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Welcome to Massachusetts Advocates for Children (MAC)! We are pleased that you are here to do your fellowship with us. This guide will give you a lot of information about working at MAC. Some of this information is about MAC and what we do in our jobs as advocates. Some of it is about what kind of work you will be doing at MAC. There is also information about the way things are done in the MAC office.

This guide is in three sections:

1. Section one is an introduction to MAC
2. Section two is about your job responsibilities
3. Section three is about MAC staff, office, and procedures

This goal of the Young Adult Leaders Fellowship is: To learn skills needed to advocate for yourself and other youth with disabilities.

Advocate means to speak up or argue for something that you think is right. You can advocate or speak up for what you think is right for yourself or for someone else.
Section One - Introduction to MAC

MAC History

MAC was started over 40 years ago by a man named Hubie Jones. Hubie found out that there were children with disabilities in Boston who were not in school. Back then, there were no education laws for people with disabilities.

Hubie and some people formed a group and wrote a paper called *The Way We Go To School* (click to see the report). This paper was about children with disabilities not getting an education.

Hubie and the group of people were called The Taskforce for Children out of School. Because The Taskforce for Children out of School wrote the book, *The Way We Go To School*, they made everyone aware of the problems. Eventually,
Massachusetts created laws that say that school districts have to allow students with disabilities to go to school. After that, the whole country made the same type of laws. Now all children with disabilities in the United States are protected by these laws called special education laws. These are the laws that set up the IEP team meeting process that you probably know about from when you were in school.

MAC works to make sure that school districts follow special education laws. The laws exist to make sure that children with disabilities get the education they need. Before special education laws were passed children with disabilities were not allowed to go to school. If they did get to go to school they were usually educated separately from children without disabilities.

Today, students with disabilities have the right to be included with children without disabilities as much as possible. They have the right to get services to help them. Some students may need a service like speech or occupational therapy. A student might need a different educational placement so they can learn.
MAC Now

MAC has **18 employees**. Some are full time employees and some are part-time. Some employees have their office at 25 Kingston St. in Boston. Others are located at a different location. Since there are so many projects many of the employees are working on different things. Sometimes they are not in the office. Some are in the community, in schools at meetings, giving trainings to parents and professionals, and at the State House meeting with legislators doing their work.

MAC has many different projects. MAC has 5 projects that are about helping children with their education. These are the projects. Click on the links to see more about them.

1. **Autism Special Education Legal Support Center** – we call it “The Autism Center”

2. **Children’s Law Support Project**
   - Discipline
   - Helpline

3. **Boston School Reform**

4. **Trauma and Learning Policy Initiative (TLPI)**

5. **Statewide Special Education**
   - Transition
   - Somerville Special Education Advocacy Project (SSEAP)
Some of MAC staff work on only one of these projects. Others work on more than one.

**CLICK HERE** for the organizational chart to see projects and staff jobs.

**MAC and Advocacy**

MAC uses a “multi-pronged” way to do advocacy. Multi-pronged means having many separate parts. It also means using many different ways to handle a problem. There are different types of advocacy and MAC uses more than one type.

The types of advocacy that MAC uses are:

- Helpline
- Case Advocacy
- Legislative Advocacy
- Partnerships
- Workshops
Each type of advocacy is explained below. There will be an example of each type of advocacy. The example will be about how MAC’s Autism Center helped the anti-bullying law pass in this state. The examples will be in a yellow box after each type of advocacy is explained.
People that call the MAC Helpline can talk to staff to get information about special education laws. This information can help them to make sure children with autism and other disabilities get the services they need.

Sometimes Helpline staff talks to the parent calling and gives advice. Sometimes parents send in school records and IEPs for Helpline staff to look at and give advice. MAC staff and volunteers work the Helpline.

