

# **Georgia State Advisory Panel Operating Policies and 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.

## **DUTIES**

The SAP shall:

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

## **MEMBERSHIP**

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;

- 10) A representative from the state child welfare agency responsible for foster care; and
- 11) Representatives from the state juvenile and adult corrections agencies.

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
- 5) Federally funded advocacy and protection groups: Georgia Advocacy Office (GAO) and;
- 6) Parent Training Information Center (PTI)

### **COMPANION ATTENDANCE**

Persons with disabilities are welcome to bring a companion with them to all meetings in order to facilitate participation.

- 1) It is not the role of the companions to participate as a member of the Panel or in committees.
- 2) The companion will not inject their own opinion or participate in discussions.

### **MEMBERSHIP SELECTION**

The SAP Chair shall appoint a four person membership committee each year. This committee will be chaired by the Vice-Chair of the panel and will include two parents of children with disabilities. One representative from the Division for Special Education Services will assist the committee throughout the membership process.

Applications for membership in the State Advisory Panel will be available on the SAP web page each spring. 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.

The role of the membership committee is to review applications and ensure the following areas are addressed:

- 1) Representation of the categories listed above (Membership)
- 2) Appropriate regional representation by congressional district
- 3) Gender and ethnic representation
- 4) Other considerations brought to the attention of the committee
- 5) Applicants may qualify for membership in one or more category

Special education administrators serving on the Panel will be representative of the state-defined size groups based on the number of students with IEPs.

If membership applications do not include representation as required by IDEA, application for those *specific* positions may be accepted after the application deadline.

### **TERMS OF MEMBERSHIP**

- 1) 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.
- 2) 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.
- 3) 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. The role of the Past Chair during this time shall include:
  - a) providing transition to the new Chairperson,
  - b) acting as a resource person to members of the State Advisory Panel,
  - c) providing assistance to new members.
- 4) 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.

### **THE ROLE OF THE DIRECTOR**

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

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

### **MEETINGS**

- 1) 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.
- 2) The State Advisory Panel shall consider issues and make comments using a consensus decision making model.
- 3) Meetings are open to the public.
- 4) Interpreters and other necessary services must be provided at Panel meetings for Panel members.
- 5) All Panel meetings and agenda items must be announced in advance of the meeting to afford interested parties reasonable opportunity to attend.
- 6) By July 1, of each year, the Panel will submit an annual report of Panel activities and recommendations to the GaDOE.
- 7) Official minutes must be kept on all Panel meetings and must be made available to the public upon request.
- 8) 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.

## **RECORDING MEETINGS**

Members and visitors are requested to notify panel members of intent to record any portion of the meeting (audio or video). In addition, the person recording the meeting is requested to not engage in any of the following: post on internet; allow viewing in a public forum by more than two people; and/or release it to third parties.

## **VISITORS TO PANEL MEETINGS**

Members of the general public are welcome to attend State Advisory Panel meetings. Visitors shall not occupy seats at the Panel meeting table and will occupy seating available around the sides and/or in the back of the meeting room, as space allows.

## **STANDING COMMITTEES**

There will be 5 standing committees. Other committees may be formed at the discretion of the Panel Chair.

*Membership* – The Membership Committee assists in the recruitment of new members each year. Committee members review all applications received from potential new members and make recommendations to the Divisions and the State Board of Education for new appointments.

The committee must review all applications and ensure that the final recommendations for board approval address the following:

- Representation of the categories listed in Membership
- Appropriate regional representation by congressional district
- Gender and ethnic representation
- Other considerations brought to the attention of the committee

*Policies and Procedures* - The Policies and Procedures Committee reviews and makes recommendations related to the policies, procedures and by-laws that guide the operations of the SAP.

*Dispute Resolution* – The Dispute Resolution Committee reviews data and decisions related to due process proceedings and other forms of dispute resolution. Upon review of data at each quarterly meeting, committee members make recommendations as well as requests for follow-up to the Division related to their findings.

*Family Engagement* – The Family Engagement Committee assists in the review of 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 committee also reviews data and information related to parent participation in individualized education program (IEP) meetings and parent response rates on the parent survey. The parent survey is disseminated each year in order 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. This committee makes recommendations for strategies and materials to support increased family engagement.

*Public Comment* - The Public Comment Committee receives and tracks all public comments submitted to the SAP for review, including those received in writing and in person. Committee members make recommendations for any necessary follow-up and/or response following receipt of each comment.

## **PUBLIC COMMENT**

The following are rules for public input:

- 1) Thirty minutes will be allocated on the agenda for public input at each meeting. Additional time may be added at the discretion of the Chair.
- 2) Public comment is limited to no more than 5 minutes per person.
- 3) 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 public input based on the order participants have signed in.
- 4) Public comment may be oral or in written form.
- 5) Speakers will clearly state their full name and county of residence.
- 6) The Panel encourages that public comments be factual and objective. Speakers should avoid using names of students or staff and maintain confidentiality and privacy standards.
- 7) Public comments will be taken under advisement by the State Advisory Panel and may not be addressed at that time.

The contact information for assistance from the Division for Special Education Services and Supports is located on the website. If anyone needs special assistance to participate in the public input session, every effort will be made to provide the accommodation. Please allow no less than 3 business days notice prior to the scheduled meeting.

### **Written Public Comment**

- 1) The public may submit comment in written form to be read by the chairperson and/or distributed at State Advisory Panel (SAP) meetings during the public input session, if unable to present in person.
- 2) All written comments must be submitted via email, mail or fax to the chairperson and received at least 3 business days prior to the scheduled meeting. Any written comments submitted after that time will be read and/or distributed at a later SAP meeting.
- 3) All public comment should be factual and should not include personally identifying information of students or personnel in order to maintain confidentiality.
- 4) Written input must include the name, address and county of residence of the person submitting comment. 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.

- 5) All public comments will be taken under advisement by the Panel but will not elicit a written response. The names of persons providing public comment and a brief summary of topics or input will be included in the meeting minutes published on the SAP web page.

### **NOTICE OF MEETINGS**

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.

### **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.

### **ATTENDANCE**

Members are expected to attend meetings for the length of their tenure in order to represent their constituency, organization and/or agency and 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 Division for Special Education Services and the Division for Special Education Supports contact of their anticipated absence. Notification is requested as early as possible, and not later than 48 hours preceding the meeting.

If necessary, State Advisory Panel members that 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.

### **REPLACEMENT**

State Advisory Panel members shall be replaced when the following occurs: the member sends a letter of resignation to the Chair or the member does not attend three meetings in one fiscal year. 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. In the event a member must resign from the Panel, the Membership Committee may seek a replacement during the regular membership selection process and make the appropriate recommendations to the State Board of Education.

## **PRESIDING OFFICERS**

- 1) The State Advisory Panel's Executive Committee includes the Chair, Vice-Chair, and Past Chair.
- 2) 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.
- 3) The Vice-Chair will assume all the duties of the Chair in the absence of the Chair. The Vice-Chair will become the Chair effective July 1 of the following year.
- 4) 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.
- 5) Officers may be selected during their tenure as State Advisory Panel members.
- 6) The DES shall oversee clerical and budgetary functions for the State Advisory Panel.

## **ROLES OF EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEMBERS:**

- 1) Chair: Lead all SAP meetings. Appoint committee members. Serve on Executive Committee
- 2) Vice-Chair: Serve as Chair in his/her absence. Lead the Membership Committee. Serve on the Executive Committee
- 3) 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. Provide assistance to new members.

## **MODIFICATIONS: Changes of Policies and Procedures**

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