PPAL

Parent/Professional Advocacy League, Inc.

The Inside Track: Advocacy In Action

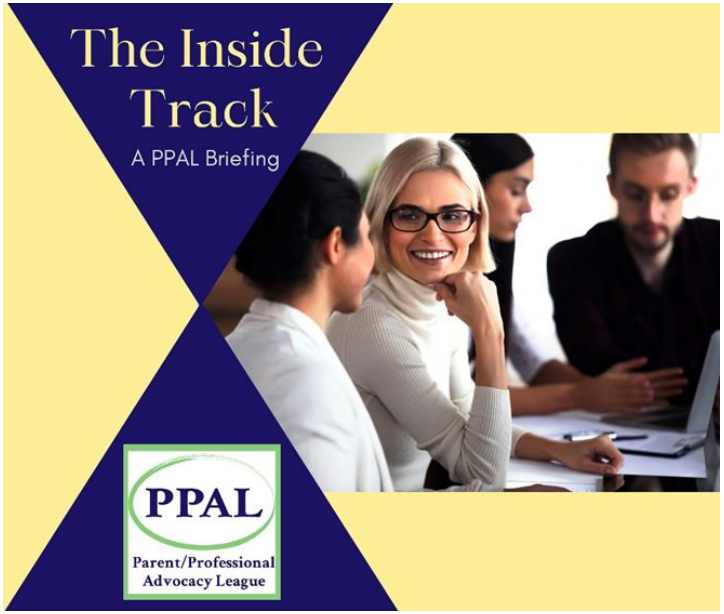
Meri Viano, Associate Director
Pamela Bows, Policy Coordinator



Parent/Professional Advocacy League Training
9/22/2026

Welcome to the Inside Track

- Confidentiality
- Bi-monthly meeting focused on policy, updates and networking
- Knowledge is power– and impact
- PPAL believes that families should have access to all information that affects them, and be able to provide feedback
- You will get a link to the slides and resources within the week that we only share with participants. You can see the meetings prior to check in on policy changes and/or things coming!



Funded by the Klarman Family Foundation

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Parent/Professional Advocacy League (PPAL)

A statewide, grassroots, family-run organization in Massachusetts.

PPAL's goal is to promote opportunities for families to become leaders and to ensure that the perspective of families is present in all conversations about children and youth.

Family organizations are an important strategy for boosting family participation, supporting and sustaining family voice (Lazear & Anderson, 2009)



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Housekeeping

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- Please introduce yourself in the chat – name and role (parent, family support) and where you're from



- Please keep yourself on mute - unless you are speaking - to reduce background noise



- Use the 'raise hand' or chat to let us know when you'd like to speak



- Please type questions into the chat box

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Agenda

PPAL
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- **PPAL Workshops + Events**
- **DMH - ACCS Listening Sessions**
- **DCF - Warm Lines and Family Resource Centers RFR**
- **DESE - New Restraint & Seclusion Guidelines**
- **CfJJ - Youth Justice Voter Guide**
- **PPAL Family Advocacy Alliance**
- **State Budget Advocacy - Overview**
- **State Legislative Advocacy - Overview + Updates**
- ***Hear From:*** **Rachel Gwaltney, Executive Director of Children's League Massachusetts**
- **Networking + Resource Sharing**

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Question Of The Month

PPAL
Parent/Professional Advocacy League

PPAL'S September Question of the Month

Are you a parent or caregiver of a child, youth, or young adult with mental health needs?

Does your child have a mental health challenge AND another diagnosis?



To Answer the Question, Please Visit
https://ppal.net/question-of-the-month/

QR Instructions:

1. Open the camera app on your cellphone
2. Position the QR code like you're going to photograph it.
3. Click the link that appears to go to the website

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PPAL Parent Support Groups

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JOIN US!!!!

Are you navigating the mental or behavioral health systems for a child, teen, or young adult?

Request 1:1 peer support!

We have NO waitlist!

MONDAY

Virtual: **Grupo de Apoyo Hispano**
10:00 AM - 12:00 PM

Hybrid: **Parenting Young Adults - Looking to the Future**
5:00 PM - 6:30 PM
(Gardner)

TUESDAY

Hybrid: **Caregiver Connections**
5:00 PM - 6:30 PM
(Winchendon)

FREE Services. No insurance required.

WEDNESDAY

Virtual: **Relax & Connect**
11:30 AM - 1:00 PM

Virtual: **Caregiver Connections**
6:00 PM - 7:30 PM

THURSDAY

Virtual: **Grandparents Lunch and Learn**
2nd Thursdays
12:00 - 2:00 PM

4th Thursdays
6:30 - 8:00 PM

Virtual: **Empowered Caregiver Connections**
6:00 - 7:30 PM

FRIDAY

Virtual: **Parenting Power UP**
12:00 PM - 1:30 PM

In Person: **Family Support Group for Lynn Families**
2nd & 4th Fridays
6:30 - 8:30 PM

In-person Support Group coming soon to Worcester!

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MASS DMH
HOPE • EQUITY • SERVICE
Department of Mental Health

Do you need help navigating and advocating in the school system for a loved one with mental or behavioral health needs?

