



DPC Issue Brief

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for Texans with disabilities.

Title: Participation of Students with Disabilities in Graduation Ceremonies with their Same-age Peers

Background: In Texas, participation in high school graduation ceremonies is governed by local school district policies. Some school districts have policies restricting participation in graduation to only those students receiving a diploma.

Students with disabilities who still need special education services are allowed to continue receiving services from the school district through the school year in which they turn 21. Typically these services are provided at a setting other than a public school, such as a community college or job site. However, these students often want to participate in graduation activities with the students their age who have been their high school classmates. Some school districts are not allowing them to do so.

Impact of Legislation: Advocacy, Inc. represented a student on this issue several years ago. He had already ordered his cap and gown, as well as invitations. The district then told him he couldn't participate, but could instead come back at age 20 or 21 (whenever he finished services) and participate with those students. Advocacy, Inc. lost the due process hearing, and again in federal court because no federal or state law had been violated.

Recommendation: The Disability Policy Consortium (DPC) recommends that the Texas Legislature supports state legislation requiring school districts to allow students with disabilities to participate in graduation ceremonies with their same-age peers, even if they will continue to receive special education services from the district after high school.

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MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS: *Statewide Members:* Advocacy, Incorporated, Brain Injury Association of Texas, Coalition of Texans with Disabilities, Epilepsy Coalition of Texas, The Institute for Disability Access/ADAPT, Lone Star Association for Persons in Supported Employment, Mental Health Association in Texas, National Alliance for the Mentally Ill of Texas, National Multiple Sclerosis Society of Texas, Texas Advocates, Texas AIDS Network, Texas Association of Centers for Independent Living, Texas Association of the Deaf, Texas Center for Disability Studies/ Texas Technology Access Project, Texas Council for Developmental Disabilities, Texas Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health, Texas Legal Services Center, Texas Mental Health Consumers, Texas State Independent Living Council, Texas State Sickle Cell Disease Association of America, The Center on Disability and Development at Texas A&M University, Council for Families for Children, United Cerebral Palsy of Texas, The Spina Bifida Association of Texas, Inc., and the Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance of Texas. *Local Members:* Epilepsy Foundation Central & South Texas, REACH Resource Centers on Independent Living – Dallas, Fort Worth and Denton, Corpus Christi Committee for Persons with Disabilities, Goodwill of Central Texas and Coastal Bend Center for Independent Living

Allies: The Arc of Texas and Unlocking Autism