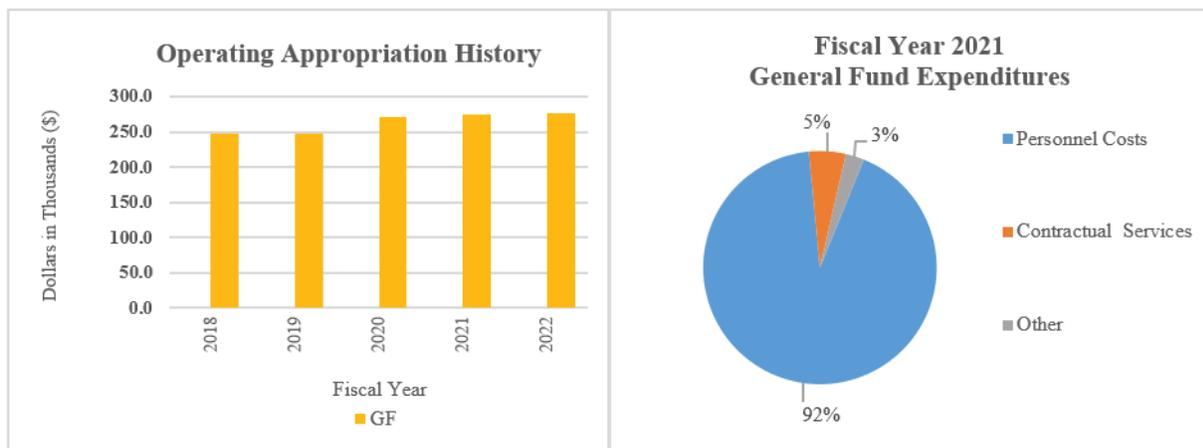


Advisory Council for Exceptional Citizens



At a Glance

- In FY21, the GACEC submitted over 1,800 letters on legislation and regulations to elected officials and agencies on educational services and the service needs of individuals with exceptionalities;
- GACEC members and staff participated on over 60 boards, task forces and committees;
- The GACEC was unable to provide as much information to the public due to cancellation of various conferences and workshops around the State. However, Council was able to provide a limited amount of information to over 1100 individuals utilizing virtual formats;
- The GACEC, in conjunction with the Department of Technology and Information (DTI) completed the update to the DelAWARE DisABILITY Hub transition website, making the site more user friendly and ADA compliant. The website received over 12,698 hits from September 2020 through September 2021, with over 6,833 unique visitors.
- The GACEC acted in an advisory capacity to the Department of Education and the Department of Correction, monitoring services provided in the joint agency prison education program.



Overview

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 from birth to death. The GACEC also serves as the state advisory panel for agencies providing educational services and programs to children residing in the State between the ages of 3 and 21 through the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act and its amendments. The primary function of the GACEC is to advise and advocate as necessary in order

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to achieve its mission. The GACEC served as the State's Advisory Council for Exceptional Children beginning in 1972 and was later renamed the Governor's Advisory Council for Exceptional Citizens to encompass the expansion of its role. The passage of Senate Bill No. 20 in 2015 expanded the role of the GACEC to include acting in an advisory capacity with the Department of Education and the Department of Correction on the provision of educational services to inmates with disabilities in the joint agency prison education system.

In Fiscal Year 2021, the GACEC worked to establish goals and activities to promote comprehensive, high quality, family-focused services and programs for children and adults with disabilities in Delaware at its annual Fall Planning Retreat. The all virtual retreat allowed members to hear information on Department of Education initiatives and data provided to the federal Department of Education on Delaware's State Performance Plan (SPP), Annual Performance Report (APR) and Annual Determinations. Members were also able to hear updated information on the delivery of services in Delaware schools, lessons learned during the pandemic and continuing barriers to education in the First State.

The GACEC continues to play a crucial role as a key stakeholder group with the Department of Education. Council also participates with the Redding Consortium and the Special Education Strategic Plan workgroup as they move forward with strategies to improve outcomes for students with exceptionalities.

The pandemic decreased legislative activity at Legislative Hall; however, the GACEC still was able to provide commentary and virtual testimony on legislation affecting the overall development, education and general welfare of children and adults with disabilities. Council supported and provided commentary on House Bill No. 86, which increased funding for kindergarten through third grade students identified as eligible for special education services. Council supported House Bill No. 128, which permits the extension of special education and related services to those students with a disability who turned 21 during the 2020-21 school year thus aging out of special education services. Council noted that the extension would benefit individuals receiving special education services and supports that could not be delivered virtually or part-time with the same effectiveness as in-person services. Council also supported Senate Bill No. 136, which transfers responsibility for the Infants and Toddlers Early Intervention Program/Part C from the Department of Health and Social Services/Division of Public Health to the Department of Education. The GACEC is included in the legislation as an integral part of the groups tasked with overseeing services and working towards a successful transfer. Council was able to review and discuss the impact of 23 bills and 25 regulations on individuals with exceptionalities.

Council continued to promote Disability History and Awareness Month in October as established by House Bill No. 123, passed by the 146th General Assembly. House Bill No. 100 also passed to increase

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disability history and awareness in early childhood settings. Due to the pandemic, the annual poster contest was not held. However, early childhood centers and day cares were given the opportunity to get a copy of “All My Different Friends at School”, a book on diversity and acceptance and “There is Nothing to Fear”, a coloring book developed as part of the GACEC oral health program for early childhood development.

On the Web

For more information, visit gacec.delaware.gov.

Performance Measures

IPU	Performance Measure Name	Fiscal Year 2021 Actual	Fiscal Year 2022 Budget	Fiscal Year 2023 Governor's Recommended
77-01-01	<i>Advisory Council for Exceptional Citizens</i>			
	# of letters on legislation and regulations written to elected officials and agencies	1800	1850	1800
	# of boards, councils and committees with participation by GACEC staff and members	65	75	75
	# of individuals reached via GACEC presentations, co-sponsorship of conferences, press releases and workshops by members and staff	(due to pandemic) 1100	25,000	25,000