



**Technical Assistance for Excellence in Special Education**

With the Technical Assistance Division of the Institute for Disability Research, Policy & Practice

## **STATE SPECIAL EDUCATION ADVISORY PANEL**

### **MEMBERSHIP REQUIREMENTS**

#### **IDEA: CFR:168 (a) and (b)**

Listed below are the membership requirements for the State Special Education Advisory Panel under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) CFR:168 (a) and (b). The list includes each membership category and a short description of each category. "The Advisory Panel must consist of members appointed by the Governor, or any other official authorized under State law to make such appointments, be representative of the State population and be composed of individuals involved in, or concerned with, the education of children with disabilities."

#### **1. Parents of Children with Disabilities (ages birth through 26)**

This is a critical group of stakeholders on the Advisory Panel. Over half the Panel should be made up of parents of children with disabilities and individuals with disabilities. Parents on the Panel are representing all parents with children who are IDEA eligible in the State and should reach out to as many other parents as possible between meetings to get their opinions on critical matters relating to special education and related services. Many Panels state in their by-laws that at least one or more members of the Advisory Panel Executive Committee be a parent.

#### **2. Individuals with Disabilities**

Who better can advise the State on policy and procedural guidance relating to special education and related services than parents of children with disabilities and individuals with disabilities? Many Panels try to consider representation from low incidence and high incidence disabilities. Some Panels include a student who is IDEA eligible and/or a student with a disability who is post-secondary and currently employed or attending a higher education/technical school.

### **3. Teachers**

The importance of including classroom and/or special education teachers on the Panel cannot be overstated. The teacher has firsthand experience with special education and related services and how those services are impacting children and youth with disabilities. Most Panels include one teacher, others include someone from the elementary and secondary levels. And this teacher representative should reach out to other teachers to get their perspectives on priorities being addressed by the Advisory Panel.

### **4. Representatives of Institutions of Higher Education that Prepare Special Education and Related Services Personnel**

A critical shortage of qualified teachers is currently being experienced across the country. The person appointed to this position brings to the Panel the current status of teacher training programs; they can report on the number of candidates that are currently enrolled. Does the current curriculum match the needs of school districts and charter schools? Do perspective teachers have knowledge and experience regarding evidence-based practices?

### **5. State and Local Officials (including officials who carry out activities under the McKinney Vento Homeless Children's Act)**

A relatively large percent of children and youth with disabilities under IDEA are also experiencing homelessness. It is important to have the voice of those addressing homelessness in the State be represented on the Panel. Child Find is an important mechanism to locate these children to make sure they are receiving FAPE. Making sure the student's school records are transferred to the most current school is important.

### **6. Administrators of Programs for Children with Disabilities**

This category is usually filled by a Director of Special Education or a school principal at the School District and/or Charter School. This person represents the opinions of special, and general, education leadership at the local level. Leadership is a critical variable in making sure the requirements of IDEA are implemented and making a difference for children with disabilities.

### **7. Representatives of Other State Agencies**

It is important to have someone on the Panel who oversees the financing and/or delivery of related services in the State to ensure adequate fiscal resources are available to meet the needs of children and youth with disabilities. This category could also include other State agencies that deal with services or financing special education.

**8. Representatives of Private Schools and Public Charter Schools**

Many children and youth with disabilities now attend private schools or public charter schools. It is important to hear from this Panel member to learn how these children are receiving FAPE and if any challenges are happening in these schools.

**9. Representative of a Vocational, Community, or Business Organization**

At least one member must represent this category, and the organization represented must show concern for the provision of transition services to children with disabilities. An important milestone for children with disabilities occur as they graduate from high school or reach the age ceiling. This representative can provide advice on how the post-secondary transition can be effective, and they can point out possible challenges.

**10. Representative from the State Child Welfare Agency Responsible for Foster Care**

Many children with disabilities are in the foster care system. This representative can advise and point out any unmet needs children in foster care might be experiencing.

**11. Representatives from the State Juvenile and Adult Correction Agencies**

Some youth with disabilities find themselves in correctional facilities. If these youth are IDEA eligible, they must still receive special education services. These members need to advise the Panel on any unmet needs for these youth with disabilities.

Some Advisory Panels include other member categories as part of the membership. Those categories are mentioned in State special education regulations and/or Panel by-laws. Most Panels have between 20-25 members.