Special Education Citizens Advisory Committees

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Local Special Education Citizens Advisory Committee

- (1) Each local school system shall establish a special education citizens advisory committee to advise the local school system on the needs of students with disabilities within the jurisdiction.
- (2) The Department shall annually allocate federal funds to each local school system to support the activities of the local special education citizen advisory committee.
- (3) Each local school system shall submit a budget for the use of federal funds, consistent with §C(1)(a) of this regulation.

COMAR 13A.05.02.13I

Regulations adopted September 28, 2004

Code of Maryland Regulations (COMAR)

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Purpose of SECAC



- Established by the Local School System
- Guided by the Special Education State Advisory Committee (SESAC) 34 CFR 300.167
- Seeks meaningful input on FAPE provision
- Serves as an advisory committee to the local office of special education
- Other functions as per SECAC by-laws

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Advisory vs. Advocacy



- Advisory: To advise means to counsel, give guidance, guide, offer suggestions on systemic issues rather than to promote advocate or plead an individual case, position or point of view.
  - Advise on SYSTEMIC issues not personal issues
  - Use data to GUIDE and INFORM recommendations
- Advocacy: Public support for or recommendation of a particular cause or policy

Remember Directors should strongly consider the input of the SECAC but are not obligated to accept all suggestions

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Advisory Opportunities

- Review and Comment
  - Staffing plan
  - Data
- Advise on Unmet Needs for education of students with disabilities
- Discuss Local Performance
  - Compliance indicators
- Identify Priorities and Goals
- Market Parent Survey
- Participate in Local Implementation Teams
- Representation on Local Committees
- Offer Annual Report to County Board of Education

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What SECAC is NOT



- Not for Personal
  - Not a place for advocating on personal issues
  - Not a place for personal advice on IEPs
- Not Legislative
  - Not a legislative group
  - Does not create legislation
- Not a Support Group
- Not a venue for promoting services of any agency, organization, or individual for profit

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Suggested Stakeholders

- Family Members of Students with Disabilities
  - Representative of Multiple Disabilities
  - Majority representation of the Group
- Representatives from General Education
- Representatives from Special Education
- Community Members
- Representatives of Community Agencies Serving Students with Disabilities
- Representatives from Disability Groups

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Recruiting Strategies

- Share successes and promote positive outcomes
  - Highlight achievements to attract potential members
  - Use success stories to build credibility
- Personal invitations to attend meetings
  - Engage individuals directly
  - Encourage participation through personal outreach
- Recommendations from current and past members and staff
- Set goals and priorities
  - Define clear objectives
  - Advertise goals to attract interest

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Bylaws and Executive Committee



- Bylaws Establishment
  - Created by each local committee
  - Regular reviews recommended
- Executive Committee Composition
  - Should include at least one parent (recommended but not required as chair or co-chair)
  - Parent of a student enrolled with a disability under of IDEA

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Marketing and Transparency



- Make information available in multiple places
  - Website
  - Newsletters
  - Facebook pages/social media
  - Flyers
  - Brochures
  - Collaborate with partners for success/family support for effective recruiting
    - Family Friendly
    - Accessible

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Responsibilities



- Regular Meeting Attendance
- Constituency Representation
- Knowledge of Special Education
- Information Sharing
- Mentoring New Members
- Participate in the work of the SECAC including participation on subcommittees when required
- Focus on systems change
- Work collaboratively with other members and school division personnel

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Roles & Relationships

Special Education Director

- Seek meaningful input
- Meet with the executive committee regularly
- Share information/data

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Roles & Relationships (cont)

SECAC Executive Committee

- Bring global concerns
- Guide flow of information from sub-committees
- Set priorities and make recommendations related to them
- Provide advice and input to the LEA/Special Ed. Department
- Seek input from families and community
- Share information with families and community

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Combined Responsibilities

- Collaborate on agendas, meeting topics, information sharing
- Disagree without being disagreeable
- Find common ground
- Be civil and respectful
- Work Collaboratively
- Co-plan the SECAC budget

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Ground Rules and Policies



- Establishing Ground Rules
  - Develop Bylaws
  - Determine necessary policies
  - Develop communication protocol
- Meetings
  - Identify structure
  - Plan agendas together
- Everyone have access to bylaws

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Conducting SECAC Meetings



- Collaborative Agenda Setting
  - Work with special education director
- Review Mission/Vision
- Ensure Understanding of Purpose and Procedures
- Establish and Maintain Meeting Format
  - Consider using Robert's Rules of Order
  - Review format and ground rules
- Address Issues Broadly
  - Avoid naming schools or personnel

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SECAC Budget



- Funding Allocation
  - $2500 allocated from IDEA part B state discretionary funds
- Submission
  - Budget submitted as part of grant from MSDE
  - Locals report to MSDE on use of funds twice each year
- Use of funds subject to local policies and procedures

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SECAC Budget (cont.)

- Communication between SECAC Chair and Director
  - Effective channels for feedback
  - Regular meetings and updates
- Rules and Procedures for Spending Money
  - Specific guidelines for county expenditure
  - Point of contact for SECAC and LEA regarding budget

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Common Use of Funds

- Speakers
  - Engaging speakers for parent events
- Regional Conferences/Training
  - Organizing local conferences and training sessions for parents
- Resource Fairs
  - Hosting fairs for providing resources to families of students with disabilities

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Common Use of Funds (cont)

- Purchasing books for lending library
- Transportation for families to SECAC events/meetings
- Conference fees for parents
- Childcare
- Brochures/informational items
- Staff award ceremonies

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Data for Possible Review:

- State Performance Plan(SPP) / Annual Performance Report (APR) www.mdideareport.org
- Census Data http://www.marylandpublicschools.org/programs/Pages/Special-Education/info.aspx
- Maryland Report Card www.mdreportcard.org

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