



Harris County Juvenile Probation Department

DisabilityRights
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**Annual Report of the Education Advocacy
and Support Services Program –
A Partnership Between the Harris County
Juvenile Probation Department and
Disability Rights Texas**

July 1, 2018 – June 30, 2019



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December 4, 2019

Executive Summary

The Education Advocacy Program entered into its fourth year providing education advocacy and support services to Harris County Juvenile Probation Department (HCJPD)-involved youth, families, and staff on July 1, 2018. In August 2018, Disability Rights Texas (DRTx) joined forces with HCJPD's three Education Specialists. By uniting the two sides of our program, we were able to capture our combined efforts to ensure probation-involved youth receive the education services they need to successfully navigate probation. During the 2018 – 19 program year, HCJPD staff submitted a record **716 referrals!** With our increased resources, we were able to **accept 690 referrals – 95% of referrals received –** and provided services in 493 of those cases.

Once again we provided assistance with a variety of education-related issues, including the eligibility process for disability services at school; need for improved behavioral supports, disability services, and language support services; truancy; denial of enrollment; services for youth who are several grade levels behind and/or seeking enrollment in non-disciplinary alternative education programs; bullying; and homelessness. To address these issues, we provided direct advocacy services to probation-involved youth and families, as well as robust technical assistance to HCJPD staff and caregivers to help them resolve school-related problems. Included in our annual report are examples of the quality and depth of the advocacy and support services provided by each member of the Education Advocacy Program Team.

During our fourth program year, we **attended 327 meetings with schools** and can report that **100% of our direct representation cases resulted in an offer of improved services from school districts.** In 86% of those cases, families overcame barriers to utilize those improved services and obtain favorable educational outcomes! We also found that **92% of cases where technical assistance and advice was provided** to the family during our third program year **were not re-referred** to our program for additional assistance this past program year. This shows that those services have been effective in helping families and HCJPD staff resolve educational concerns.

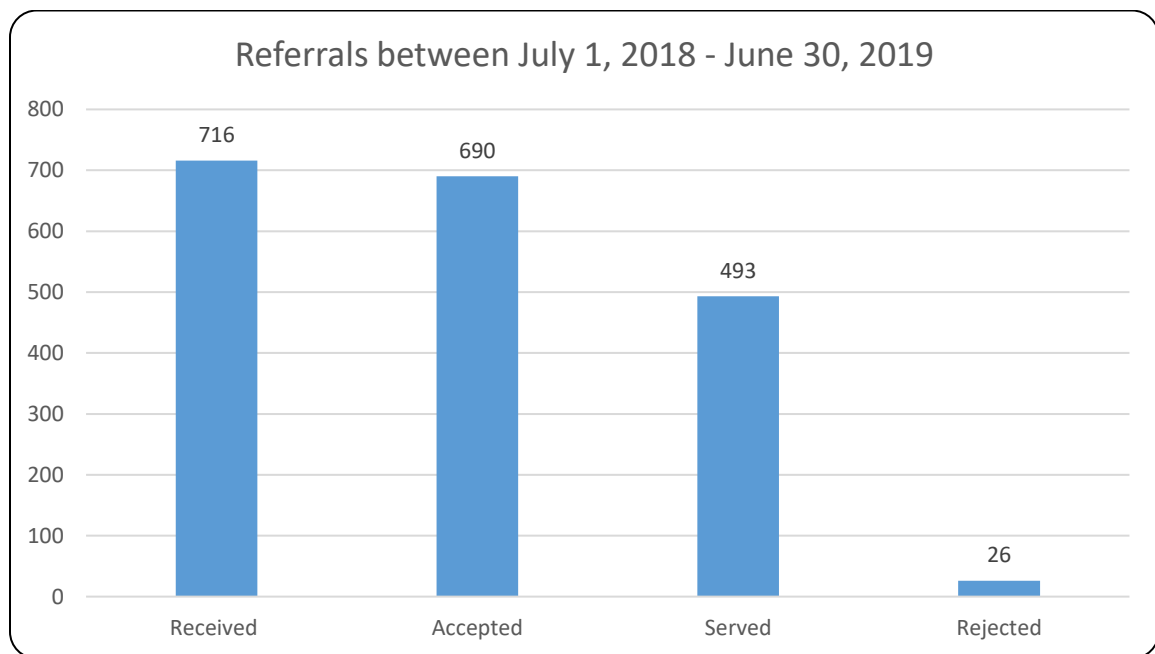
Finally, the report describes the **systemic victories** we achieved, which this year includes **passage of state-wide legislation** that will assist probation-involved youth with transition back to school following release from juvenile justice facilities and disciplinary alternative education programs.

I. Referrals

a. Referrals Continue to Increase

During the previous reporting year, we received 456 referrals from HCJPD staff. Nearly all of these referrals were submitted by JPOs who office out of the community units. By comparison, we received a whopping 716 referrals during the 2018 – 19 program year. The addition of the HCJPD Education Specialists can account for a small portion of this increase. Previously, all referrals from specialty courts, court services, and forensics were being directed to the HCJPD Education Specialists so were not being tracked by or included in the numbers for the DRTx side of the program. Only 76 referrals came from departments outside of the CUPS offices during this reporting period, which means 640 of the 716 referrals were still made by JPOs housed at the CUPS offices. The additional 184 referrals from those offices constitutes a 40% increase in referrals from the previous year.

Of the referrals received this year, DRTx accepted 690. Of the accepted referrals, 197 were closed without being able to provide services, bringing the total number of accepted referrals where services were provided to 493. DRTx only rejected 26 referrals this past year.