Example

Massachusetts has had an anti-bullying law since 2010. Massachusetts did not have any anti-bullying laws before 2010. MAC’s Autism Center got a lot of calls from parents about bullying. We learned that a new law was needed from these calls. Parents were worried because they thought their children with autism and other disabilities were getting bullied at school. MAC Helpline staff gave parents information about special education laws. They also gave parents advice and ideas of some things they could do. In some cases parents gave Helpline staff school papers for them to look at.
MAC advocates and lawyers help families get school services their children are supposed to get by law. MAC advocates and lawyers sometimes give advice to people about special education and the IEP process. Sometimes they go to IEP meetings with parents/students to help make or change the IEP. When an advocate or lawyer goes to an IEP meeting with parents we call this advocacy. When parents and schools can’t agree sometimes they have to go to a hearing. In special education law a hearing is like going to court.

Example

MAC lawyers and advocates helped some of the parents who had children with autism that were worried about bullying. They learned more about why new laws were needed to help protect children with autism from bullying. Lawyers and advocates went to IEP meetings and helped the IEP team understand what IEP services were needed to help stop bullying.
MAC works to make or change laws all over Massachusetts. These laws help children with autism and other disabilities to get services and supports they need to so that they can learn.

Example

MAC heard about bullying from many parents who have children with autism. MAC talked to parents that called the Helpline and at workshops about bullying. Professionals that work with children with autism and other disabilities talked to MAC about bullying too. MAC got information from parents and professionals around the state that showed the huge numbers of children with autism that were harmed by bullying. MAC wrote a report called Targeted, Taunted, Tormented: the Bullying of Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (Click link to see this report).

MAC gave this report to lawmakers, educators, and the press. The report showed them how important it was to pass a new law about bullying. The new law would protect children with autism and other disabilities from bullying.
MAC has partners in the community who are also working to make schools fair for students with disabilities. Some good examples of these are parent organizations, like Boston Public Schools Special Education Parent Advisory Council (SEPAC). Other partners are advocacy offices like the Disability Law Center, and the Federation for Children with Special Needs.

Example

MAC asked our partners to work with us to get a new anti-bullying law passed. MAC and partners told people about the large numbers of children with autism who were hurt because of bullying. MAC worked with other autism, advocacy, and disability groups to do this. MAC worked together to show how bullying hurts children with all types of disabilities. MAC and partners told all the lawmakers why it was important to vote “yes” for the new anti-bullying law. A law was then passed that made bullying against the law.
MAC staff gives workshops for parents of children with autism and other disabilities. A workshop is like a class. Sometimes we call a workshop a training. People go to workshops, or trainings, to learn about something. MAC’s workshops teach parents about special education laws. MAC also does workshops for teachers, doctors, psychologists and others who work with children with autism and other disabilities. The workshops are usually not at the MAC office. The workshops are at places like schools, conferences, in the community, or health centers. MAC does workshops for parents and professionals all over Massachusetts.

Example

MAC created a new workshop after the law was passed. The new workshop told parents, teachers, and doctors about the anti-bullying law. MAC told these people how the law can help students with autism and other disabilities.
Section Two - Job responsibilities

Things you will be doing at MAC

In the beginning you will do a lot of following people who work at MAC, or shadowing (this means going to a meeting to watch and learn what to do at meetings).

You will shadow MAC staff at trainings at the statehouse,
at IEP meetings and mediations.

You will also write a daily journal on the computer and share it with the fellowship director, your supervisor and the Fellowship Advisor.
You will read and learn about different laws and about special education law.

You will do some office work, things like helping the office manager with different office tasks such as:

- filing
- copying
- Mailing
- daily data entry
Job Skills

There will be times when you have questions or have other needs.

You need to know what to do if you:

- have a question
- get frustrated
- need to go home because you’re not feeling well
- are confused about when more than one person gives you something to do
If these things happen, follow these steps:

1. e-mail or talk to your supervisor any time with questions or things that you’re worried about. It is always important to ask questions if you are unsure or confused.

2. e-mail or talk to the fellowship director (especially if your supervisor is not around).

3. talk with legal interns to see if they can give you advice.

4. ask to take a break (or email your supervisor that you are taking a short break).

