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

Michigan Alliance for Families
information, support, and education

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Things to Consider

What kinds of committees are there?

Why would I serve?

What do I need to know?

Issues to consider

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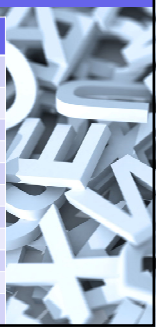
What Do Those Letters Mean?

IDEA	Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (federal law)
IDEA – Part C	the part of the IDEA that provides early intervention services for infants and toddlers (birth through age 2) with disabilities and their families
IDEA – Part B	the part of the IDEA that governs special education and related services for children and youth ages 3-21 with disabilities
MARSE	Michigan Administrative Rules for Special Education
ISD	Intermediate School District
SPP APR	State Performance Plan Annual Performance Report
LICC	Local Interagency Coordinating Council
MICC	Michigan Interagency Coordinating Council
PAC	Parent Advisory Committee
SEAC	Special Education Advisory Committee
MDE	Michigan Department of Education
MiLEAP	Michigan Department of Lifelong Education, Advancement, and Potential



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Kinds of Committees

Early Childhood Special Education

Local Interagency Coordinating Councils (LICC)
Early On at your Intermediate School District (ISD)

required by *Early On* Michigan Part C of the Individuals With Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) State Plan

Michigan Interagency Coordinating Council (MICC)
Early On at the state level

required by Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)

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Kinds of Committees

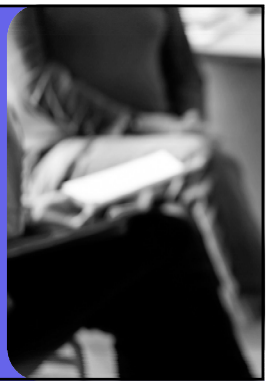
Special Education

Parent Advisory Committees (PAC)
at each Intermediate School District (ISD)

required by Michigan Administrative Rules for Special Education (MARSE)

Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC)
at the state level

required by Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)



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Kinds of Committees

Other Opportunities

Community and Local Level Groups
PTA / PTO, Parks and Recreation, local parent groups

Michigan Developmental Disabilities Council
at the state level

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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.

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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

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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

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Gather Information

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

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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?

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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?



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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?

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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

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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

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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

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Issues to Consider: SPP APR Part C

State Performance Plan Annual Performance Report (SPP APR)

Compare the current data with state averages and goals

Part C – Birth to 3

- Services in Natural Environments
- Child Find
- Early Childhood Outcomes
- Early Childhood Transition

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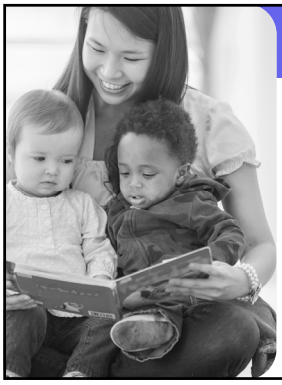

Issues to Consider: Family Involvement

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

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Issues to Consider: SPP APR Part B

State Performance Plan Annual Performance Report (SPP APR)

Compare the current data with state averages and goals

Part B - Ages 3-21

Number of students receiving special education supports and services

Educational Environments – K-12 and Preschool

Current outcomes for students with disabilities – Preschool and Post-school

Graduation and Dropout Rates

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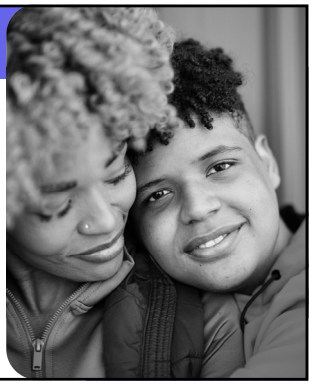
MDO

Issues to Consider: Family Involvement

Part B – Indicator #8

Percent of parents with a child receiving special education services who report schools facilitated parent involvement.



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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

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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



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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

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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

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We are here to support you!



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