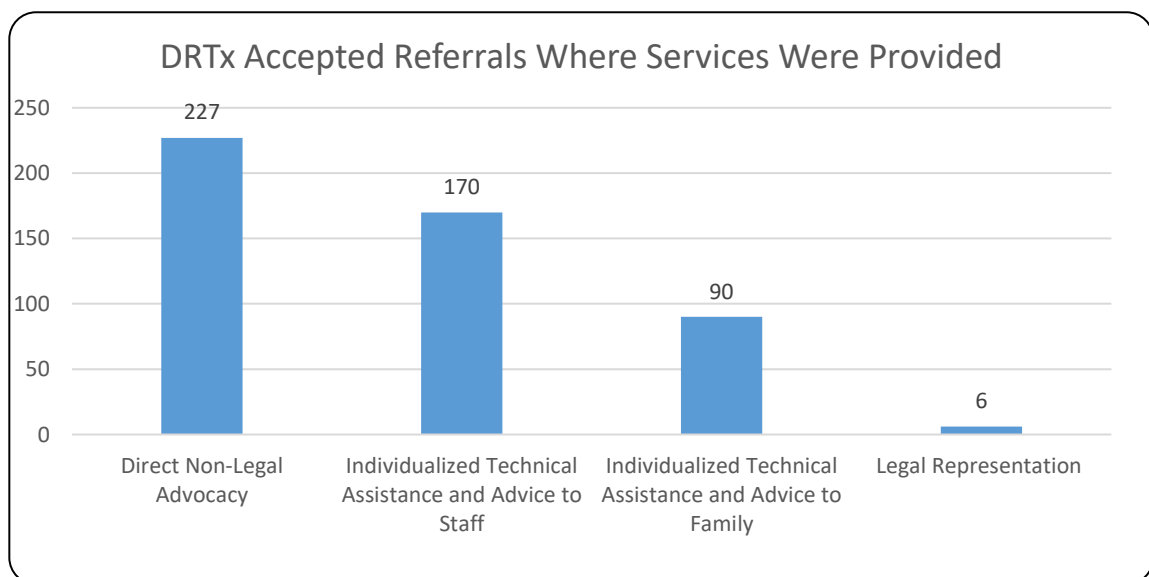
As with all other years, the most common reason why a case was closed without services being provided was because we were not able to make contact with the family to initiate services, or the parent failed to attend the initial client meeting. In fact, that was the case in 91 of the 197 cases that were accepted, but closed without services being provided. In 61 cases, the parent declined our services. Twenty-seven (27) cases were closed without services because we were not able to initiate services before the youth was brought into

HCJPD custody, left for rehab, moved out of the county, or became absent without permission. In eleven of the cases, the school-related problem was resolved prior to initiating services. Finally, in four of the cases, the youth terminated probation before we were able to initiate services and the other three were withdrawn by the JPO.

b. Continuing Tiered Services

With the addition of the HCJPD Education Specialists, we had increased capacity to serve more youth, families, and HCJPD staff so were able to accept the vast majority of referrals. This increased capacity also allowed us to handle more cases at a higher level of assistance. We stayed within our original model of tiered services with the bulk of JPOs and families receiving technical assistance and advice. Of the 493 referrals where services were provided, Individualized Technical Assistance and Advice to the JPO was provided for 170 referrals and Individualized Technical Assistance and Advice to the family was provided for 90 referrals for a total of 260 technical assistance cases. We are pleased to report that 92% of cases where technical assistance was provided to the JPO or family during our third program year were not re-referred to us during our fourth program year. We attribute the low number of repeat referrals to the success of the technical assistance provided to staff and families in helping them resolve many of the problems their youth experience at school.

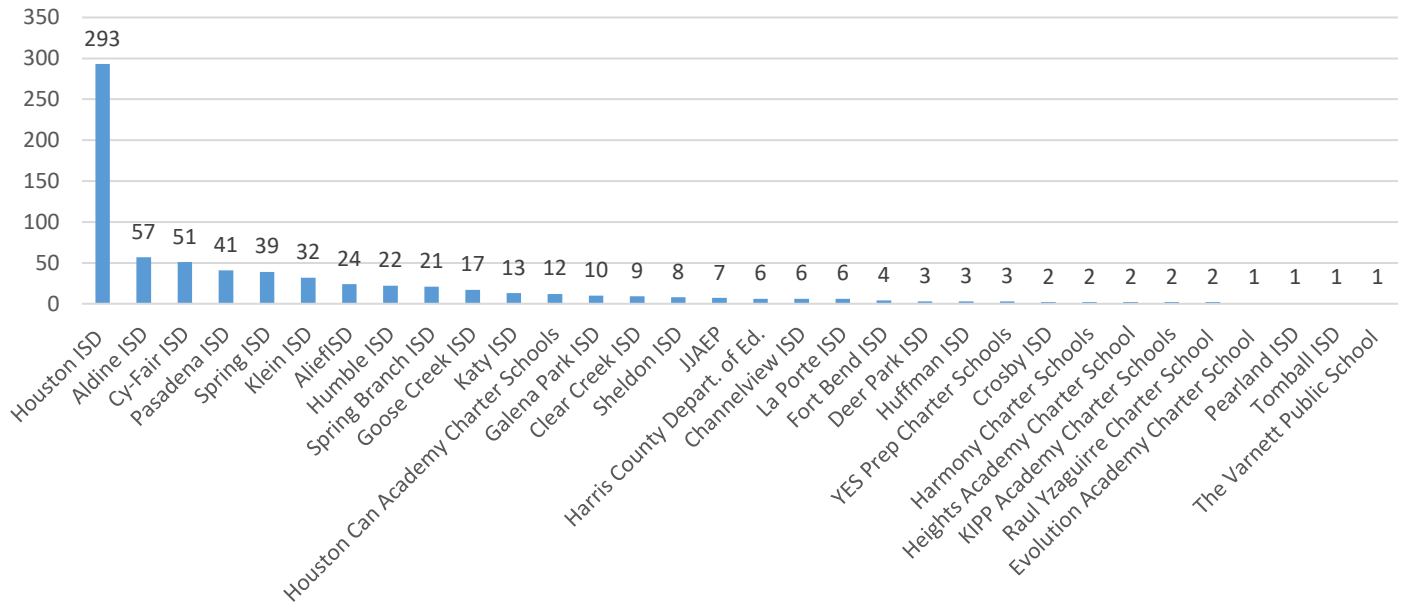
Direct Non-Legal Advocacy was provided for 227 referrals, and six referrals required Direct Legal Assistance. Although a high number, we still provided more technical assistance and advice than direct assistance during this past program year. When we provide direct representation in a case, we meet with school administrators, counselors, attend 504 and ARD meetings, and negotiate with district level staff to resolve youth and caregiver concerns. It typically takes more than one meeting to obtain the result we are seeking in a case so over the course of the 2018 – 19 school year, we attended 327 meetings to advocate for the rights of probation-involved youth and improve their educational outcomes.



