

# Georgia State Advisory Panel Operating Procedures

The State Advisory Panel (SAP) of the State of Georgia is established in accordance with **IDEA 2004 SEC. 612 State Eligibility and Section 1412(a) (21) of IDEA**. The state has established and maintains an advisory panel for the purpose of providing policy guidance with respect to special education and related services for children with disabilities in the state.

## I. DUTIES

The SAP shall:

- Advise the State Education Agency (SEA) of unmet needs within the State in the education of children with disabilities;
- Comment publicly on any rules or regulations proposed by the State regarding the education of children with disabilities;
- Advise the SEA in developing evaluations and reporting on data to the Secretary under section 618 of the Act;
- Advise the SEA in developing corrective action plans to address findings identified in Federal monitoring reports under Part B of the Act;
- Advise the SEA in developing and implementing policies relating to the coordination of services for children with disabilities;
- Review and comment on completed due process hearing findings;
- Serve as a Stakeholder Committee as outlined in the Georgia Systems of Continuous Improvement Process.

The Director of Division for Special Education Services and Supports shall:

- Provide relevant and current information to panel members;
- Serve as an Ex-officio capacity member;
- Assist with the development of the agenda;
- Report on topical issues;
- Support the panel in carrying out their functions.

The Presiding Officers:

- The State Advisory Panel's Executive Committee includes the Chair, Vice-Chair and Past Chair.
- The Executive Committee will nominate the new Vice-Chair at the final SAP meeting each year. Consideration will be given to alternating the Vice-Chair position between parents and other panel members.
- The Vice-Chair will assume all duties of the Chair in the absence of the Chair.
- The Vice-Chair will become the Chair effective July 1 of the following year.
- The Chair will assume the office of Past Chair effective July 1 of the following year.

- In the event the Chair's three-year term on the panel expires prior to completing the Past Chair office, the Chair will return to the panel for a one- year term to serve in that capacity on the Executive Committee.
- Officers may be selected during their tenure as State Advisory Panel members.
- The Division for Special Education Services and Supports shall oversee clerical and budgetary functions for the State Advisory Panel.

#### Roles of Executive Committee Members:

- **Chair:** Lead all SAP meetings. Appoint committee members. Serve on Executive Committee
- **Vice-Chair:** Serve as Chair in his/her absence. Lead the Membership Committee. Serve on the Executive Committee
- **Past-Chair:** Serve on the Executive Committee. Provide transition to the new chairperson. Act as a resource person to members of the State Advisory Panel. Support the current executive members by offering orientation for new panel members.

#### Additional Roles of the Executive Committee:

- *Membership* – The Executive Committee will assist the panel in the recruitment of new members each year. The Executive Committee will review all applications received from potential new members and make recommendations to the Division and the State Board of Education for new appointments. The Executive Committee must review all applications and ensure that the final panel membership meets eligibility and participation requirements set out in its bylaws.
- *Operating Procedures* - The Executive Committee will review and make recommendations based upon input from the panel related to the policies, procedures, and by-laws that guide the operations of the SAP.
- *Family Engagement* – The Executive Committee will review fact sheets for families on initial and annual evaluations, transition from Babies Can't Wait into school, transition out of high school, IEPs, and discipline. The Executive Committee will also seek input from the panel and review data and information related to parent participation from individualized education program (IEP) meetings and parent response rates from the GaDOE parent survey. The parent survey is disseminated each year to assess the percentage of parents with a child receiving special education services who report that schools facilitated parent involvement as a means of improving services and results for children with disabilities. The Executive Committee will make recommendations to the panel for strategies and materials to support increased family engagement.
- *Public Comment* - The Executive Committee will receive and track all public comments submitted to the SAP for review, including those received in writing

and in person. The Executive Committee will make recommendations to the panel for any necessary follow-up and/or response following receipt of each comment.

Standing Committees for the current year will be determined by the Executive Committee based upon input from Panel membership. Other committees may be formed at the discretion of the Panel Chair.

