



# **Educational Advocacy:**

## **What you need to know for your older youth clients**

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# Education is an entitlement for all youth



# Who are our youth clients?

- Under age 18
- Ages 18 - 21



# Age makes a difference

- Under age 18
  - Must work with parent, guardian or surrogate
  - No limitations based on credits
- Ages 18 - 21
  - Youth is decision maker
  - Limitations for age 19 and older based on number of credits (Conn. Gen. Stat. 10-220)

# State high school graduation requirements

- Public Act 17-42 – New standards for class of 2023
  - Extends current graduation requirements by two more years.
  - Freshman class of 2019-2020/graduating class of 2023 will be the first class to be held the new standard
  - State Board of Ed. to establish Subject Matter Content mastery standards

Conn. Gen. Stat. 10-221a



# State graduation requirements

## Current requirements:

20 total credits:

- 4 English
- 3 Math
- 3 Social Studies, including  $\frac{1}{2}$  credit in Civics
- 2 Science
- 1 Arts or Vocational
- 1 P.E.

## New requirements:

25 total credits:

- 9 credits in humanities (includes English, Social Studies, Civics and the arts)
- 9 credits in STEM
- 1 credit in health
- 1 credit in PE
- 1 credit in World Language
- 1 credit in mastery based diploma assessment

# State law provides school districts flexibility

- Districts must meet or exceed state standards
- Are granted flexibility in awarding credits through alternate means
  - ✓ Online coursework
  - ✓ Obtaining world language credit through credit earned in middle school
  - ✓ Through an alternate approved provider of higher education
  - ✓ Community service hours
  - ✓ Other alternatives for students having difficulty with mastery

# Alternatives to traditional diploma path

- State Credit Diploma Program
  - Credit-based options for youth in state custody
  - Based on state minimum requirement of 20 credits
  - Used for youth in state care: USD 1, 2 or 3
  - Also may be offered by school districts through adult education programming
- GED
  - Test-based alternative
  - Requires certain level of mastery





# Basic educational rights for all students

- School Choice
  - [Choiceeducation.org](http://Choiceeducation.org)
  - Local district options



- Student success plans
  - Grade 6 through high school graduation  
Conn. Gen. Stat. 10-221a

# Basic educational rights for all students

- Tiered interventions through RTI/SRBI
  - Academic and social
  - Emotional and behavioral
- Safe school climate
  - Safe school climate plans & safe school climate coordinator & specialist

Conn. Gen. Stat. 10-222d, 222g and 222k



# Youth in juvenile or criminal justice system

- Under age 18
  - Right to full education in confinement
- Ages 18 and over
  - More limited, apt to receive adult education



# Youth in juvenile or criminal justice system

## All Youth

- Right to automatic re-entry, including expeditious transfer of records
- Right to receive credit for work completed while confined
  - Partial credit is important, especially for older youth
  - Assessment of credits upon re-entry is key

Conn. Gen. Stats. 10-186(e), 10-220h, 10-233k, 10-253

# Alternative education programs

Definition: “a school or program maintained and operated by a local or regional board of education that is offered to students in a nontraditional educational setting and addresses the social, emotional, behavioral and academic needs of such students”

- Student and/or guardian must consent
- Program must be approved and transparent
- Program must provide robust educational programming
  - Online alternatives acceptable
- May/may not accommodate special education students

Conn. Gen. Stat. 10-74j, 10-74k

Also see *Guidelines for Alternative Education Settings*, CT State Department of Education, 10/16

# Issue spotting

## Tasha

- Age 17
- In detention for 3 months
- Returning to home community

Can/should Tasha return to her former school?



# Issue spotting

## Anthony

- Age 19
- Confinement for one year
- Convicted of illegal possession of firearm
- Entered confinement with 14 credits

Can/should Anthony return to his former school?

- Implications

# Other laws for justice involved youth

- DCF can notify district that youth is potentially dangerous

Conn. Gen. Stat 10-233k

- School cannot expel youth after confinement

Conn. Gen. Stat. 10-233d





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# Legal rights for youth moving around

Homeless youth: Youth who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence. May be couch surfing or “doubling up,” living in transitional shelters, in a public or private place not designed for humans to live, i.e. parks, abandoned buildings

## Rights

- School choice (former or current)
- Immediate enrollment
- Transportation while homeless
- Removing barriers to get credit for coursework at prior school
- Can request a hearing (Residency Hearing) Conn. Gen. Stat. 10-186

42 U.S.C. § 11301 *et seq.*

# Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act

- General Education programming for students with disabilities
  - Applies to schools (and other public agencies)
  - Protects individuals with physical or mental impairments from discrimination
  - Students with disabilities and/or disabling medical conditions may qualify
    - Schools must provide plan with accommodations

# Qualifying for 504

Youth must have physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major activities, such as:

- walking
- seeing
- hearing
- breathing
- learning and thinking



# Important information about 504

- Regular education accommodation versus special education
- Same access to curriculum as regular education students
- May offer variety of accommodations
  - Frequent breaks
  - Extended time on tests
  - Regular access to the nurse
- May provide related services
  - Social work, language services, counseling, nursing services, other

# 504 process

- Obtain medical diagnosis
- Request meeting with school
- Request/agree upon additional evaluation, if desired/necessary
- Develop plan to fit student's unique needs
- Periodic plan review

# Issue spotting

Betsy

- Seizure disorder, but no seizures in the last year
- Not on medication
- Recently diagnosed with Depressive Disorder NOS

Should Betsy receive 504 accommodations?  
What would the process be?



## Added benefit

Health care plan for Betsy

- Created with doctor's input
- Included as part of 504 plan
- Provides detailed information if disabling condition ensues



# 504 applies to colleges and universities

- Students receiving special education services can pursue 504 accommodations at college level
- Student must proactively seek accommodations and provide college/university with documentation
- Affirmative protection from discrimination due to disability

# Questions?

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