School Problem Solving Clinic
Make An Appointment!
PPALSchoolClinic@ppal.net

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Upcoming PPAL Events:

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10/14 - The Mental Health IEP
12:00 - 2:00 PM
https://bit.ly/MHIEP-1014

10/19 - Moving To Young Adult Life: Transition Planning And Post Secondary Options
10:00 - 11:30 AM
https://bit.ly/move-1019

10/19 - Juvenile Justice Basics: Juvenile Justice 101
6:00 - 7:30 PM
https://bit.ly/jj101-1019

10/21 - My Child's Not Going To School: What Now?
12:00 - 2:00 PM
https://bit.ly/school-1021

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Discussion:

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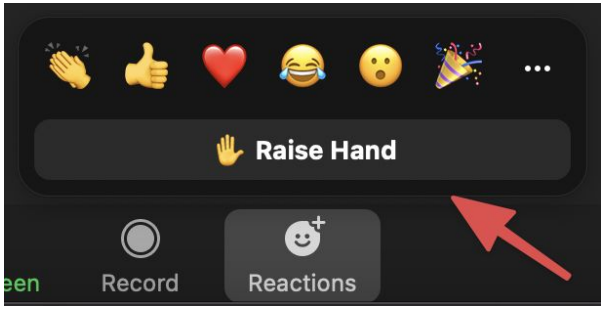
To join in, you can



Use the Raise Hand feature





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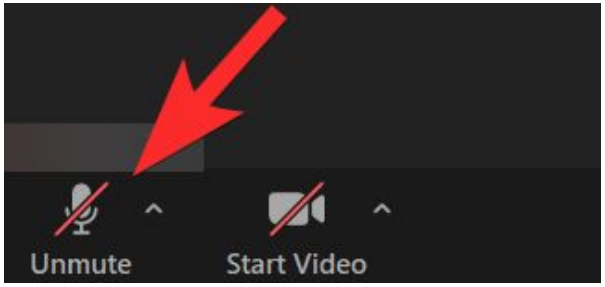



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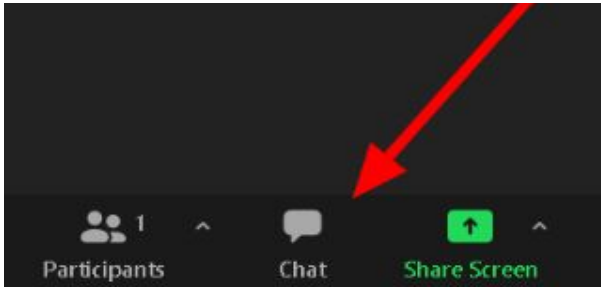

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ACCS Listening Sessions

For Families

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- **Department of Mental Health (DMH) Adult Community Clinical Services (ACCS):** DMH's primary community service for adults. Provides clinical interventions and peer and family support to facilitate engagement, support functioning and maximize symptom stabilization and self-management of individuals residing in all housing settings

- **Procurement:** The process through which Massachusetts decides which organizations run certain programs. They call for bids and award contracts for specific services, such as many of DMH's programs.

- **DMH is holding listening sessions for individuals who receive Adult Community Clinical Services (ACCS).**
  - These sessions are an opportunity to share your experiences, perspectives, and recommendations.
  - Participation is voluntary. You may choose how much you would like to share during the session. No identifying information will be provided to DMH or ACCS service providers.
  - The first 50 people receiving ACCS services who sign up and attend a Listening Session will receive a gift card for $30.

- ACCS listening session for reprocurement
  - FAMILY MEMBERS, CAREGIVERS, GUARDIANS interested in attending a listening session can register here: https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/CNN3KKW
  - Participants must have access to an email address to participate.
  - Separate sessions will be offered with ASL interpretation and in Spanish.

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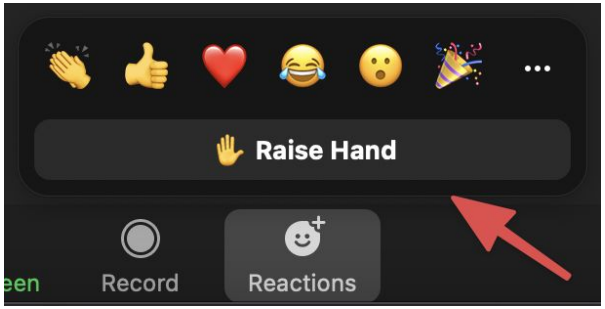



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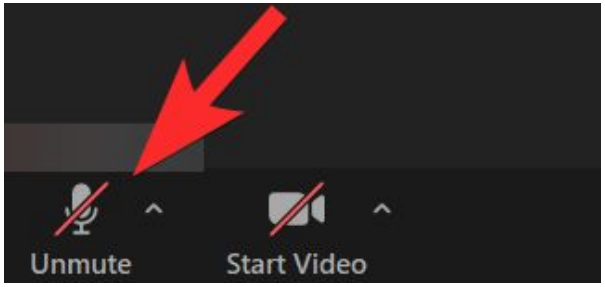



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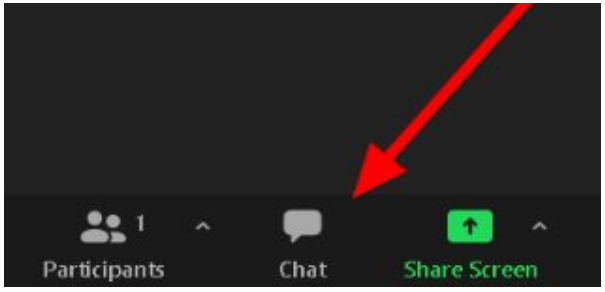

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Department of Children & Families (DCF)

Family Resource Centers

- Year-long work addressing what needs to improve or be added/changed in FRC
- Discussion of the RFR (next slide), including peer positions and diversion from court, helping with schools
- PPAL joined lawyers, agencies, and lived experience reps to give feedback to DCF
- Jan 2027

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DCF Warm Lines

Request for Information (RFI) about potential

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This Request for Information (RFI) seeks information to assist the Department of Children and Families (DCF) in exploring systems design and service array options provided through a potential "Warmline" to be procured by the Department.

