

Judge to Milwaukee Schools: Get a plan, and make it work

A federal judge has ordered the Milwaukee school district to revamp the procedures it uses to evaluate whether children require special education services.

The move came after a landmark case questioned whether the district had an unusual share of "bad apples" or whether it was not properly serving students with special needs.

The case began winding through the court system in 2001 and eventually was certified as a class action, meaning many kids – not just the original plaintiff – who fit a pattern could join in.

Attorneys presented one case after another of students who were suspended for school-time troubles rather than properly evaluated to determine if a disability was at the root of the problems.

Attorneys convinced the judge that the Milwaukee district flouted the IDEA provisions of

Child Find by shortchanging children who might have fared better with special services.

They presented startling data about the district's suspension rate. For instance, in 2006-07 a surprising 10 percent of first-graders created enough havoc to be removed from their classrooms at least once, and a whopping 50 percent of ninth-graders had the same fate.

Milwaukee's primary newspaper, the Journal-Sentinel, covered the recent decision with an explanatory [article](#).

Do you have confidence in your child's IEP? Broder Law Group offers a [primer on the process](#).

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categories (education, land use, trusts & estates, real estate and business litigation). You'll need the Broder Law Group address and phone number, plus his email address (details below), plus his age (37).

Three-part bill to help people with autism gains momentum

The Helping HANDS for Autism Act under consideration by the U.S. Senate gained momentum this week when a similar bill was introduced in the House. A so-called companion bill can shorten the time a bill takes to become law by moving its concepts through both legislative chambers at once.

U.S. Senator Robert Menendez (D-NJ) initially proposed the three-part bill that would help people with autism by improving access to information, increasing awareness about the disorder, and creating a grant system to improve their housing options.

Reps. Chris Smith (R-NJ) and Mike Doyle (D-PA) were among those launching the companion bill through the House. Approval by both chambers would prompt a committee to synthesize the two bills and send a final version to the president for signature into law. The act would establish a grant program to offer families a trained "navigator" to connect them with services and support; develop a comprehensive curriculum for first responders like police and paramedics; and set up grants for individual housing and services for people with autism.

Details of the [Helping HANDS for Autism Act](#) are on Menendez's website.

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responders could be trained in assisting people with autism. Third, the act would set up grants for individual housing and services for people with autism.

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