



KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

Puerto Rican students with disabilities moving to Massachusetts



Your child should get the special education services they need as soon as they start school

The services should be the same as the services your child had in Puerto Rico.

For example:

If your child was in a regular classroom in Puerto Rico, but/and had their own aide, the new school should give your child the same support.

Your child should be able to start school right away

An Individualized Education Program (IEP) tells schools the services your child needs.

The new school may test your child and write a new IEP. But they must let your child go to school while they are testing and making a new IEP.

Schools must not delay services just because parents are still in Puerto Rico and cannot sign the forms. Someone can act “in place of the parent” to make decisions and sign forms.

If you do not have your child’s IEP

Your child should still be able to start school right away.

The new school must **try** to get a copy of your child’s records from Puerto Rico.

If the new school cannot get a copy of your child’s IEP

The school must make a new IEP. They can ask you about the services your child had in Puerto Rico.

If you agree to the new IEP, your child can get services right away.

You may be able to get your child’s IEP faster than the school can. If you have family still in Puerto Rico, ask them to mail you a copy.

Your child may need counseling

Your child may feel “trauma” from

- the hurricane,
- the sudden move, and
- separation from friends and family.

Trauma can keep children from learning. It can also change their behavior.

If your child is suffering from trauma, the new school must include mental health services in your child’s IEP.

Your child may need help with learning in English

If English is not your child's primary language, the new school must test your child's English language skills.

They must compare them with your child's Spanish language skills.

If your child speaks very little English, the new school must give some instruction in Spanish.

Your child's IEP must include these language services.

You have the right to get all communication from your child's school in your primary language

The school must use a qualified interpreter when they need to speak with you.

They must translate all the documents you need into your language.

The interpreter and information in your language must cost you nothing.

The school must give you this information **at the same time** they give other parents information in English.

The school must not ask you to sign a document in English if you do not understand it.

Use the card on MassLegalHelp to ask the school for help in your language
MassLegalHelp.org/interpreter/how-to-get

For questions about your rights and your child's rights to information in your own language

- See Masslegalhelp.org/language-rights,
- Call Massachusetts Law Reform Institute – 617-357-0700 x350

If you need help, contact one of the agencies below:

Where the Agency Works	Agency	Phone Number
Northeastern Massachusetts	Children's Law Center	888-KIDLAW8
Central and Western Massachusetts	Community Legal Aid	855-CLA-LEGAL
Southeastern Massachusetts, Cape, and the Islands	Justice Center of Southeast Massachusetts	800-244-9023
All of Massachusetts	Massachusetts Advocates for Children	617-357-8431
All of Massachusetts	Mental Health Legal Advisors Committee(students with mental disabilities)	800-342-9092
Framingham Area	MetroWest Legal Services	508-620-1830



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www.massadvocates.org

This flyer was prepared by Massachusetts Advocates for Children on behalf of the Education Law Task Force subcommittee on Latinos and Special Education.