- DCF receives an estimated 90,000 reports of suspected child abuse/neglect annually - over half are screened out because they do not meet the legal threshold for a protective response. Most reports are filed by mandated reporters, such as health care providers, police officers, and school personnel who are frequently in contact with children.
- **However, mandated reporters are not necessarily always aware of existing community-based services that may be available to address a family's needs. The Warmline would be an alternative pathway for helping families who need support, such as food assistance or mental health treatment, to stabilize and hopefully, prevent the need for DCF involvement. Families may be more likely to engage in services without the stigma of being involved with child protective services.**
- Responses to this RFI are sought from individuals and organizations with experience and interest in providing Warmline services as well as from families and other interested stakeholders. DCF has contracted the services of Health Resources in Action to develop a framework for the Warmline.

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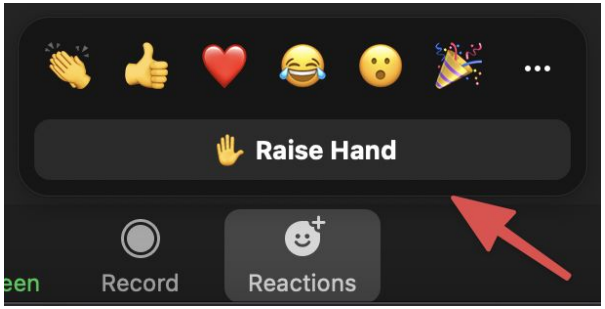



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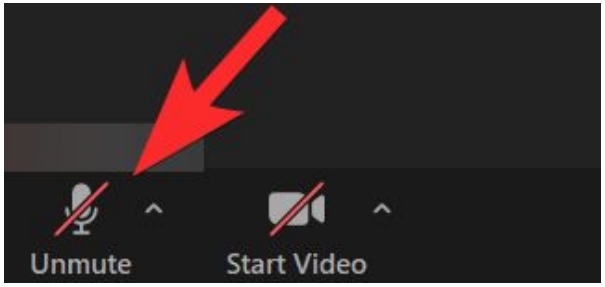



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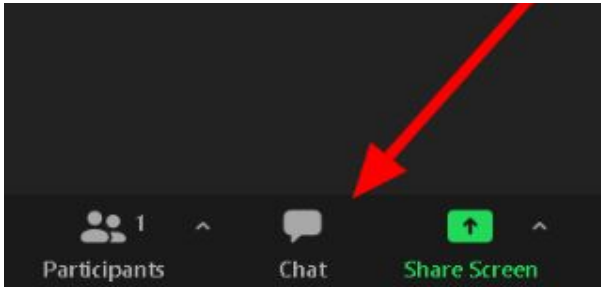

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NEW DESE Restraint & Seclusion Guidelines

DESE

Our friends at the Alliance Against Seclusion and Restraint:

"The new regulations reintroduced the use of seclusion, which had been previously prohibited, established a clearer distinction between time-out and seclusion, and reinforced that physical restraint is an emergency procedure of last resort."

9/15/26 "The Rules Are Changing in Massachusetts. But Are We?"
https://endseclusion.org/2026/09/15/the-rules-are-changing-in-massachusetts-but-are-we/

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NEW DESE Restraint & Seclusion Guidelines

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DESE's Slide from Special Education Leaders Meeting 8/21/2026

Use of Emergency Seclusion Permitted If:

Seclusion shall be prohibited in a public education program **except-**

As a **last resort**, in an **emergency situation**, where a student's behavior poses:

- imminent threat of assault, or
- imminent threat of serious physical harm to self/others

--BUT ONLY IF--

- documented **history** of repeatedly causing serious self-injuries and/or injuries to other students or staff
- **not responsive to directives or less intrusive behavior interventions**, or such interventions deemed inappropriate under the circumstances
- **other forms of interventions have failed** to ensure the safety of the student and/or the safety of others

dese Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

14

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NEW DESE Restraint & Seclusion Guidelines

What Changed

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What Changed:

- Updated definition of seclusion
- Updated definition of time-out
- Added requirements for any room or area used for seclusion
- Added emergency circumstances under which emergency seclusion may be used
- Added safeguards for emergency seclusion

Beginning August 17, 2026, public education programs that use emergency seclusion must submit data using the Department's Emergency Seclusion Reporting Form in the security portal

https://www.doe.mass.edu/specialeducation/policy/dese/advisories/memo-sy2026-2027-1.html

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NEW DESE Restraint & Seclusion Guidelines

Time-out vs. Emergency Seclusion

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Time-out is defined as a behavioral support strategy in which a student temporarily separates from the learning activity or the classroom, either by choice or direction from staff, for the purpose of calming. During time-out, a student must be continuously observed by a staff member in an unlocked setting from which the student is permitted to leave. Staff shall be with the student or immediately available to the student at all times.