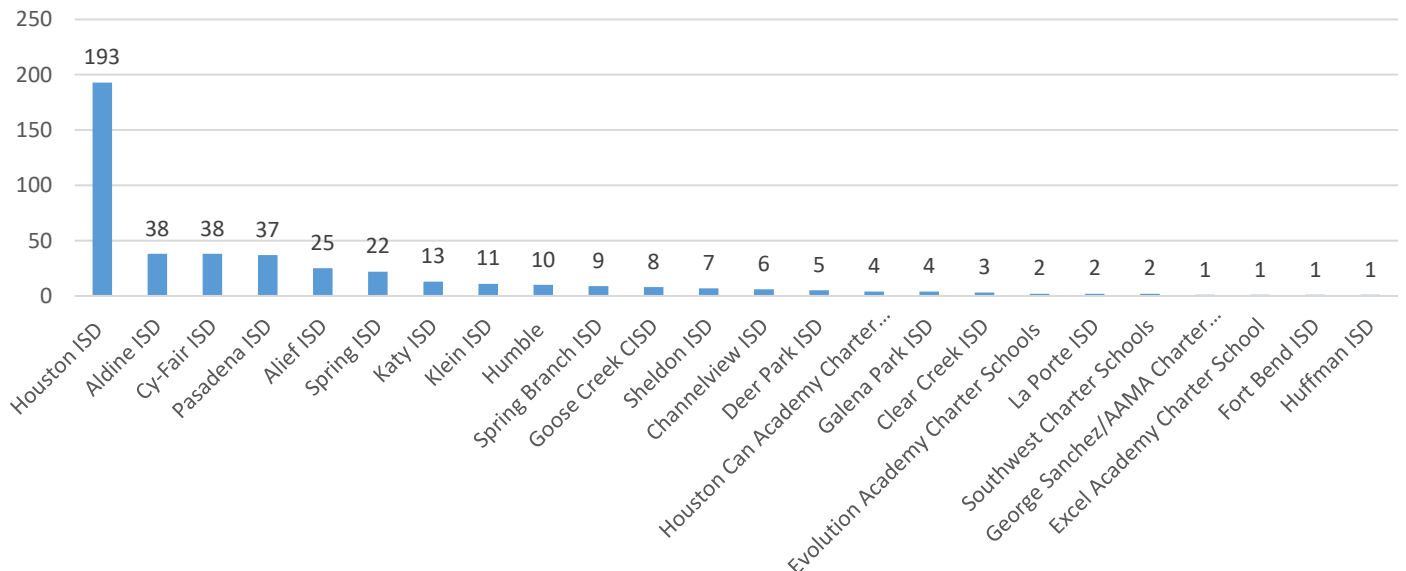
c. Referrals by School District

Our program received referrals for 33 school districts and charter schools in Harris County during this program year. The chart below illustrates the breakdown of those referrals. The chart from the previous year is included for comparison purposes. Notably, the top four school districts remained the same with Houston ISD accounting for the vast majority of referrals, followed by Aldine ISD, Cy-Fair ISD, and Pasadena ISD. Alief ISD surpassed Spring ISD for number of referrals during this reporting period, but not by many.

