



Advocates for Children of New York

Protecting every child's right to learn

News Release

For Immediate Release

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AFC Urges DOE to Follow NYSED Guidance and Extend Eligibility to Students at Risk of Aging Out

April 15, 2021 (NEW YORK CITY) — Today, Kim Sweet, Executive Director of Advocates for Children of New York (AFC), issued the following statement in response to [new State guidance](#) strongly encouraging school districts to provide over-age high school students the opportunity to return to school next year to finish meeting requirements for a high school diploma, diploma endorsement or exit credential:

Advocates for Children commends the Board of Regents and the New York State Education Department (NYSED) for urging school districts to allow 21-year-old students to return for the 2021-22 school year to finish high school. This year has been incredibly difficult for students and families. The guidance released this week is an important step towards ensuring that no student loses the chance to graduate or to prepare for post-secondary opportunities because of COVID-19.

We strongly urge the New York City Department of Education (DOE) and districts across New York State to act quickly to follow NYSED's recommendation, get the word out to students and their families, and provide all students who are on the verge of aging out without a diploma the chance to finish their education and prepare for life after high school.

Last year, NYSED issued similar guidance for students who turned 21 during the 2019-20 school year. However, citing funding shortages, many districts denied students the option of returning to school this year. While New York City allowed most 21-year-old students to return to school for the 2020-21 school year, the City left out some of the students with the most intensive needs by not funding the continued enrollment of students with significant disabilities placed by the DOE at state-approved non-public schools. In light of both unprecedented school interruptions due to the pandemic and massive increases in State and Federal funding for education approved recently, all districts should extend school eligibility to all over-age students who need it.

About Advocates for Children of New York (AFC)

Since 1971, Advocates for Children of New York has worked to ensure a high-quality education for New York students who face barriers to academic success, focusing on students from low-income backgrounds who are at greatest risk for failure or discrimination in school because of their poverty, disability, race, ethnicity, immigrant or English Language Learner status, sexual orientation, gender identity, homelessness, or involvement in the foster care or juvenile justice systems. AFC uses four integrated strategies: free advice and legal representation for families of students; free trainings and workshops for parents, communities, and educators and other professionals to equip them to advocate on behalf of students; policy advocacy to effect change in the education system and improve education outcomes; and impact litigation to protect the right to quality education and compel needed reform.