Seclusion is defined as the involuntary confinement of a student alone in a room or area, with or without adult supervision, from which the student is not permitted to leave.

Seclusion occurs when a student is alone in a room or area and not permitted to leave, regardless of whether school staff supervise a student through an observation window or video feed. “Not permitted to leave" means a student is directed, verbally or physically, or otherwise prevented from leaving a room or area.

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NEW DESE Restraint & Seclusion Guidelines

Seclusion Safeguards

The following safeguards are required prior to the use of seclusion:

1. The student has a documented history of repeatedly causing serious self-injuries and/or injuries to other students or staff.
2. The student is not responsive to directives or other lawful and less intrusive behavior interventions, or such interventions are deemed to be inappropriate under the circumstances.
3. Other forms of interventions have failed to ensure the safety of the student and/or the safety of others.
4. There are no medical contraindications as documented by a licensed physician.
5. There is a psychological or behavioral justification for the use, and there are no psychological or behavioral contraindications, as documented by a licensed mental health professional.
6. The program has obtained consent to use seclusion from the student's parent or guardian and, if appropriate, the student, and such use has been approved in writing by the principal.
7. Any individual using it has received training about alternative behavior interventions and management techniques.

The school, district, or program must obtain consent and medical documentation prior to the use of seclusion in an emergency and collect and maintain documentation of compliance with all other safeguards listed above should seclusion be necessary in an emergency. Where seclusion is used as an emergency intervention with the safeguards prescribed by the regulations, it is referred to as "Emergency Seclusion."

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NEW DESE Restraint & Seclusion Guidelines

From DESE's Use Of Seclusion FAQ

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Question 11: What happens if there is an unexpected use of seclusion without the safeguards required by 603 CMR 46.07(2)?

Answer:
In rare and isolated circumstances, a school, district, or program may need to engage in the unexpected use of seclusion without the documentation on file required by 603 CMR 46.07(2)(a) and (d) through (g). In those instances, the Department expects the school, district, or program to adhere to all other safeguards, including parental notification, documentation, and review of the incident. Additionally, the district, school, or program must take immediate action to determine how best to address the student's behavioral needs moving forward, including reviewing the student's IEP and/or behavioral supports and obtaining the required documentation for the use of emergency seclusion.

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NEW DESE Restraint & Seclusion Guidelines

From DESE's Use Of Seclusion FAQ

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Question 14: How will DESE monitor and enforce these new regulatory requirements?

Answer:
Schools, districts, and programs will be monitored for these requirements through cyclical monitoring, targeted monitoring, and investigations of complaints filed with the Department's Problem Resolution System Office and any credible allegations of noncompliance. These activities will include monitoring of updated policies and procedures, facility observations, and implementation of the requirements outlined in 603 CMR 46.07(2) and (3).

Question 16: Are schools, districts, and programs required to report the use of time-out to the Department?

Answer:
No. Under 603 CMR 46.07(3)(g), schools, districts, and programs are only required to report the use of seclusion to the Department.

However, for students with disabilities, exclusionary disciplinary measures, if implemented repeatedly, could constitute a disciplinary removal from the current placement, implicating the student's right to a free appropriate public education (FAPE). Therefore, schools, districts, and programs may wish to track the use of time-out and other exclusionary disciplinary measures that could implicate the provision of FAPE.

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NEW DESE Restraint & Seclusion Guidelines

Reminder about Restraint:

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Physical restraint shall not be used:

- As a means of discipline or punishment;
- When the student cannot be safely restrained because it is medically contraindicated for reasons including, but not limited to, asthma, seizures, a cardiac condition, obesity, bronchitis, communication-related disabilities, or risk of vomiting;
- As a response to property destruction, disruption of school order, a student's refusal to comply with a public education program rule or staff directive, or verbal threats when those actions do not constitute a threat of assault, or imminent, serious, physical harm; or
- As a standard response for any individual student. No written individual behavior plan or individualized education program (IEP) may include use of physical restraint as a standard response to any behavior. Physical restraint is an emergency procedure of last resort.

Physical restraint in a public education program shall be limited to the use of such reasonable force as is necessary to protect a student or another member of the school community from assault or imminent, serious, physical harm.

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NEW DESE Restraint & Seclusion Guidelines

Resources for additional information:

DESE's Seclusion Documentation Guide for schools
https://www.doe.mass.edu/specialeducation/policy/procedures/restraint/emergency-seclusion-reference-guide.pdf

Some of DESE's School Staff Training modules around seclusion & restraint:
https://www.doe.mass.edu/rlo/sfs/restraint/story.html
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U38oWuHD4II&t=6s
https://www.doe.mass.edu/specialeducation/pd-ta/training/reducing-reliance/implementation-guide.pdf

Law:
603 Code of Massachusetts RegulationsCMR 46.00
Prevention of Physical Restraint and Requirements If Used
https://www.doe.mass.edu/lawsregs/603cmr46.html?section=all

Special Education Policy Memo SY2026-2027 — 1
Implementation Resources to Help Schools Reduce and Eliminate the Use of Seclusion, 603 Code of Massachusetts Regulations CMR 46.00 and 603 Code of Massachusetts Regulations CMR 18.00
https://www.doe.mass.edu/specialeducation/policy/dese/advisories/memo-sy2026-2027-1.html