You will also learn other job skills needed to work well with people at your job.

Examples of these other job skills include:

- how to dress for work
being on time for work

how to act during meetings

what to do if you are having a hard time finishing something

the way you communicate without using words, this could mean gestures, facial expressions, and your tone of voice
what to do if you are not sure how to do something you are asked to do

your attitude

- showing that you are interested in your job
- showing respect for other people’s opinions even if you disagree with them

There are many other important job skills like these. Your supervisor will be helping you work on these skills during your time at MAC.

MAC Office Meetings

You will go to staff meetings and project meetings. These are two separate meetings and are held on different days. Usually everyone at MAC goes to the staff meetings. People that work on a certain project go to that project meeting.
For example, people that work on the Autism Center project go to the autism staff meetings.

Before each meeting, you will be given a copy of the agenda for meetings. Your supervisor will review the agenda with you before meetings.

Your supervisor will tell you which meetings you need to go to. Some of the meetings you might be required to go to are:

- MAC staff meetings – these are held every other Tuesday.
- Autism staff meetings – these are held every other Tuesday. They are on the Tuesdays that we don’t have the MAC staff meeting.
- Boston Special Education Transition meeting (B-SET) – these meetings are held every other Friday.
- Ask your supervisor what exact dates the meetings are scheduled.
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Relationships at work

At MAC you will work with many different kinds of people. Some will be MAC staff members. Some will be law interns. And some will be volunteers. You will also meet parents and some children who need help from MAC.

It is important to treat the people you meet in a professional way at all times. Working in a professional way is different from how we act with our friends and our families outside of work. Working in a professional way means keeping conversations work-related. It’s OK to share some personal information but if too much is shared, it is no longer professional. If you’re not sure how much personal information to share, ask your supervisor or the fellowship director for advice in private.

It is always important to “read the room”. Reading the room means paying attention to what other people are talking about. This can help you to understand what kind of personal information to share with coworkers. It is also important to remember that no matter how close we feel to people we work with, work relationships are still professional relationships.
Confidentiality

Confidential means private. When information is said to be confidential, it means that it is not OK to talk about it to anyone outside of MAC. A lot of our work at MAC is confidential. Many times at meetings we will talk about people that we are helping. Anything we say about someone or their situation at meetings is confidential.

Some examples of confidential things that we may talk about are:

- someone’s diagnosis or disability
- how much money someone makes or has
- medications someone takes
information about someone’s family

where a person lives or if they are homeless

anything about the student’s school program, the student’s parent, or their legal case

Sometimes people outside of the office might ask details about the people we help. If this happens, we must say that we are not allowed to discuss things about the people we help because this is confidential information.
Section Three - Fellowship Staff, Office, and Procedures

Fellowship Staff

Fellowship Supervisor
MAC’s advocate will be your direct supervisor.

You will meet with the advocate for most of your work. You will meet with the fellowship director for supervision for some of your work too. You will also work with other individuals at MAC. Please check with your supervisor if someone else asks you to do something. The work that you do at MAC will be very important and some of it will have due dates. If your supervisor isn’t in the office please check with the fellowship director. Your supervisor and the fellowship director will know which works needs to be done first. You will learn what work must be done before other work.
Fellowship Advisor
You will also spend time with the Fellowship Advisor from the Institute for Community Inclusion. The Institute for Community Inclusion is also called the ICI.

The Fellowship Advisor works with the Fellow's supervisor and the Fellow to help figure out if there are supports that will help the Fellow be successful in their job at MAC. Supports are things like photos, schedules, and guides that make it easier to do things like use the copying machine or go to a staff meeting or to a meeting at the State House. The Fellowship Advisor also does evaluations to see how the fellow is doing at MAC.

MAC Office Manager
The MAC office manager’s desk is in the middle of the office next to the elevators. The office manager knows about all things related to the office. She can tell you about the copy machine, where to find paper or office supplies, give computer help, and more.

