

Q and A: AEA Resolution Facilitator System

1. What does having a statewide AEA Resolution Facilitator system mean?

The AEA Resolution Facilitator system is a statewide conflict resolution process available through each of Iowa's nine intermediate agencies (area education agencies). Each AEA has a designated person (or persons) known as the AEA Resolution Facilitator Coordinator. The major goal of the AEA Resolution Facilitator process is to have an option available to help resolve differences at the earliest possible time. Another goal is to have persons receive conflict resolution skill training so that individuals will enhance their skills to get differences addressed and meaningfully resolved in a collaborative manner.

2. What type of circumstances may utilize a Resolution Facilitator?

The conflict or concerns may involve general education, Section 504, special education, Early ACCESS, or any issue involving a school setting. The conflict may be between educators and parents, educators and educators, or any other employee hired by the district or AEA.

There are at least four options that may involve a Resolution Facilitator:

- some type of conflict which could lead to mediation;
- at an *IEP meeting* should there be a potential for an adversarial meeting;
- a "resolution meeting" after a parent has filed a due process hearing notice to the district and AEA (and which must be addressed within 15 days); or
- *any other type of meeting* to serve as a facilitator when conflict may be anticipated.

3. What process is to be used if someone wants to use a Resolution Facilitator?

Step 1. Contact the designated AEA Resolution Facilitator Coordinator.

Step 2. Inform the Coordinator what type of option is desired (from Question #2 above).

Step 3. The Coordinator will determine whether the request can be implemented and act accordingly. Use of the process will be at the discretion of the parties involved.

4. What if the AEA does not have a Resolution Facilitator available?

If the AEA Resolution Facilitator Coordinator does not have a Resolution Facilitator available or the Coordinator believes the conflict is of a magnitude greater than the AEA is willing to attempt to resolve, the Coordinator should contact the Iowa Department of Education for assistance. The State of Iowa has agreed to use its state mediators when the Coordinator seeks assistance from the State.

5. What type of training have the AEA Resolution Facilitators received?

This cadre is made up of people who have received a *minimum* of four days of introductory mediation training. Many have far exceeded that.

6. What happens if a party considering using the Resolution Facilitator process does not perceive the AEA Resolution Facilitator process to be impartial?

The party should indicate to the AEA Coordinator that he/she would participate in the process if the Resolution Facilitator was not from the resident AEA. The coordinator could contact an AEA that is willing to participate in an exchange system or the Coordinator could contact the Iowa Dept. of Education to arrange discuss using a state mediator. In addition, the coordinator could also review other mediation options that could be used if the issue involves special education, such as the preappeal conference.

7. How are costs handled for exchange programs, using the Resolution Facilitator process?

The service is exchanged without cost, although the agency using the service may reimburse the sending AEA expenses such as mileage, meals, and motel. When the State mediators are used, the State will cover the costs.

8. How do people know the process is available?

Each AEA is responsible for promoting and disseminating information about the Resolution Facilitator process, such as disseminating brochures or including the information on district and AEA website. The State is also instrumental in promoting its use.

9. What training is available statewide for resolving conflict?

- **RESPECT in the IEP Process:** Recognizing Everyone's Strengths by Peacebuilding, Empathizing, Communicating and Trustbuilding. (4 days spread out over 9 - 12 weeks so as to allow participants to practice new skills and concepts between training sessions).
- **Introductory Mediation:** (4 days)
- **Advanced Mediation:** (4 days)
- **Advanced Mediation:** Part II (2 days)
- **Refresher courses** For those who have completed any of the above (One day, typically, but could be longer)
- **Creating Solutions:** Parent training in same core skills that are addressed in trainings for educators. (One day)