

Spotlight on GEORGIA

IEP Facilitation Multistate Workgroup (2015-2017)

Georgia Department of Education Facilitated Individualized Education Program (FIEP) Accomplishments

Families of children with disabilities and the professionals who serve them may find themselves in conflict over a child's special education services. When poorly managed, these disputes can result in damaged relationships and resources spent on conflict rather than on education. A growing body of evidence indicates that individualized education program (IEP) facilitation services can address these conflicts, while building trust and better relationships between families and schools.

In response to this need, the National Center for Appropriate Dispute Resolution in Special Education (CADRE) convened a multistate workgroup, using a peer-to-peer intensive technical assistance approach, to help states maximize their investments in IEP facilitation. CADRE selected the Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE), along with six other states (Arkansas, Florida, Missouri, New Jersey, New York, and West Virginia), to participate in the three-year workgroup initiative.

Georgia's interest in joining the

workgroup was driven by the desire to learn from CADRE and other states the most efficient and effective strategies for implementing an IEP facilitation program at the state level.

This spotlight on Georgia highlights what GaDOE set out to accomplish, and what it achieved while participating in the workgroup.

Objectives

Georgia determined that the objectives for its participation in the workgroup were to:

- Analyze preliminary stakeholder input in order to create a facilitated IEP (FIEP) process tailored to the needs of Georgia
- Establish a facilitated IEP stakeholder committee group to provide ongoing input and feedback
- Offer IEP facilitation training to GaDOE-contracted IEP facilitators by Spring 2015
- Provide IEP facilitators to pilot Local Education Agencies (LEAs) by the 2015-2016 school year

98% of participants reported that they would recommend the IEP facilitation process to others.

About CADRE

CADRE is a national center that provides intensive technical assistance to state education agencies using a multistate workgroup model, creating a forum for learning together through shared knowledge, practices, and experiences. CADRE offers ongoing support, consultation, and resources to workgroup members. Activities include teleconferences, virtual and face-to-face meetings, webinars, and opportunities to engage with experts through trainings, presentations, and consultations.

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Significant Milestones and Accomplishments

Georgia met all of its objectives and continues to make significant progress in implementing an efficient and effective IEP facilitation program. Some highlights of their accomplishments include:

- Creation and implementation of a state IEP facilitation program as a dispute prevention and dispute resolution process for families and districts
- Selection and training of seventeen (17) IEP facilitators, including parents, former special education directors and coordinators, mediators, attorneys, and college professors
- Expansion of the State Education Agency (SEA) IEP Facilitation Pilot Program from four (4) to twenty (20) districts, including three (3) metro-area districts
- Favorable outcomes being reported by participating IEP teams

97% of participating IEP teams reached consensus on some to all issues.

2016-2017 Results

- IEP teams reached consensus on some to all issues in 30 out of 31 facilitated IEP team meetings
- Based on 156 completed participant evaluations, 85% of participants were very satisfied with the outcome of the facilitated IEP team meetings
- 80% of participants indicated that the IEP facilitation process prevented the need for other means of resolving disputes related to the IEP (e.g., mediation, formal written complaint, due process hearing)
- 98% of participants reported that they would recommend the IEP facilitation process to others

Essential Elements of Program Development

Georgia has identified the following as essential elements of their program improvement efforts:

- Engagement of a broad stakeholder group (e.g., parents, educators, attorneys, and administrators) on the selection and qualifications of IEP facilitators, a review of FIEP processes and procedures, and feedback on FIEP promotional materials
- Development of FIEP request forms, procedural manual, parent guide, promotional flyers, and informational webinar
- Provision of initial and advanced FIEP trainings to facilitators by nationally recognized trainers, including a cultural competency training for facilitators
- Development of an FIEP webpage that includes general FIEP information, request forms, promotional materials, and links to each participating FIEP district's website
- Data collection and analysis of the facilitated IEP meetings; and provision of reports to stakeholders and participating districts

Future Activities and Desired Outcomes

Georgia's desired future IEP facilitation activities and outcomes include:

- Statewide expansion of the IEP Facilitation Program
- Increased use of IEP facilitation in appropriate situations over more formal dispute resolution processes (e.g., formal complaints and due process hearings)

- Improved communication and relationships between families and districts, resulting in positive student outcomes



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<http://www.gadoe.org/Curriculum-Instruction-and-Assessment/Special-Education-Services/Pages/IEP-Facilitation.aspx>