Referrals by School District - 2018 - 2019



Referrals by School District - 2017 - 2018

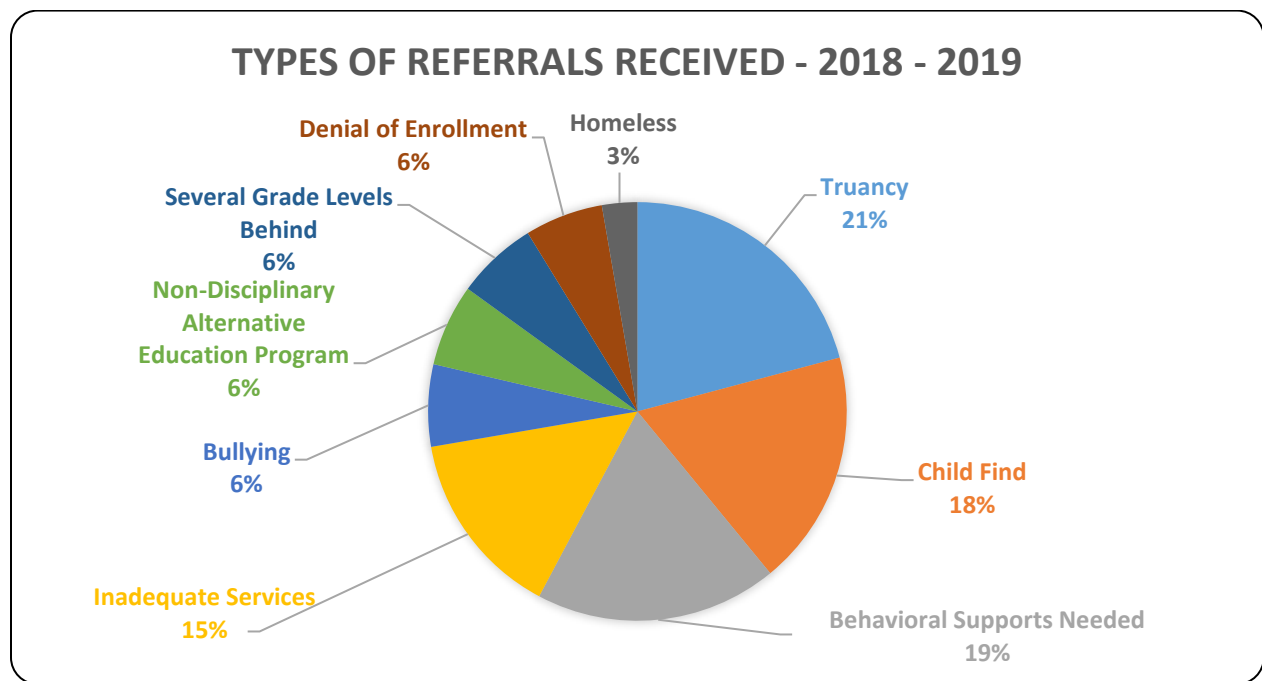


II. Types of Cases Handled and Outcomes

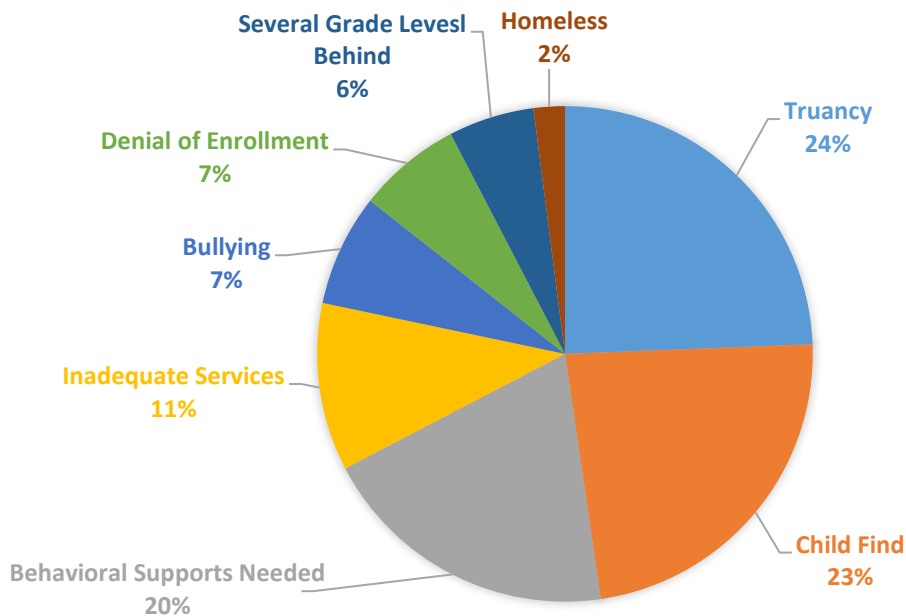
The types of cases DRTx received can be grouped into nine different categories. Most referrals contain more than one problem area to be addressed, making the total number of types of cases greater than the total number of referrals. For this reporting period, we again made great effort to capture our case outcomes. Since we are able to provide more specific outcome information in our direct representation cases, that information is included throughout the report. We are pleased that 100% of direct representation cases resulted in an offer of improved services from school districts, and in 86% of those cases, families overcame barriers to take advantage of those services to obtain favorable educational outcomes.

The reasons we were not able to fully resolve some cases were most often the result of external challenges that prevented families from being able to prioritize education at that time because they are focused on meeting their basic needs, or their child's mental health or substance abuse. Unfortunately, because some probation-involved families are not in a position to be able to take advantage of our services, we may not be able to fully achieve our goals for the case.

A chart showing the breakdown of the types of referrals our program received during the fourth program year is provided below along with a copy of the same chart from the third program year for comparison purposes.



TYPES OF REFERRALS RECEIVED 2017 - 2018



The next section of the report contains a description of each category of referral that was submitted to us over the past year and examples of cases handled in those categories.

a. Truancy

Of the 716 referrals we received, 283 included a problem with truancy, an increase of 23% over last year making this the issue most often referred to our program for the second year in a row. This high percentage can still be attributed to school districts grappling with how to properly implement the truancy laws that went into effect in September 2015. School staff still fail to take the time to meet with students who experience chronic truancy to identify the reasons they do not attend school. Even if school staff do properly identify the underlying cause of a student's chronic truancy, they often lack familiarity with district and community resources and programs to be able to put meaningful truancy prevention measures in place to help the student improve their attendance.

DRTx was able to provide assistance in 185 of those referrals with the main service level being technical assistance to the JPO. This year, we shifted our strategy around the advice we provided to HCJPD staff regarding how to deal with chronic truancy. Instead of focusing on how to encourage schools to identify the underlying cause of a youth's truancy, we developed a resource – the Attendance Intervention Plan – which allows HCJPD staff to work with the youth and family to identify the root cause of the truancy. Once the staff member gathered that information, we found we were in a better position to assist them with determining whether the underlying cause was an issue they could address through referrals to community or department resources, or an issue the school district should

address. We believe this strategy will yield more positive outcomes in cases where truancy is a main barrier to a youth's success at school. Below we provide an example where our revised strategy for addressing truancy yielded a positive outcome.

D.D.

D.D. is 17 year old, 10th grade student. The JPO who referred D.D.'s case expressed concern that D.D. struggled to attend school and eventually dropped out because he did not understand the course work since his native language was not English. At first, we advised the JPO to contact the school district's Multilingual Department for assistance with receiving the services D.D. needed to be able to understand his coursework. D.D. still failed to attend school, however. We then advised the JPO to use the Attendance Intervention Plan tool to try to obtain a better understanding of why D.D. would not attend school. After using the tool, the JPO reported that the youth could not attend school due to being the primary income earner for his family because his father does not speak English and his mother has a disability. D.D. was working every day of the week until 1:00am so could not attend a full school day. Once we identified the root cause of D.D.'s school attendance problems, we were able to make recommendations for non-disciplinary alternative education programs that would better meet his needs than a traditional high school.

b. Child Find

Under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), the federal special education law, school districts must identify, locate and evaluate all children with disabilities within their jurisdiction. This requirement is known as "Child Find." The majority of youth referred to our program already have a diagnosed disability so should at least be eligible to receive basic accommodations under section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 at school. However, most youth are not receiving any disability services at school so a significant portion of the work we do involves assisting with requesting disability services under Section 504 and/or an evaluation for special education services.