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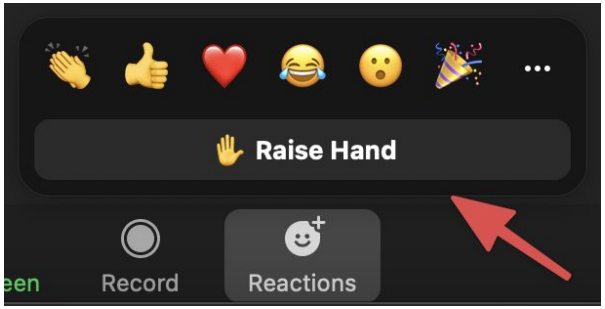



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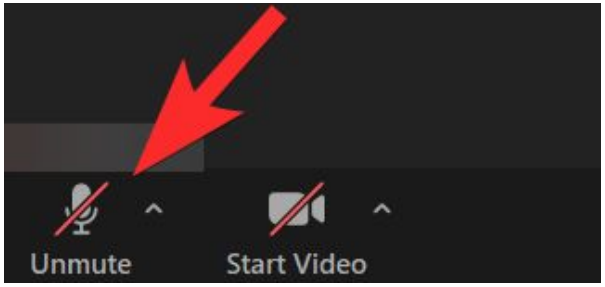



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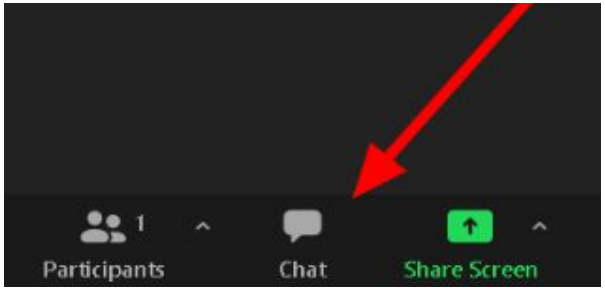

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Youth Justice Voter Guide

with Citizens for Juvenile Justice (CfJJ)

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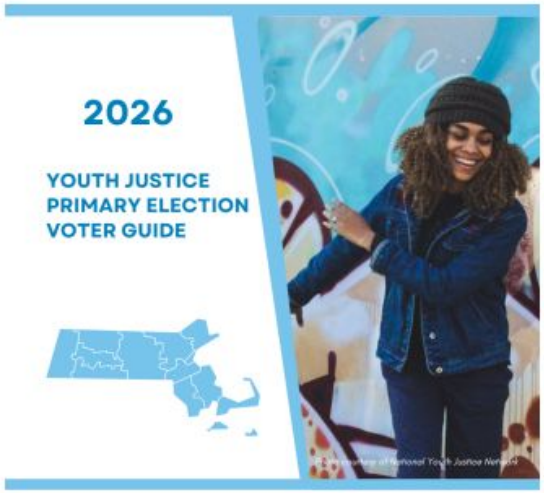

https://www.cfjj.org/2026-voter-guides

- Learn what your voting rights are and all the ways that you can vote
- Understand where candidates stand on issues impacting youth justice in any of the 8 Governor's Council districts; 40 State Senate districts and 160 State Representative districts
- The general election is on November 3, 2026.

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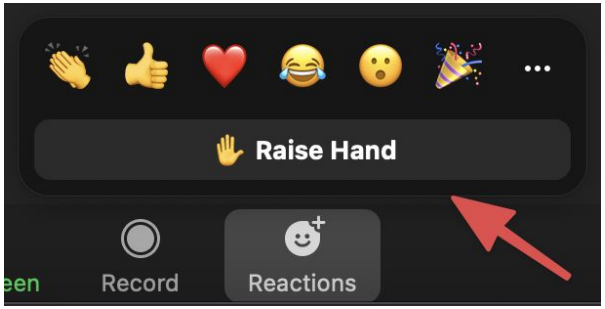



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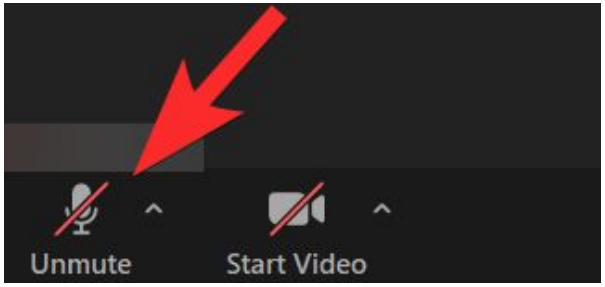



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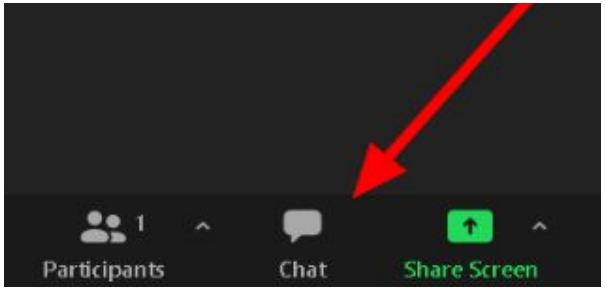

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Family Advocacy Alliance (FAA)

What kind of advocacy can parents/caregivers do?



What is Advocacy?

Advocacy can happen at different levels:

- Federal-
  - voting,
  - calling federal legislators,
  - federal bills & laws
- State-
  -
  - voting,
  - calling state legislators,
  - state bills & laws, state budget,
  - regulatory and administrative
- Local/Community-
  - town/city,
  - school district.