Other Staff Members
You will meet and work with other staff members while you are at MAC. Your supervisor will tell you when you will be working with other staff members. Click here for a list of MAC staff members. When you get to the MAC staff webpage, you will be able to see their pictures by clicking on their names.
MAC Office

Offices
There are many offices at MAC. Some have regular doors. Others do not have doors. Some offices have one person, some offices have more people. Some offices have different people on different days.

Your office
Your office will be next to the fellowship director’s office. You will share an office with legal interns. Legal interns are law students who come to MAC to get some experience while they are still in school to become lawyers. Most legal interns are at MAC for a few months.

Conference room
There is one conference room at MAC. The conference room is used for meetings and sometimes it is used for other projects. MAC staff use a schedule to reserve the room for meetings. Sometimes there is a conflict. There
may be two meetings scheduled at the same time. If this happens, one meeting usually goes to one of the offices to meet while the other stays in the conference room.

**Kitchen**

There is one kitchen at MAC. The kitchen has a small refrigerator, a water cooler, microwave, and coffee/tea maker. There are also plastic utensils and napkins. Some employees bring their lunch and snacks to work and keep them in the refrigerator. You can do this too. We all clean up after ourselves and make sure we leave the kitchen clean when we are finished.
First Aid Kit
There is a first aid kit in the kitchen. The first aid kit is in the cabinet above the microwave oven. There are bandages, Band-Aids, and medicine for pain (like Tylenol) in the cabinet.

Bathrooms
There are three bathrooms at MAC. All bathrooms are for men and women. You can use any of the three bathrooms.
Procedures

Contact Information
Contact information is what you need to know to get in touch with someone. You will have your own contact information while you are at MAC. You will have your own office extension and email address. You will also need contact information for MAC staff members. Please talk to your supervisor or the office manager to get this contact information.

Schedule
You will have a schedule when you work at MAC. Your supervisor will give you your schedule. You can talk to your supervisor if you need to change your schedule in any way.
Keys
You will be given your own set of keys to the building doors and elevator. The office manager will give you these keys. At the end of the fellowship, you will return your keys to the office manager.

Lunch Break
You get a 30 minute lunch break. Some people eat lunch at their desks. Some people eat together in an office or sometimes in the conference room. Some people go out to lunch. You can decide which you would like to do.
MAC staff, interns, and the Fellow try to eat lunch together as a group on one of the days that you are in the office. Your supervisor will let you know when your lunch break will be and on what day we eat together. On most days, your lunch break will be at the same time every day. But other days your lunch time will be different because of the things you will be doing outside of the office or because you may need to get work done at a certain time.

**Calling in Sick**

If you are sick and can’t come to work, please call or email your supervisor or the fellowship director to let them know. If you can’t contact them, call the office manager to let her know. If no one is around to tell that you will be out sick, please send your supervisor a text to let her know. Your supervisor will give you her cell phone number.
**Vacation**
You will have 2 weeks of paid vacation time during your fellowship at MAC. This means that you can take time off and still get paid for it.

**Personal Days**
You also have two personal days. These are days that you can take off if you have something to do like go to the dentist or doctor. There could be other reasons to take a personal day off too.
If you need time off please talk to your supervisor or the fellowship director about it. They will let you know when it’s OK to take off. You can talk to them in person, on the phone, or by email.

**Sick Days**

You will have 6 days of paid sick time during your fellowship at MAC. This means that you will get paid when you are out sick for up to 6 days. You will not get paid for the time you are out sick over 6 days.
Summary: Your Fellowship at MAC

The Young Adult Leaders Fellowship will give you many chances for learning. You will learn about special education law by going to team meetings and mediations.
You will learn how to be a part of a workshop to teach others about disabilities.

You will learn to talk to legislators when you go to the State House.
You will also learn about working in a professional office by going to meetings and doing tasks at MAC.

By doing all of these things, you will learn the skills to advocate for yourself and other youth with disabilities.

We hope that you enjoy your time at MAC, and we look forward to working with you over the next year.