During our fourth program year, 248 of the 716 referrals we received were for youth who we believe should be evaluated for disability services at school. In most cases, we provided Individualized Technical Assistance and Advice to either the family or HCJPD staff member. Of the 248 Child Find referrals assigned for assistance, we were able to provide services in 150 of those cases. Where direct services were provided, 80% of those cases resulted in the district agreeing to evaluate the youth for services.

Of interest is that for the three program years for which we have a full school year's worth of data (school year 2016 – 17, 2017 – 18, and 2018 – 19), the percentage of referrals for help with a Child Find issue has decreased. Since Texas is still recovering from the 8.5% cap on special education eligibility that was put in place by the Texas Education Agency back in 2004, and there are still several thousand students who need to be identified and evaluated for special education services, we do not believe the decrease can be attributed to Child Find being less of a problem for probation-involved youth. Instead, we believe this decrease is directly related to the training we have provided to HCJPD staff to help them become more comfortable with identifying youth who need to be evaluated and then assisting

families with requesting evaluations for disability services without making a referral to our program for assistance.

M.A.

M.A. was a 14 year old 8th grade student. His mother had requested an evaluation for special education services in the past and provided documentation from a doctor showing his need for an evaluation, but the school failed to initiate the evaluation process. Without a plan in place to address his behavioral needs at school, M.A. was sent to the school district's Disciplinary Alternative Education Program (DAEP) for behaviors caused by his disabilities. The Education Specialist successfully advocated for M.A. to be returned to his home campus and for the district to conduct an expedited evaluation. M.A. was found eligible for services and had a successful school year. He was promoted to high school for the 2019 – 2020 school year and successfully completed probation.

c. Behavioral Supports Needed

This year, we received 254 referrals indicating a need for improved positive behavioral supports and services at school, which constitutes an increase of 40% from the previous year. Very often, youth exhibit behavioral challenges at school because the school has failed to identify that they have a disability and are in need of services, or the youth is receiving disability services, but those services are not being implemented appropriately or are not sufficient to meet the student's needs. We have found this to be true for the majority of cases where the need for behavioral supports arises so there is significant overlap between these cases and "Child Find" and "Inadequate Services" cases. During this program year, we successfully obtained improved behavioral support services in 88% of direct representation cases.

I.M.

I.M. was a 14 year old 6th grade special education student who struggled with significant behavioral challenges at school and excessive truancy. He was repeatedly disciplined for his behaviors and eventually placed at the district's DAEP. The Education Specialist successfully advocated for I.M. to be returned to his home campus and for a full reevaluation to be conducted, including a formal Functional Behavioral Assessment (FBA) so the district could develop a more appropriate plan for addressing his behaviors. The Education Specialist attended several ARD meetings and obtained agreement for the district to provide I.M. with academic compensatory education services since he had been allowed to fall so far behind in school due to the district's failure to provide him with appropriate behavioral supports, which caused him to miss a significant amount of school and therefore instruction.

d. Inadequate Services

Many of the referrals we received were for youth who were already receiving disability-services either through Section 504 or special education. In these cases, the services being provided were not sufficient for the youth to make progress at school which resulted in failing grades, significant behavioral problems that often led to placement at DAEP and other alternative education settings, problems with chronic truancy, or all of the above.

This was true in 198 of the 716 referrals we received, which constitutes a significant increase in these referrals from the previous year where we only received 102 referrals for inadequate services. We believe this is evidence that HCJPD staff have come to understand the rights of students with disabilities and trust our ability to address these more complex situations.

The “Inadequate Services” category captures our work to address the needs of English Language Learner and pregnant and parenting students since approximately 8% of our casework involved efforts to obtain improved services in those areas as well. Overall, where we provided direct representation to the family, we successfully obtained improved services in 85% of our cases.

T.M.

T.M. was a 17 year old 10th grade special education student who had been placed at the Juvenile Justice Alternative Education Program (JJAEP). T.M. had been at the JJAEP for nearly a year and the school district had failed to hold his annual ARD meeting despite efforts from JJAEP staff to communicate with the school district about T.M.’s services. Once the Education Specialist became involved in the case, it quickly became evident that the school district had forgotten about T.M. at the JJAEP and not been coordinating with staff there to ensure he was receiving special education services. The Education Specialist worked with both the JJAEP and the school district to have T.M. returned to the district as quickly as possible and successfully advocated for the district to provide T.M. with compensatory education services to help him get caught up and back on track academically. Once T.M. was returned to his home district, his case was recommended for early termination of probation.

e. Bullying

More staff reported concerns over probation-involved youth being bullied at school than in the past three years. We received 86 referrals that included a concern about bullying compared to only 68 last year, which constitutes a 25% increase in referrals for this issue. The bullying youth experienced came not only from fellow students, but from school staff as well. When a student experiences bullying at school, there are a number of interventions the school can put in place to protect the student from further harassment including having both parties sign a Stay Away Agreement, extra supervision or an escort during unstructured times, and even transfers to different classrooms or another campus. We successfully resolved 85% of bullying cases where direct assistance was provided.