What does advocacy look like?

- Community events with elected officials
- Testifying at a hearing
- Meeting with elected officials
- Sharing your lived experience about an issue
- Holding a lobby day
- Voting
- Walking a picket line
- Holding a press event
- Holding a rally
- Marching in the streets
- Civil disobedience
- Small acts of resistance
- Talking to your neighbors about issues important to you
- ...and more!

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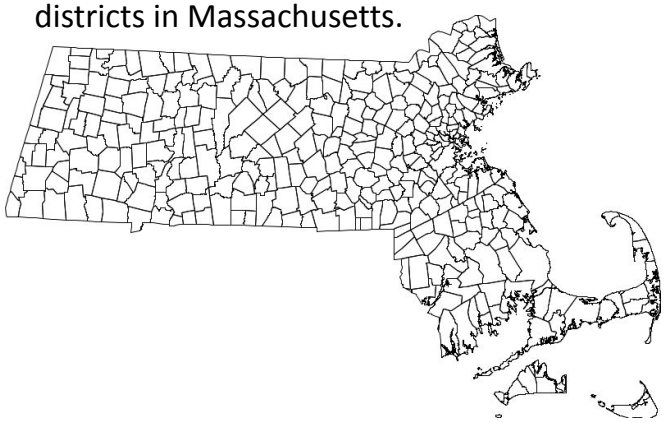
Family Advocacy Alliance (FAA)

Our Goal

FAA's goal is to identity a caregiver/family in <u>every</u> legislative district in Massachusetts

Will you help us?
https://bit.ly/FAA-26

There are 40 Senate districts and 160 House of Representative districts in Massachusetts.



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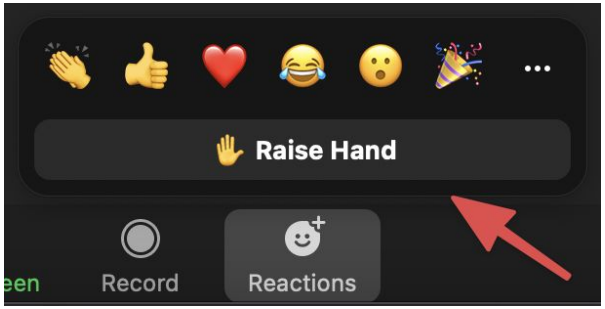



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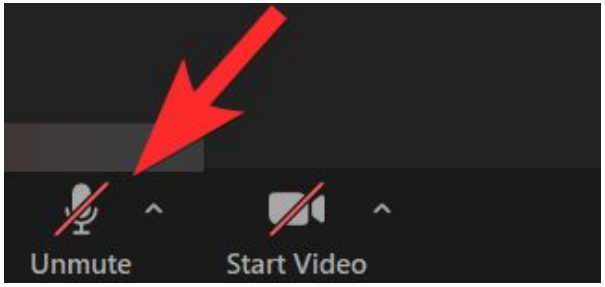



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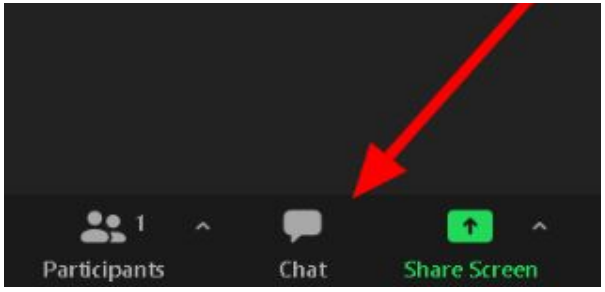

