MISSION

The mission of the Governor’s Advisory Council for Exceptional Citizens (GACEC) is to serve as the review board for policies, procedures and practices related to the delivery of services for all residents with exceptionalities or disabilities in Delaware. GACEC also serves as an advisory panel for agencies providing educational services and programs to children (birth through age 26) in Delaware, through the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). GACEC's primary function is to advise and advocate as necessary to achieve its mission.

KEY OBJECTIVES

- Analyze state regulations and legislation.
- Participate in public meetings.
- Review public reports.
- Participate in program visits.
- Coordinate various research projects.

BACKGROUND AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Since 1972, GACEC has served as the State’s Advisory Council for Exceptional Children. The agency advises the State Board of Education and the Department of Education (DOE) on all issues related to the education of children with special needs, including those with outstanding talents and gifts. Pursuant to Delaware Senate Bill 353, passed by the 129th General Assembly in 1977, the Advisory Council for Exceptional Children was renamed the Governor’s Advisory Council for Exceptional Citizens, and its responsibilities were expanded to cover a broad range of human service needs for all residents with disabilities.

GACEC has served as the advisory panel for special education since the initial passage in 1974 of the federal special education statute, known as the Education of the Handicapped Act. GACEC continues to serve in this capacity under the reauthorized law, IDEA and its amendments.

In Fiscal Year 2015, GACEC actively participated in the development and passage of legislation impacting the overall development, education and general welfare of children and adults with disabilities. This included ongoing participation in the State Transition Task Force for Emerging Adults with Disabilities and Special Health Care Needs, which was created as a result of Senate Concurrent Resolution 34, passed by the 146th General Assembly. GACEC continued to work on the recommendations of the State Transition Task Force Report, including the creation of the DelWARE DisABILITY Hub transition website. GACEC also continued the work of the Disability Education Awareness Program to meet the demand for awareness and acceptance in schools and other child-centered settings. Additionally, council members participated in a number of task forces and workgroups to research and improve services for students with special needs and other individuals with disabilities, such as the Individualized Education Plan Improvement Task Force and Autism Services Task Force.
### Activities

- Establish goals and activities to promote comprehensive, high-quality, family-focused services and programs for children and adults with disabilities in Delaware.
- Advise and make recommendations on initiatives and regulations that impact students in special education and students who are gifted and talented.
- Provide input to DOE on the needs-based funding system reporting requirements for special education students.
- Advise DOE in the development of regulations related to Senate Bill 229, passed by the 147th General Assembly, which provides extended school year and other services for students who are not beginning to read by age seven and requires the development of an alternate assessment for students with severe cognitive disabilities.
- Promote the DelAWARE DisABILITY Hub transition website throughout the State at venues and meetings.
- Promote Disability History and Awareness Month in October, as established by House Bill 123, passed by the 146th General Assembly, and House Concurrent Resolution 33, passed by the 147th General Assembly.
- Implement the Disability Education and Awareness Program (DEAP), which aims to increase awareness in schools and other child-centered settings through the use of DEAP-generated curriculum and presentations.
- Collaborate with other agencies, councils, work groups, boards and committees to educate the disability community and the general public on disability issues and on issues relating to services for persons with disabilities or educational services for those with exceptionalities.
- Assist with the development of surveys for residential and day program providers to ensure their services align with federal standards.
- Review, comment and act on state and federal regulations and proposed legislation.

### Performance Measures

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td># of letters on legislation and regulations written to elected officials and agencies</td>
<td>1,989</td>
<td>2,000</td>
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<td># of boards, councils and committees with participation by GACEC staff and members</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>80</td>
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<td># of individuals reached via GACEC presentations, co-sponsorship of conferences, press releases and workshops by members and staff</td>
<td>298,303</td>
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