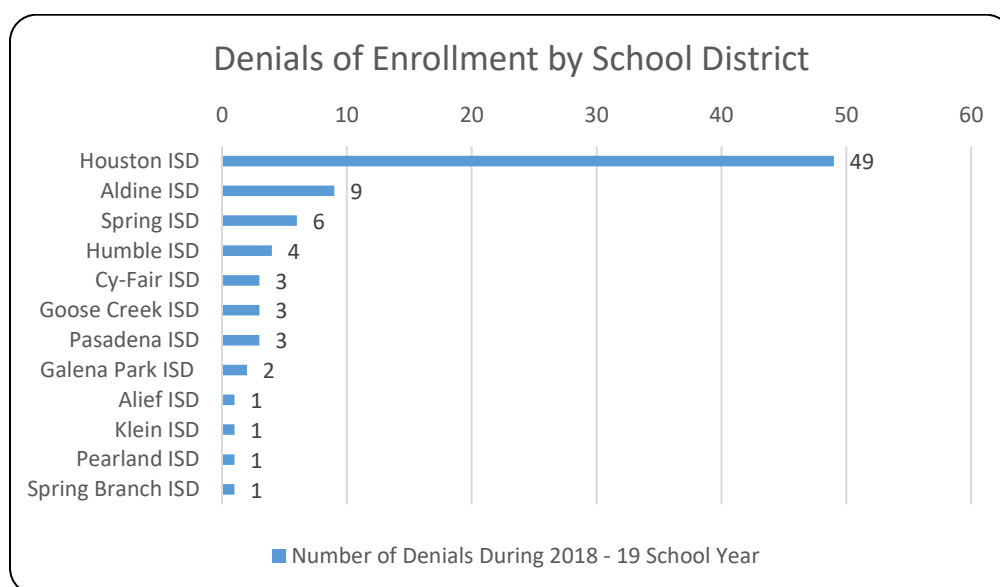
J.M.

J.M. was a 15 year old 9th grade special education student. Within 20 days of enrolling in school in January 2019, J.M. had already been suspended twice. Following the second suspension, J.M.’s JPO met with school administration to address concerns about the lack of services being provided to properly support J.M.’s behavior. While the JPO was meeting with the assistant principal, she witnessed the lead principal verbally threaten the youth. The Education Specialist successfully advocated for J.M. to be transferred to a different high school within two days of the JPO submitting a written witness statement. We then filed an

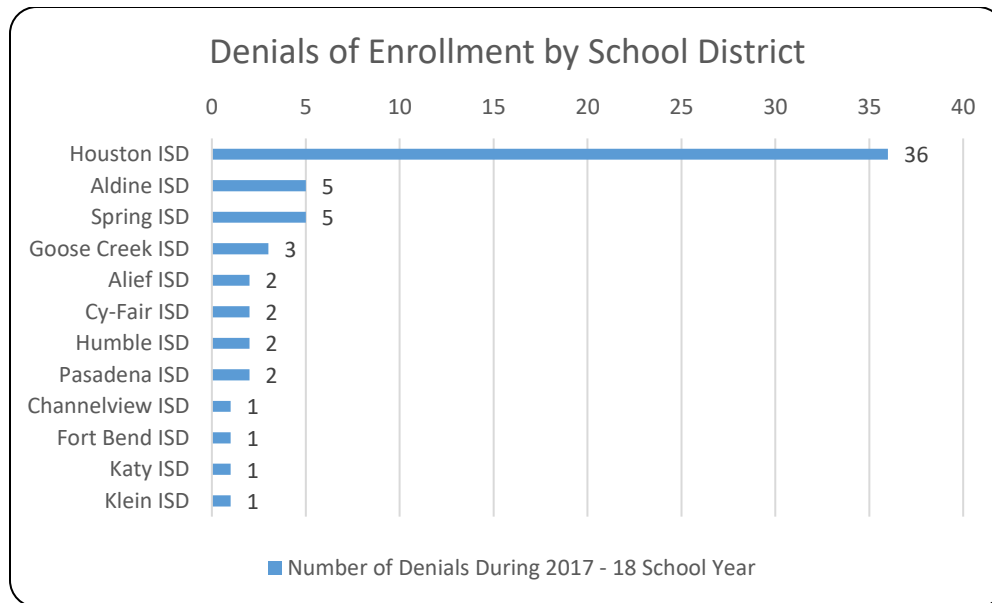
ethics complaint against the principal and obtained permission from HCJPD to include the JPO's witness statement.

f. Denial of Enrollment

During this program year, we received 84 requests for assistance with denial of enrollment and were able to provide services in 73 of those referrals. The service provided most often in denial of enrollment cases was technical assistance and advice to the probation officer to help them develop the knowledge and skills needed to address this issue with little to no assistance from our program. Given the nature of providing only technical assistance in a case, we are not always told whether our advice worked to resolve the issue. In every denial of enrollment case, we followed-up with the officer and attempted to find out whether the youth was enrolled in school. This year, we were able to learn that 80% of the denials of enrollment referred to our program were successfully resolved!



The chart showing denials of enrollment by district from the 2017 – 18 school year is also included for comparison purposes. Worth noting is that we received referrals for denial of enrollment from only twelve school districts over the past two school years and that eight of the twelve districts were the same and included the highest number of referrals demonstrating that denial of enrollment is particularly problematic in those eight districts.



C.B.

C.B. was a 14 year old 6th grade student who was denied enrollment by their home campus due to being over-age for his grade level. C.B.'s JPO successfully resolved the denial of enrollment after being provided technical assistance and advice and C.B. was placed in the 7th grade. The school district also provided C.B. with access to an online credit recovery program to help him get caught up. The JPO was also provided with a request for evaluation letter that she gave to the parent to submit to the school district. The district agreed to evaluate C.B. and he was found eligible for special education services. An Education Specialist then became involved in the case and successfully advocated for C.B. to be caught up academically by the end of the 2017 – 18 school year and he was able to begin the 2018 – 19 school year as a high school freshman.

g. Several grade levels behind

Many probation-involved youth are several grade levels behind in school: 17 and in the 9th grade, or worse yet, 15 and 16 and still in middle school. While most districts offer programs to assist youth who are several grade levels behind, these programs are usually only for youth at the high school level. For over-aged middle-schoolers, their best hope to move forward with their education is to be promoted to the 9th grade, which may mean missing vital instruction from an entire grade level, most often 8th grade. For many of these youth, the GED becomes an appealing option even though that exam is only recommended for those who have successfully *completed* at least a 10th grade education. Of the 716 referrals we received, 85 included youth who are several grade levels behind in school. We were able to provide services in 60 of those referrals and achieved improved education outcomes in 65% of those cases.

A.R.