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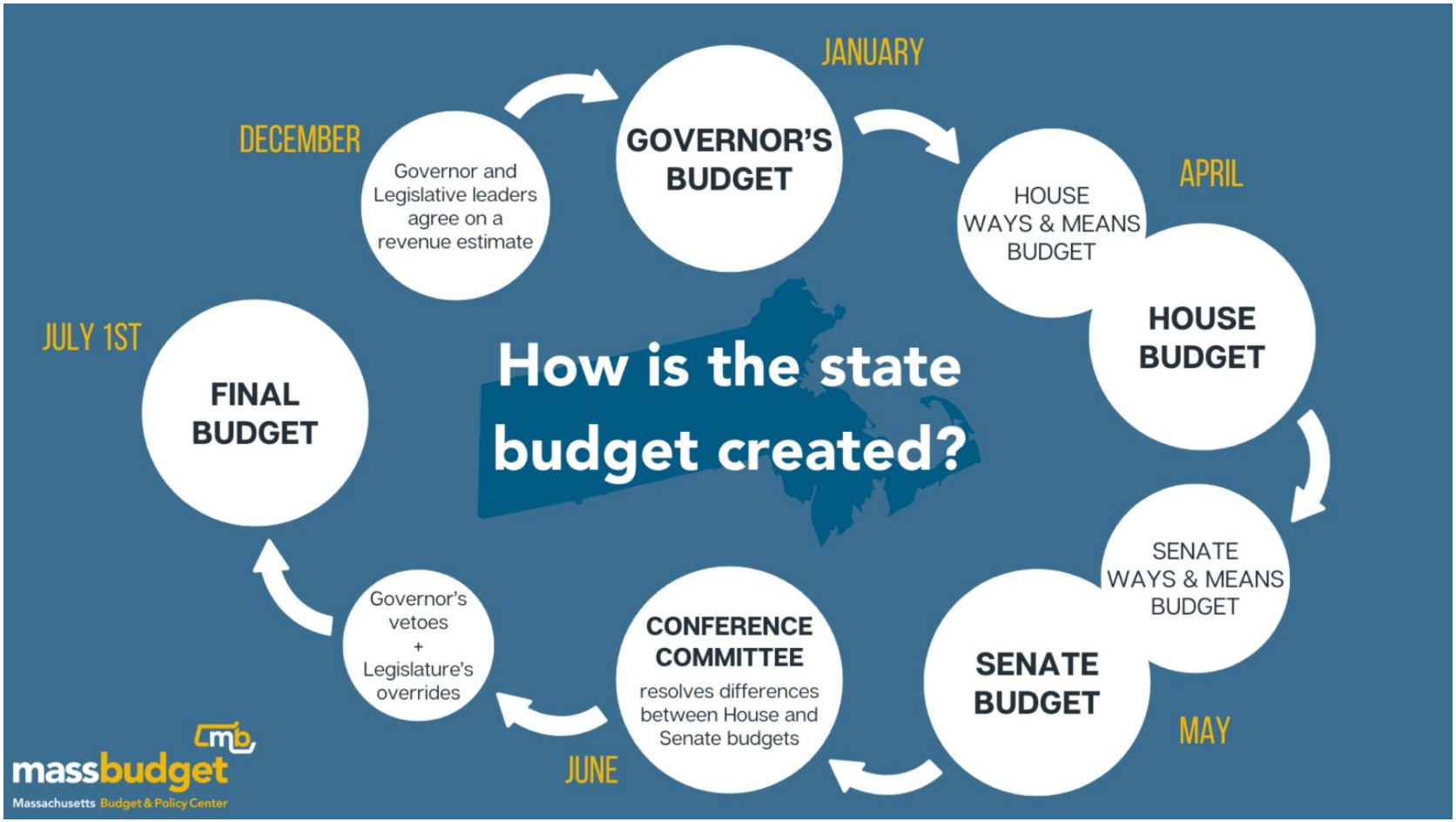
Massachusetts Budget Process Timeline

Overview



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Massachusetts Legislative Process Timeline

Overview



- Legislative sessions are 2 years, and begin on the odd numbered year– 2025, 2027
- Prospective laws, called Bills, are filed early in the session, and the rest of the session is spent deciding their fates
- State Senate and State House of Representatives come together in ***Joint Committees*** - a variety of subject-specific working groups.
  - Joint Committees hear from interested parties - ***YOU*** - about whether bills should be passed
- There are multiple times throughout the 2 year session to advocate for each bill!

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Massachusetts Legislation

An Act Relative To School Medicaid Reimbursement

An act relative to school Medicaid reimbursement

S.862 - Bill reported favorably by committee and referred to the committee on Senate Ways and Means
https://malegislature.gov/Bills/194/SD575

H.545 - Sent to Health Care Financing, Reporting date extended to Friday, July 31, 2026
https://malegislature.gov/Bills/194/HD2658

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Massachusetts Legislation

An Act Expanding Access To Mental Health Services

An Act expanding access to mental health services
H.1131
Accompanied a new draft, see H4895
Committee recommended bill ought to pass and referred to the committee on House Ways and Means
https://malegislature.gov/Bills/194/HD2218/Bills
https://malegislature.gov/Bills/194/H4895

S.773
Accompanied a study order, see S2972
https://malegislature.gov/Bills/194/SD1645

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Massachusetts Legislation

An Act Ensuring Efficient & Effective Implementation of the Roadmap for Behavioral Health Reform

An Act ensuring efficient & effective implementation of the Roadmap for Behavioral Health Reform

S.1394
Accompanied a study order, see S2972
https://malegislature.gov/Bills/194/SD2595

H.2193
Committee recommended bill ought to pass and referred to the committee on House Ways and Means
https://malegislature.gov/Bills/194/HD4248

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Massachusetts Legislation

An Act Promoting Rule Of Law, Oversight, Trust, And Equal Constitutional Treatment ("The PROTECT Act")

- House Bill: https://malegislature.gov/Bills/194/H5293
- Law: https://malegislature.gov/Laws/SessionLaws/Acts/2026/Chapter163
- ACLU: more info on protect act www.aclum.org/campaigns-initiatives/protect-act/

“The PROTECT Act will ensure that local law enforcement resources focus on local communities’ needs — not on helping the federal government carry out mass deportations.

The PROTECT Act will:

- Ban future 287(g) agreements, which deputize local police to act as immigration agents, with very limited exceptions.
- Restrict the use of state and local resources for civil immigration enforcement.
- Place limits on police communication with ICE.
- Prohibit police from asking about immigration status except in limited criminal contexts.
- Ban arrests on civil matters inside and outside Massachusetts courthouses.
- Ban civil arrests at schools, healthcare facilities, and day care centers.
- Expand rights and protections for detainees held in Massachusetts jails.
- Allow individuals to sue state or federal officials in state court for violations of federal constitutional rights.”

