A GUIDE FROM THE PRACTICE OF SHARIFUL A. SYED, MD

When the school won't accept your child: what to do right now

Every child with a disability in the United States has a right to a free public education that fits their needs. Schools still send children home, suspend them, or push them into a placement that holds them back. You are your child's strongest advocate, and you don't have to know the law by heart to start. This is general information, not legal advice.

If anyone may be in danger, call 911. For the Suicide & Crisis Lifeline, call or text 988.

This week

- Put everything in writing. Email the principal and keep a copy. A phone call leaves no record.
- If your child is sent home or suspended, ask in writing for the reason and for the school's plan to get them back in class.
- Ask in writing for a special education evaluation. In New York, send it to your district's Committee on Special Education (CSE). The school can't start without your consent, and timelines start once you give it.
- Ask about a 504 plan too: support and changes in the classroom for a child with a disability.
- If your child is out of school, ask what instruction they will get while this is sorted out.

Get ready for the meeting

- Keep a log: dates, who said what, every time your child was sent home.
- Gather the paper: report cards, past evaluations, the school's emails, letters from doctors or therapists.
- Write down what your child does well, not only what's hard.
- Bring someone with you. A second person takes notes and keeps you steady.
- You can disagree. You can ask for an independent evaluation, and you can ask for mediation or a hearing.

Free help

- Every state has a free Parent Training and Information Center for families of children with disabilities. Find yours at parentcenterhub.org.
- A doctor who knows your child can put their needs in writing for the school, and can join the CSE meeting. Ask Dr. Syed about this on your free call.

When to call a doctor

- Your child has been sent home or suspended more than once.
- The school wants a placement that you believe will hold your child back.
- Your child is refusing school, or hasn't been in class for days.
- You need a doctor's letter or a doctor at the meeting.

Talk with Dr. Syed for 30 minutes, free, by video or phone: **(516) 522-0410** or sharifulsyedmd.com/autism.

General education for families, not medical or legal advice and not a diagnosis. Every child is different; talk with your child's doctor about yours.