## **II. MEMBERSHIP**

- A. The SAP shall be comprised of members appointed by the State Board of Education. The majority of the members of the panel shall be individuals with disabilities or parents of children with disabilities (ages birth through 26). The members shall be representative of the state population and composed of individuals involved in, or concerned with the education of children with disabilities, including:
  - 1. Parents of children with disabilities (ages birth through 26);
  - 2. Individuals with disabilities;
  - 3. Teachers;
  - 4. Representatives of institutions of higher education that prepare special education and related services personnel;
  - 5. State and local education officials, including officials who carry out activities under subtitle B of title VII of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. Section 11431 *et seq.*);
  - 6. Administrators of programs for children with disabilities;
  - 7. Representatives of other state agencies involved in the financing or delivery of related services to children with disabilities;
  - 8. Representatives of private schools and public charter schools;
  - 9. Not less than 1 representative of a vocational, community, or business organization concerned with the provision of transition services to children with disabilities;
    - a. A representative from the state child welfare agency responsible for foster care; and
    - b. Representatives from the state juvenile and adult corrections agencies.
- B. To meet the requirements of IDEA and to broadly represent the interests of students with disabilities in Georgia, permanent Panel positions have been established. Each group or association shall nominate one representative who will serve a three-year term. Permanent positions will represent the following groups:
  - 1. Georgia Association of Educational Leaders (GAEL)
  - 2. Georgia Council of Administrators of Special Education (GCASE)
  - 3. Georgia School Superintendents Association (GSSA)
  - 4. Babies Can't Wait (BCW)
  - 5. Federally funded advocacy and protection groups: Georgia Advocacy Office (GAO) and;

## 6. Parent Training Information Center (PTI)

### **MEMBERSHIP SELECTION**

- A. The Executive Committee shall appoint two individuals with disabilities or parents of children with disabilities from the panel, and one additional panel member. One representative from the Division for Special Education Services will assist the committee throughout the membership review process.
- B. Applications for membership in the State Advisory Panel will be available on the SAP web page each January/February. Notice of the posting will be sent to all special education administrators and parent groups throughout the state. Applications will be accepted for a minimum of thirty days.
- C. The role of the membership committee is to review applications and ensure the following areas are addressed:
  - i. Representation of the categories listed above (Membership)
  - ii. Appropriate regional representation by congressional district
  - iii. Gender and ethnic representation
  - iv. Other considerations brought to the attention of the committee
  - v. Applicants may qualify for membership in one or more category
- D. Special education administrators serving on the Panel will be representative of the state- defined size groups based on the number of students with IEPs.
- E. If membership applications do not include representation as required by IDEA, application for those *specific* positions may be accepted after the application deadline.
- F. The Executive Committee with feedback from the panel may recommend to revise the list of current permanent members and/or agency representation as long as the established criteria of maintaining a majority of membership from the disabled community is maintained.

### **TERMS OF MEMBERSHIP**

- A. The term of each member shall be for three years and shall begin on July 1st of the year he or she is selected and expire on June 30<sup>th</sup> of the final year.
- B. Appointments to the State Advisory Panel shall be staggered to assure that only one third of the membership rotate off at the end of any given year.
- C. The Chairperson shall serve as an ex-officio member for one year following his/her term, providing this person's three-year term on the State Advisory Panel has ended.
- D. The role of the Past Chair during this time shall include:
  - i. providing transition to the new Chairperson,
  - ii. acting as a resource person to members of the State Advisory Panel,
  - iii. providing assistance to new members.
- E. Panel members shall serve no more than two consecutive terms. If a current panel member wishes to be considered for a second term, an application must be submitted to the membership committee.

## **G. ADVOCATE/ASSISTANT ATTENDANCE**

Persons with disabilities are welcome to bring an advocate/assistant with them to all meetings in order to facilitate participation in all aspects of the SAP.

- A. The advocate/assistant may facilitate the panel member in the sharing of thoughts, opinions, ideas, as well as, asking questions on his/her behalf.
- B. The opinions and comments expressed will be those of the panel member.

## **H. COMPENSATION**

Members of the State Advisory Panel shall serve without compensation but will be reimbursed for reasonable and actual expenses incurred in attending meetings within the limits provided in state rules.

## **I. ATTENDANCE**

- A. Members are expected to attend meetings for the length of their tenure in order to represent their demographic area and/or agency to enhance the effectiveness of the State Advisory Panel. Should State Advisory Panel members be unable to participate in a meeting, it is their responsibility to notify the Chair of the State Advisory Panel for Special Education of their anticipated absence. Notification is requested as early as possible and not later than 48 hours preceding the meeting.
- B. If necessary, State Advisory Panel members who are agency representatives may, for information purposes only, opt to send a substitute to meetings. If a substitute is sent to a State Advisory Panel meeting, it is the responsibility of that member to fully inform the substitute of the work of the Panel and to also notify the Chair and Division for Special Education Services and Supports staff contact of the anticipated participation of the substitute. Since the work of the State Advisory Panel is dependent upon consistent participation of members, it is anticipated that the use of substitutes by members will be limited. Substitutes may be reimbursed at the same rate as State Advisory Panel members.