A.R. was a 15 year old 7th grade student. When his case came to us, there were only 15 school days left in the school year. A.R. was diagnosed with ADHD, but was not receiving

any disability services at school, which could explain why he was so far behind academically. The Education Specialist requested a Grade Placement Committee meeting and successfully advocated for the youth to attend summer school where he could work on both 7th and 8th grade curriculum so he could begin the 2019 – 20 school year in the 9th grade. The Education Specialist also successfully advocated for the youth to be evaluated for special education services. As of the start of the 2019 – 20 school year, the district is in the process of evaluating the youth for services.

h. Non-Disciplinary Alternative Education Programs

This year, we were able to capture our work around assisting youth and families with identifying and enrolling in appropriate non-disciplinary alternative education programs. For some youth, attending the large public middle or high school they are zoned to can be overwhelming. Some students need a smaller learning environment or a program that will allow them to focus on catching up on credits if they are behind. In other cases, youth may be ready to study for and take the GED exam. We received 86 requests for assistance with identifying and enrolling in alternative education programs. We provided services in 74 of those cases, and where direct assistance was provided, 88% resulted in the youth enrolling in an appropriate education program.

D.C.

D.C. was a 16 year old student from Honduras who was undocumented. The JPO and parent were requesting assistance with enrolling D.C. in an appropriate education program that he would qualify for given his undocumented status and that would allow him to catch up academically. The Education Specialist successfully assisted D.C. with enrolling in Liberty High School, a charter school for newcomer students in Houston ISD that assists students with acclimating to the U.S. education system and provides English language instruction to help students be better prepared to attend their regular high school.

i. Homelessness

For the fourth year in a row, homelessness remained the issue for which we received the fewest number of referrals with only 37, just two more than the previous year. When youth did experience homelessness, however, it resulted in significant problems, most often denial of enrollment, but also truancy and failure of districts to evaluate youth for special education services. We were able to provide services in 28 of the referrals we received, typically at the technical assistance and advice level, and achieved improved education outcomes in 80% of those cases.

C.Z.

C.Z. was a 15 year old 10th grade student who resided with his grandmother and was administratively withdrawn from school by the school district after they learned that C.Z. and his grandmother moved into the boundaries of another school district in the middle of the Fall semester of the 2018 – 19 school year. C.Z.'s grandmother could no longer afford her home in the original school district so had moved in with her daughter, C.Z.'s aunt. The family was doubled-up and therefore McKinney Vento eligible (or homeless) entitling C.Z.

to either enroll at his zoned school in the district where they were living, or continue attending the school C.Z. had been attending at the start of the school year. The original school district was resistant to reenrolling C.Z., but the Education Specialist worked diligently with the Homeless Liaisons for both school districts to arrange transportation for C.Z. to attend the campus where he began the school year since that was his school of choice. The Education Specialist also advocated for the original school district to come up with a plan to ensure C.Z. did not fall behind due to missing quite a bit of school while arrangements were made for C.Z. to return to the district. C.Z. successfully completed probation in the Fall of 2019.

III. Systemic Victories

Legislation to Improve Transitioning of Youth from Juvenile Facilities and Disciplinary Alternative Programs to Community Schools

Last year, we described the formation of the Reentry Workgroup, a collaborative of community partners interested in addressing the problems probation-involved youth experience when they reenter the community following release from a juvenile facility. The Reentry Workgroup consisted of professors from the University of Houston and Texas Southern University's Thurgood Marshall School of Law, a graduate student from Rice University, a Ph.D. student from the University of Texas, and a law student from South Texas College of Law; representatives from the City of Houston, including Commissioner Ellis' Office, My Brother's Keeper, and the Department of Health and Human Services; and other community organizations such as Eight Million Stories, reVision, Mental Health America, Texas Criminal Justice Coalition and Houston ISD.

Through the efforts of the Reentry Workgroup, and particularly DRTx, HCJPD, Mental Health America and Houston ISD, we successfully helped pass House Bill 2184. This legislation requires all school districts across the state to hold a meeting within five school days of a youth's return to school from a juvenile justice facility, Juvenile Justice Alternative Education Program (JJAEP), or Disciplinary Alternative Education Program (DAEP) to put a plan in place to address the youth's needs so they can be successful in school. During the meeting, school staff, the youth, and their parent should discuss the most appropriate educational placement, recommendations for counseling services, behavior management, academic assistance, and mental health services, and advise the parent of the special education evaluation process. The new law also requires school districts to monitor the plan to determine whether the student is making progress. HB 2184 is a significant victory for our youth since less than 20% of legislation filed with the Texas State Legislature passed into law during the 2019 legislative session. Our team continues to work closely with community stakeholders and HCJPD staff to ensure school districts implement this new law so youth will experience greater success upon reentering their community public schools.

IV. Educational Trainings

a. Community Trainings

During the fourth program year, Education Specialists conducted a round of six (6) Back to School trainings for probation-involved youth and their caregivers prior to the start of the 2019 – 20 school year. We conducted the trainings at all of the community units around the County to make it as convenient as possible for families to attend. At each training, we provided information to help families prepare for the upcoming school year, as well as helped them understand their rights in school and feel empowered to exercise those rights. The Education Specialists reported excellent participation from youth and their caregivers at each training.

b. JPO Trainings

This past year we continued conducting trainings at each of the field office locations after receiving feedback that officers and administrators preferred the smaller, more intimate trainings that could be tailored to those units and the school districts they most commonly work with instead of the larger group trainings. We planned to hold two rounds of trainings during the 2018 – 19 school year, as had been done the previous year, but due to the reconfiguration of the field units in the Spring 2019, we were asked to hold off on conducting the second round of trainings until officers were settled with their new units. Consequently, we were only able to complete two trainings for CUPS 3, YESS and TCU last year. We plan to get back on track with the two trainings per unit during our next program year. During these trainings, we were able to revisit the services our program offers, how to make referrals, and drill down on how to handle the most common education-related problems our youth experience.

We have also continued to provide an Education Resources Training, which is offered quarterly to HCJPD staff. Supervising Attorney, Sarah Beebe, co-presents with HCJPD Education Support Services Coordinator, Carlos Olivares, to provide an overview of the Education Advocacy and Support Services Program, educate HCJPD staff about the issues probation-involved youth and their families experience with schools, and provide advocacy strategies for how to address some of those issues. Participating in these trainings has afforded DRTx the opportunity to meet with and provide pertinent information to staff outside of the field offices.

