



Systemic Solutions

to social justice issues

Massachusetts
Appleseed



OUR MISSION: To promote equal rights and opportunities for Massachusetts residents by developing and advocating for systemic solutions to social justice issues.

First We Mind the Gap, Then We Mend It

At MA Appleseed, we dedicate ourselves to remedying social injustices for at-risk and underserved children, youth, and adults. Working with volunteer lawyers, community partners, and others, we identify and address gaps in services and opportunities in areas such as education, homelessness, and the court system. Through in-depth research, community problem solving and consensus building, we develop powerful solutions that reform systems and structures.

Our Systemic Reform Efforts Bear Fruit

As part of one of the nation's largest *pro bono* legal networks, we have been instrumental in leading vital systemic reform initiatives for over 15 years. Among our accomplishments:

- improving access to education for homeless children;
- enabling caregivers to make educational and health decisions on behalf of the children in their care; and
- examining inequities in funding that prevent poorer school districts from meeting student needs.

our Signature Project

KEEP KIDS IN CLASS: BREAKING THE SCHOOL-TO-PRISON PIPELINE

Through Keep Kids in Class, MA Appleseed is at the forefront of understanding the full impact of school discipline policies. Current state law allows school principals to suspend or expel children for serious offenses, such as possessing drugs in school. However, in some cases, principals exclude children without considering all of the circumstances. This practice, sometimes referred to as “zero tolerance,” can have devastating consequences for kids.

From Preschool to Prison

Each year, some 32,000 students are excluded from school. Preschoolers as young as four years old, and sixth- and ninth-graders making the transition to middle and high school, are especially at risk. Excluded students are likely to be male, poor, or receiving special education; a disproportionate number are Latino or African-American. Once excluded, a majority of these children—our children—drop out, end up in “the system,” or serve time.

Best Practices for Safety and Success

Massachusetts Appleseed is gathering data and identifying effective alternatives to excluding students. Next, we will share these best practices widely: with our policymakers, our educators, and our families and communities. The result? Kids are kept in class where they are safe, supported, and available for learning.

Your Involvement Makes All the Difference

To the legal community—Effect change on a large scale by joining our *pro bono* network.

To community-based organizations and foundations—Let’s discuss partnering to leverage resources for maximum impact.

To Massachusetts residents—Share your concerns, donate what you can, and sign up online for important updates.

MASSACHUSETTS APPLESEED CENTER FOR LAW AND JUSTICE

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