## **J. REPLACEMENT**

- A. State Advisory Panel members may be replaced when the following occurs:
  - 1. The member sends a letter of resignation to the Chair or the member has more than three consecutive absences. Typically, the SAP replaces appointed positions; all other positions must be presented to the State Board.
  - 2. After two absences, the Chair of the State Advisory Panel will contact the Panel member to verify interest and ability to serve as a State Advisory Panel Member. An absence is considered nonattendance for both Panel meeting days.
  - 3. In the event a member must resign from the Panel, the Executive Committee may seek a replacement during the regular membership selection process (during January/February) and make the appropriate recommendations to the State Board of Education.
  - 4. In the event that the Panel does not demonstrate the required minimum of 51% for families and/or individuals with disabilities, the Executive Committee

may make a recommendation to seek a replacement outside of the normal membership intake process.

## **K. MEETINGS**

- A. The State Advisory Panel shall meet as often as necessary to conduct its business but not less than four (4) times during each fiscal year at a time and place determined by the GaDOE staff.
- B. The State Advisory Panel shall consider issues and make comments using a consensus decision-making model.
- C. Interpreters and other necessary services must be provided at Panel meetings for Panel members. Panel members must submit necessary information to support the State in committing to contractual agreements in a timely manner.
- D. All Panel meetings and agenda items will be announced in advance of the meeting to afford interested parties reasonable opportunity to give a public comment.
- E. By July 1, of each year, the Panel will submit an annual report of Panel activities and recommendations to the GaDOE.
- F. Official minutes must be kept on all Panel meetings and are posted on the GaDOE State Advisory Panel website, as appropriate.
- F. An orientation meeting for new SAP members will be conducted prior to the first scheduled meeting. The orientation meeting will provide Panel members with their responsibilities and provide an overview of existing laws and regulations governing the Panel. This meeting will also provide panel members with a summary of the activities and initiatives that the SAP focused on over the preceding year.
- G. Members of the general public are welcome to attend State Advisory Panel meetings during the Public Comment time. The additional Panel meeting times will not be open to the public unless indicated otherwise on the agenda. If visitors attend the meeting, they should occupy visitor seats.
- H. The dates and locations of the annual SAP meetings shall be posted on the GaDOE website by August 1 each year. Meeting agendas will be posted at least 2 weeks prior to each meeting.

## **L. PUBLIC COMMENT**

The following are guidelines for public input:

- A. Thirty minutes will be allocated on the agenda for public input at each meeting.
- B. Additional time may be added at the discretion of the Chair.
- C. Public comment may be oral, in person, by phone call, or in written form to be read by the Chair.
- D. Public comment is limited to no more than 5 minutes per person.
- E. A sign-in sheet will be available at the registration table. Those wishing to speak will be asked to sign in. The Chair will call on individuals based on the order participants have signed in.
- F. Persons submitting comment by phone call or in writing will be signed in by the

Chair.

- G. Each speaker will clearly state their full name and county of residence.
- H. All public comment should be factual and should not include personally identifiable information of students or personnel in order to maintain confidentiality. Speakers should avoid using names of students or staff and maintain confidentiality and privacy standards.
- I. All public comments will be taken under advisement by the Panel but will not elicit a written or spoken response. The names of persons providing public comment and a brief summary of topics or input will be documented as part of the meeting's record.
- J. Requesting public comment by phone call
  - i. The public may submit a request to make public comment by phone call at State Advisory Panel (SAP) meetings during the public input session, if unable to be present in person.
  - ii. All requests to make public comment by phone call must be submitted by email, mail or fax 770-344-4482 to the chairperson and received by 4:00 PM at least 3 business days prior to the start of the scheduled meeting date. Any requests submitted after that time will be scheduled for a later SAP meeting.
  - iii. A request to make public comment by phone call must include the name and county of residence for the person submitting the request.
  - iv. Specific issues about a particular student should be addressed to the Georgia Department of Education, Division for Special Education Services and Supports rather than the SAP.
  - v. The Chair or designee selected from Panel Membership or GADOE support staff will contact each person wishing to make public comment by phone or email to confirm receipt of the request and to schedule the date and time for public comment.

**M. MODIFICATIONS: Changes of Procedures**

Members may review the operating procedures of the State Advisory Panel, and recommendations for revisions may be made to the Chair or designee.