED, that the American Bar Association urges state and local bar associations and attorneys to make legal representation available to parents, students, and organizations seeking to enforce the provisions of state and federal law related to the right to high-quality education in administrative and judicial proceedings.  
*Highlight from Improving the Public Education System, Approved by the ABA HOD, August, 2009*
- RESOLVED, that the American Bar Association urges federal and state legislatures to pass laws and national, state, and local education, child welfare, and juvenile justice agencies to implement and enforce policies that provide full procedural protections, including the opportunity to have representation by counsel in proceedings to exclude students from their regular education program.  
*Highlight from Improving the Public Education System, Approved by the ABA HOD, August, 2009*
- RESOLVED, that the American Bar Association supports uninterrupted educational access and stability for homeless children and youth, as well as children and youth placed by public agencies in out-of-home settings.  
*Highlight from Education Access for Homeless & Foster Youth, Approved by the ABA HOD, August, 2004*
- RESOLVED, that the American Bar Association opposes the principle of “zero tolerance” policies that mandate either the expulsion or referral of students to juvenile or criminal court without regard to the circumstances or nature of the offense or the student’s history.  
*Highlight from School Discipline “Zero Tolerance” Policies, Approved by the ABA HOD, February, 2001*

To see all ABA education policies, visit  
[http://www.americanbar.org/groups/child\\_law.html](http://www.americanbar.org/groups/child_law.html)