For the next few months, Marissa’s mother, grandmother and others tried to figure something out. They called their state representative and contacted education groups, trying to get Marissa back to school. But nobody could help. Tired and frustrated, they thought nothing could be done.

Then a family friend suggested that they call the American Diabetes Association, and they got the help they needed. A Legal Advocate (a lawyer experienced with diabetes discrimination) at the Association let the family know that Marissa had legal rights. By denying her the ability to attend school, the school district had broken federal law. The Legal Advocate referred Marissa’s case to Alan Yatvin, a Philadelphia member of the Association’s Advocacy Attorney Network. At no cost to the family, Mr. Yatvin reached out to the school district. He presented information about the law and tried to work with school officials to solve the problem. When that didn’t work, he filed a lawsuit in federal court, demanding that the school district provide diabetes care for Marissa at school and allow her to return. The district then backed down and agreed to assign a full-time nurse to the school. After almost five months, Marissa was finally back in school.

Sadly, her mother, Evelyn, died two weeks later. Although it was a hard time for the whole family, it helped to know that Marissa was safe at school, where she belonged.

“I am disappointed that school officials didn’t understand this terrible denial of Marissa’s basic rights. But I am so happy that with the resources of the American Diabetes Association, we were able to help this sweet little girl and her wonderful family. The Association’s Legal Advocacy program made the difference.”

-Alan Yatvin

The American Diabetes Association’s Safe at School Campaign Helps Children Who Have Diabetes

The American Diabetes Association leads the effort to prevent and eliminate discrimination against people who have diabetes at school, at work and in other parts of daily life.

Call 1-800-DIABETES (342-2383) or visit diabetes.org/gethelp