



## ADVOCATES FOR CHILDREN

*Helping children succeed in school*

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### NEWS RELEASE

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#### **Transitioning to Nowhere: An Analysis of the Planning and Provision of Transition Services to Students with Disabilities in New York City**

*New York City.* Approximately 13,000 students with disabilities exit the New York City public school system each year. The New York City Department of Education is responsible for preparing these individuals for independent living, vocational training, employment, higher education, and the other post-secondary opportunities awaiting them. Despite this obligation, the Department does not have sufficient systems or programs in place to prepare students with disabilities for their transition to life after high school, according to a report released today by Advocates for Children of New York, Inc.

Kim Sweet, Executive Director of Advocates for Children, said, “For students with disabilities, transitioning to adulthood is likely to require more thought and planning than it does for others. The Department of Education is stranding thousands of the most vulnerable students without the support they need to prepare for their futures. We call on the Department to commit the resources necessary to address this serious problem.”

In order to assess the state of transition services for New York City students with disabilities, the report analyzed 264 student records called Individualized Education Programs or IEPs. An IEP is the document that indicates what services, including transition services, must be provided to a student with a disability each year.



The report found significant failures in the planning and provision of transition services. In over 26% of the IEPs reviewed, the New York City Department of Education failed to conduct any transition planning whatsoever. In the rest of the IEPs, the transition plans failed to establish measurable goals, clearly identify services to be provided, or incorporate the individual student's needs, strengths, preferences, and interests. The transition plans also failed to indicate adequately the academic coursework, credits, and support services that the students required to earn their high school diplomas and achieve their long-term goals.

Although federal law requires the Department to include students in developing their own transition plans, students participated in creating only 31% of the plans reviewed. Nohel Marte, a student with a disability who left the public school system without a diploma in the 2005-2006 school year, explained, "I never heard of transition services during my time in the school system. I never sat down with anyone from the Department of Education to discuss my future. I never received any help preparing for my life after school. The school system failed me and I am afraid that it will continue to fail others."

The Department of Education completed a self-review for the 2005-2006 academic year that bolsters the findings in the report. In particular, the Department reported to the New York State Education Department that in a review of at least 100 IEPs, not a single one complied fully with the legal requirements for transition planning.

Congress began requiring school districts to provide transition services in 1990 to address dismal graduation and employment rates for individuals with disabilities. In New York City, data continues to indicate that students with disabilities are leaving the school system unprepared for college, work, and other productive pursuits. In the 2005-2006 school year, 82% of students with disabilities who left the New York City public school system did so without a regular high school diploma or its equivalent.



In 2005, working-age people with disabilities in New York State had an employment rate of only 35.7%, as compared to 76.6% for their non-disabled peers.

***The full report can be downloaded from [www.advocatesforchildren.org](http://www.advocatesforchildren.org).***

*For additional information, the following persons are available to talk to the press:*

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