WHAT:

The challenges our students face require specialized skill and knowledge to help. Each of our highly qualified advocates assess needs, help families and students know their rights and options, navigate complex policies and service systems, and provide support so that families and students can have a voice in decisions that impact education. We provide support at disciplinary hearings (where students can be removed permanently), special education meetings, and behavior plan meetings. The advocate helps with enrollment (particularly when enrollment has been denied), school transitions, transportation, grade and course placement, credit audits, screening for special education, the development and monitoring of trauma-informed behavior and safety plans, and brokering school resources such as compensatory education, tutoring and extracurricular support. We are required to have weekly face-to-face contact with students and cases typically last between 3-9 months.

We are fighting school dropout and pushout every day, because we believe every student deserves an education and can find success with the right support.

Outcomes:

We track outcomes carefully and see increased rates of attendance and decreased days out of school for disciplinary reasons, factors that lead to higher high school graduation rates. In fact, data from the 2015-2016 school year showed 100% of students increased overall engagement in school, 90% increased attendance, and 83% decreased disciplinary referrals.
Case 1: SAC’s Wayne County advocate was able to avert three expulsions in one week. All three students, ages 11, 12, and 13, had experienced trauma and were diagnosed with disabilities, but their relatively short time in the respective schools prevented the staff from appropriately assessing their needs. All three students returned to school with added behavior supports and safety plans after the advocate attended hearings, communicated with special education staff and supported further IEP testing.

Case 2: A Wayne County student in 10th grade was suspended for 10 days from the private school he was attending. He then was told he could not return to school. Mom tried enrolling him in a public school in their resident district but was told it was too late in the year to do so. The student had been out of school for a month and a half when mom contacted SAC. With our assistance, the student was enrolled within a couple of days. Follow up was made with the parent who reported that her son was still in school and doing well.

Case 3: A Wayne County teen who had made “verbal threats” at school had been out of school for two weeks. The school had asked the dad to get a medical professional to declare her safe to come back to school, but he was struggling to make an appointment. SAC called the school principal, who explained that they did not want to suspend or expel the girl, but needed some assurances she was safe to come back. After some pushing from SAC, it was determined that a visit to the ER was adequate. SAC relayed this to the father, who said he wished he had known two weeks earlier the ER would be OK. She was back in school within a day of finding out this information and the school is surrounding her with extra support.

Case 4: SAC was able to get special education services implemented for a 14-year-old 8th grader to avert an expulsion. The school staff had minimal experience with the student, as she was new to the district. The advocate assisted the family through the process of requesting a special education evaluation, and she was found eligible for services as a student with an Emotional Impairment.

Case 5: We were able to assist a student through the process of getting a full ride scholarship to college. Our advocate had been working with this 17-year-old to help identify funding for about two months. He seemed to have few options for financial aid due to his limited familial support and status as a former foster youth. However, a last ditch effort to get a scholarship he initially did not qualify for resulted in the student’s choice university and the scholarship funders being so impressed with him that they offered the funds for tuition, room and board. He continues to work hard in college and stay in touch.
The Student Advocacy Center is a unique organization with a proud 40-year history of helping vulnerable students stay in school or get back into school. There is no other organization like us in the state of Michigan.

The Need
- Michigan has one of the harshest state discipline codes in the country.
- Michigan has the third worst suspension rate for black students in the country (Schott Foundation).
- Among large urban districts, Detroit is ranked lowest in the country for its graduation rate for black males (Schott Foundation).
- Overall, Wayne County ranks 60 out of 81 Michigan counties for the percentage of students not graduating on time (25%) (State of Michigan).
- Of teens ages 16-19, 4% of teens statewide and 6% of Detroit teens are not in school. (Kid’s Count)
- Nearly 14% of Detroit students in the class of 2015 are considered high school dropouts. (Kid’s Count)
- Economists estimate that dropouts cost our nation $1.5 trillion over the next decade — and individual dropouts will earn $10,000 less per year than high school graduates (Alliance for Excellent Education and U.S. Department of Labor).

Why Invest in SAC’s Approach
- We are focused on education, the most important investment in our future. There is a return of $1.45-$3.55 for every dollar invested in producing a new graduate (New York Times, 2012).
- We are focused on the most vulnerable students in our community, including students experiencing foster care, homelessness, mental illness, abuse and neglect, juvenile justice involvement, and harsh discipline. We use research-based indicators to determine who is eligible for our services.
- We are focused on outcomes, tracking research-based indicators such as attendance, grades and disciplinary referrals. More importantly, we see results.
- We deeply value and elevate student and family voice and meaningful student decision-making. Research indicates that true school reform will not happen without parents and students advocating for themselves.
- Too often, students (and parents) are alone blamed for school problems. Solutions are designed to “fix” students. We recognize the complexity of dropout and the role systems, policies and procedures play in pushing out the students who need caring adults the most.
Every dollar you donate unlocks a dollar from the Wayne County Childcare Fund, monies we secured through a competitive bid process. Currently, we are unable to access all of the county money awarded due to a lack of private match dollars. Families of more than 80 Wayne County students called SAC seeking an advocate but could only be assisted through our helpline.

Fundraising goal = $60,000 private dollars.

Platinum Level: $10,000 (or monthly gift of $834)
Your match gift provides funding for our Education Advocacy Program for four months
Benefits:
Logo/name recognition on program’s Web site, social media recognition, personalized wall plaque, lunch with some of our students and staff, and 10 free tickets to our annual storytelling fundraiser.

Gold Level: $5,000 (or monthly gift of $417)
Your match gift provides funding for our Education Advocacy Program for two months
Benefits:
Logo/name recognition on program’s Web site, social media recognition, personalized wall plaque, and 10 free tickets to our annual storytelling fundraiser.

Bronze Level: $2,500 (or monthly gift of $209)
Your match gift provides funding for our Education Advocacy Program for one month
Benefits:
Logo/name recognition on program’s Web site, social media recognition, and 8 free tickets to our annual storytelling fundraiser.

Silver Level: $1,000 (or monthly gift of $84)
Your match gift provides funding for our Education Advocacy Program for less than a month
Benefits:
Logo recognition on program’s Web site, social media recognition, and 6 free tickets to our annual storytelling fundraiser.