V. Program Feedback

We are pleased to report that, over the course of our fourth year, we received quite a bit of positive feedback. Below is a sampling of that feedback:

a. Caregivers

- “Thank you for attending the ARD Meeting with me this afternoon. This is the first time that they were so thorough. I actually have a better understanding of my child’s

disability and the ARD Process. Thank you for getting his schedule adjusted and getting him enrolled in credit recovery classes.”

- “Thank You for never giving up on my daughter. You didn’t give up even when I got discouraged. You made sure that all of her academic supports were place with the school. My husband and I really appreciate you sticking by us.”
- “Thank you for assisting me with ensuring that [my child’s] SPED services get properly implemented at his new school. I requested your services by name after my son was assigned to his new probation officer.”
- “You have been so helpful. I have repeatedly asked the school for academic supports for [my son] and you stepped in and quickly got [him] assessed.”
- “Thank you for all your hard work and effort. I truly appreciate your care and confidence in my son.”
- “Muchas gracias por todo. Yo estoy muy agradecida con usted por todo lo que usted a hech por nosotros. De verdad, muchisimas gracias. Eres un angel.” *(Thank you for everything. I am so grateful for you. I sincerely thank you for all you have done for us. Truly, thank you so much. You are an angel!!.)*
- “Wow! You got done today what I’ve been trying to get done for years!”
- “They wouldn’t help me before. Thank you for all of your help!”
- “Thank you for having a willing heart. I truly appreciate it, we need more people as yourself that’s a believer, but also a stand up person with a heart of gold and fights like a lion for the love of the community you serve. Thanks for everything and you know we will keep you posted.”

b. Youth

- “Thank you for believing in me. I feel like there is really hope for me now to finish school.”
- “Thank you for helping me advocate for a new school and getting my voice heard about being pressured and bullied.”
- “Thank you and don’t give up on me. I really want to do better and graduate from high school. I want to become a nurse.”
- “Thank you for working with the DAEP to give me another chance to work my way back to my home school. You believe in me so I am going to do what I need to do to return to my home campus.”
- “Thank you for encouraging me to better my life through education.”
- “Thank you for all your time and help. I really appreciate all you have done for me and for my family. Thank you for everything!!”

c. HCJPD Staff

- “Please note that I heard that your presentation was awesome! The section that I attended was phenomenal. I wanted to stay for its entirety. We thank you for sharing your knowledge and we appreciated you.” – Excel Academy Special Education Director
- “To Disability Rights who fights the battle on a regular basis for our kids on probation to be accepted in school, thank you! Y’all have helped me on numerous cases and with numerous kids and I really appreciate the work y’all do.” – JPO

- “Honestly I love to advocate on behalf of my kids, and knowing that I had your support and guidance made it so much easier to feel confident in my abilities.” – JPO
- “I just wanted to tell you that I met with [youth] and his mother and they could not stop thanking me for referring them to Disability Rights Texas. The youth’s mother stated she is very grateful and pleased with all the help they are receiving from [Education Specialist]. [The parent] stated that she is VERY appreciative for everything [Education Specialist] has done for the youth. I just wanted to let you know what the family had said.” - JPO
- “Thank you very much for coming today and speaking with us and sharing the valuable information. We appreciate you and your team more than you know! 😊” – Deputy Director of Field Services
- “Thank You for always being willing to assist me. I feel like I am a better advocate for my youth in school because of your guidance and all of the tools we receive from you.” – JPO
- “Thank you for digging deep into these cases with me. I really value DRTX and what you all do for our students. I have acquired so much knowledge from you all. Thank You for fighting in the schools for my students.” – JPO
- “I really appreciate you and DRTX. We make a great team together in the schools. Your passion makes me feel empowered to fight even harder for my kids in schools.” – JPO
- “Thank you for always taking out the time to staff cases with me and keep me on the right track. DRTX has really educated me on discipline in the school setting.” – JPO
- “Thank you for taking out the time to really explain what attendance interventions should look like in the schools for students. I appreciate you always being so patient with me while staffing cases. You all have a very valuable program.” – JPO
- “You guys do a great job. Thank you for working with [parent] and assisting [youth] with his bullying and truancy issues at school.”
- “I know how hard you have fought for this youth and his family. I just want you to know it is greatly appreciated.” – JPO
- “Wow!! I appreciate your thoroughness and am so thankful you are assisting this youth and his family.” – CUPS Administrator
- “I would like to thank you for taking the time to meet with me and [youth] family at Alief Learning Center. It was a relief hearing how energized, interested and knowledgeable you are in connecting with the schools, getting the youth the right services and gearing the schools to the right steps. The information that I gathered throughout this meeting has encouraged me to also share it with other clients. It has been a pleasure to work with you and thank you again for always willing to help even in the most extreme circumstance.” - JPO
- “Just a quick note to share how much we appreciate all that you do to enroll our students in school. You are truly a team player and gentle fighter of injustices blocking our students from their rightful education. Thank you, for ALWAYS taking the time to reply to help address the needs of our students and families. If there is ever anything that you need, I am always happy to reciprocate your high-level of professionalism that is exemplary.” – School District Administrator

VI. Conclusion

Our fourth school year with Harris County Juvenile Probation Department was another great success! Combining the two sides of our program significantly increased our ability to provide more direct quality services to youth, families, and HCJPD staff, which then resulted in higher percentages of improved education outcomes than in years past. We were also able to strengthen relationships with community partners and use the information we gather from our individual casework to inform and tackle systemic issues that negatively affect probation-involved youth. This year, our efforts to address systemic problems brought about the passage of legislation that requires improved school-based transition planning for youth returning to the community from juvenile facilities and disciplinary alternative programs closing the gap on one of the main barriers to successful community reentry. We look forward to continuing our advocacy on behalf of HCJPD youth over the course of the next year!