

Serving on Special Education Committees

How to be an effective parent representative

Adopted from Curriculum developed by the
Technical Assistance ALLIANCE for Parent Centers
National Technical Assistance Center at PACER Center



Things to Consider

What kinds of committees are there?

Why would I serve?

What do I need to know?

Issues to consider



Kinds of Committees

- Local Interagency Coordinating Councils (LICC) required by Early On
- Michigan Interagency Coordinating Council (MICC) required by the state
- Parent Advisory Committees (PAC) required by each ISD
- Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) required by the state
- Michigan Developmental Disabilities Council (DD Council)
- Community and Local Level Groups

Why might you want to be involved?

- Increase parent involvement in your district
- Build support for special education
- Impact issues you care about
- Foster community understanding of special education
- Learn about resources

Research has shown that parent involvement helps improve student achievement.



As a Parent Committee Member

- Share your experience as a parent
- Contribute to discussions about the needs of families in your local service area /district

Willing to learn

Willing to share and contribute your ideas

Willing to ask questions

Good Information to Know

- Basics of state and federal special education law
- Education and special education policies in your school district
- Who the decision-makers are in your area

Gather Information

Parent Exploring Opportunities Form: <https://www.michiganallianceforfamilies.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/Fillable-Parent-Exploring-Opportunities-Form.pdf>

- Group
- Membership
- Operating Procedures
- Meeting Logistics
- Parent Role

Gather Information: Group & Members

Group Information

- Governing or Advisory?
- What is the defined purpose, mission, and vision?

Membership

- Appointed, elected, or volunteers?
- What is the process to join?
- What is the length of the term?

Gather Information: Operating Procedures

- Formal or Informal?
- How are decisions made?
- Who coordinates meetings?
- Who leads the meetings?
- How do members add to the agenda?





Gather Information: Meeting Logistics

- How often does the committee meet?
- What is the schedule?
- Where? Virtual or in person?
- Is travel required?
- Is a stipend provided?
- Is child care provided?

What might I do on the committee?

- Help build cooperative relationships between general and special education
- Support the special education budget at school committee and school board meetings
- Identify and distribute information on promising practices
- Help other parents in the district understand special education
- Help educators understand the perspectives of parents of students who receive special education services
- Develop advocacy strategies for parent groups and the district
- Recommend district improvements, based on local student evaluation data
- Serve as sounding board for parent and professional concerns

Gather Information: Parent Role

- Know your role
 - request a job description, if available
- Consider your ability to fully participate when agreeing to join the committee
- Shift perspective to long-range, systems change issues for all children, not just one – from “ME” to “WE”
- Read the agenda and be prepared to contribute to the discussion
- Review previous minutes and be prepared to discuss any questions or vote on approval
- Communicate: share your perspective and listen to others

to be an **Effective Member**

Become familiar with:

- Outcomes of children with disabilities in your district
- Staff and parent concerns that affect outcomes for children with disabilities

Issues to Consider: SPP APR Part C

State Performance Plan Annual Performance Report (SPP APR)

Compare the current data with state averages and goals

Outcomes – Part C

Services in Natural Environments

Child Find

Early Childhood Outcomes

Early Childhood Transition

Issues to Consider: SPP APR Part B

State Performance Plan Annual Performance Report (SPP APR)

Compare the current data with state averages and goals

Outcomes – Part B

Number of students receiving special education supports and services

% of students who receive services in regular education settings

% of students who receive services in segregated settings

Current outcomes for students with disabilities

Graduation and Dropout Rates

Issues to Consider: Discipline

Part B – Indicator #4

- Student suspension rates in your district (for students who do and do not have disabilities)
- Number of students placed in Interim Alternative Educational Settings (IAES)
- Major behavior concerns that result in IAES placement, and district planning to address the concerns

Issues to Consider: Family Involvement

Part C – Indicator #4

Early intervention services have helped the family:

- Know their rights
- Effectively communicate their child's needs
- Help their child develop and learn



Issues to Consider: Local

- What major issues your district faces, if any
- Whether the issues affect the education of students with disabilities
- How your committee can help resolve the issues



How can I **Help Other Families?**

- Support high expectations for their child
- Model home-school collaboration and respect
- Share information with parents about whom to contact for district information or to have their rights explained

Positive Impact

- Help the district / ISD / MDE to understand the need for parent-friendly materials
- Represent all parents of children with disabilities in your role on the committee
 - Learn about student needs
 - Encourage feedback from other families
- Ensure appropriate communication with families of children with disabilities

We are here to support you!

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For more information visit:

<https://www.michiganallianceforfamilies.org>

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Michigan Alliance for Families

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