ACLU Massachusetts

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Massachusetts Legislation

An Act Regarding Families And Children In Need Of Assistance

An act regarding families and children in need of assistance
S.141 - Bill reported favorably by committee and referred to the committee on Senate Ways and Means
https://malegislature.gov/Bills/194/SD1693

H.265
https://malegislature.gov/Bills/194/HD2453
New draft H.4599 An Act establishing a bill of rights for children in foster care -**SIGNED INTO LAW**
https://malegislature.gov/Bills/194/HD2453

Child Welfare Omnibus Bill Signed Into Law
An Act Enhancing Child Welfare Protections was passed by the Massachusetts Legislature and signed into law by Governor Healey on Friday. The legislation includes several priorities long supported by CLM and our members, including the Foster Care Bill of Rights, Children Requiring Assistance (CRA) reform, and strengthened reporting on Support and Stabilization services.

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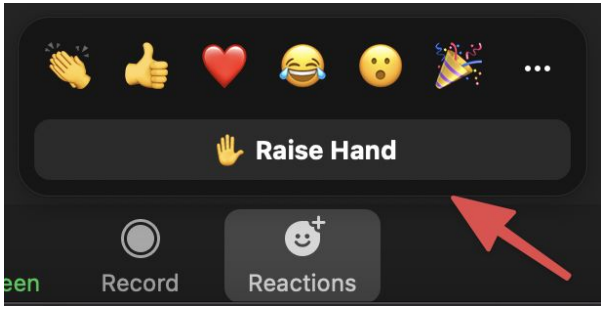
Discussion:

PPAL
Parent/Professional Advocacy League

To join in, you can

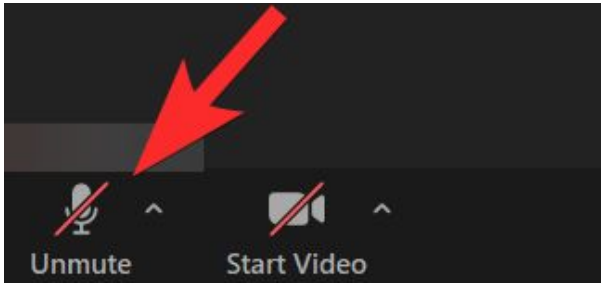


Use the Raise Hand feature



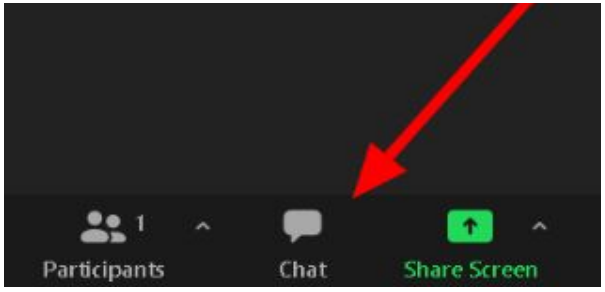


Unmute





Type questions into the chat box



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State Legislative Updates + More

with Rachel Gwaltney
Executive Director of Children's League Massachusetts



Rachel is the Executive Director at the Children's League of Massachusetts (CLM). In this role, she works in collaboration with CLM's Board, Task Forces, Coalitions, and Member organizations to advance the mission of CLM and achieve policy, budgetary, and legislative wins for children and families across the Commonwealth.

In her free time, Rachel serves on the Board of Directors of Horizons Greater Boston. She enjoys reading, singing, and exploring the great outdoors.

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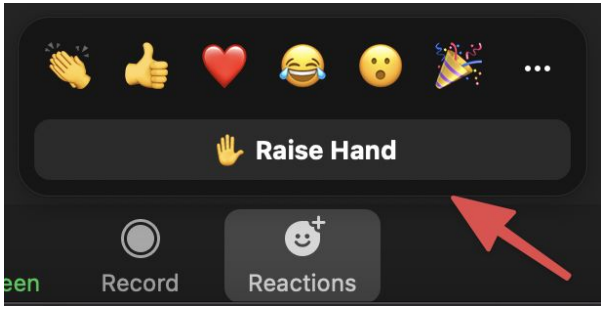



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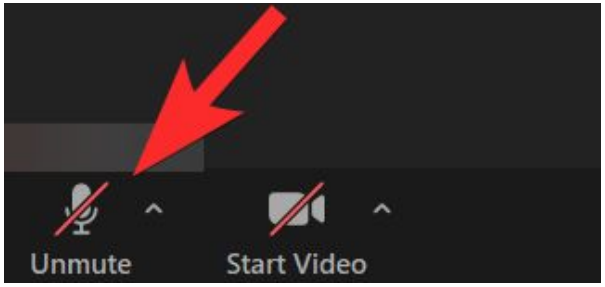



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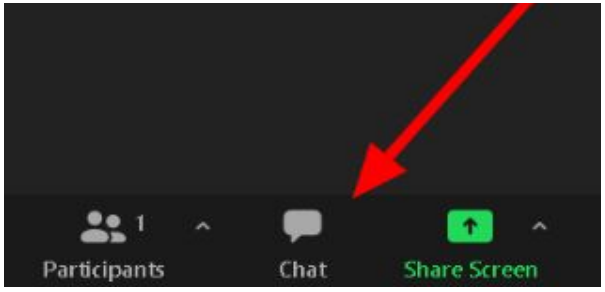

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Networking—

Parent/Professional Advocacy League

Do you have

Resources

Job Opportunities

Recommendations

Requests

that you would like to share?

Please come off mute, or indicate in the chat that you would like to speak!

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Thank You for attending PPAL's Inside Track!

You will receive the bulletins and resources discussed within the next few days.

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