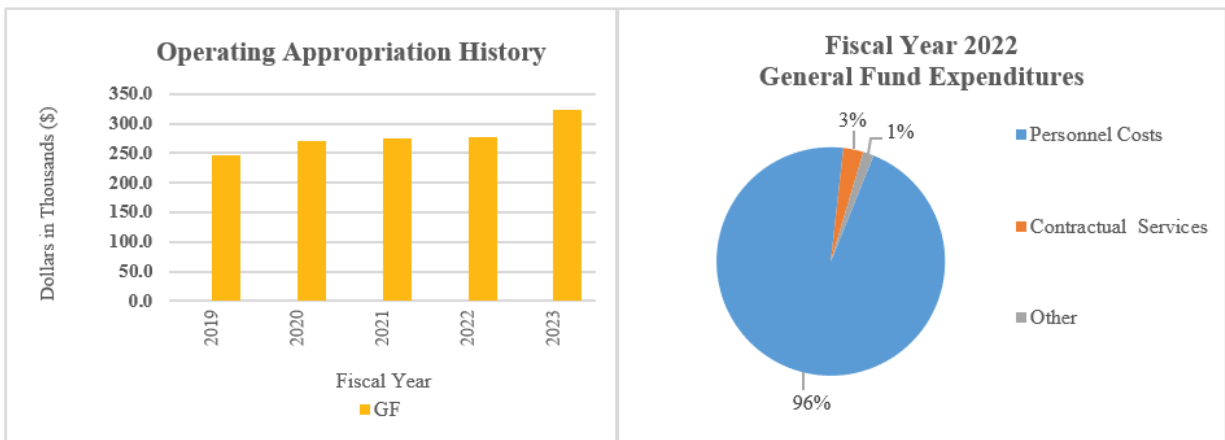


# Advisory Council for Exceptional Citizens



## At a Glance

- In FY22, the GACEC submitted 1,350 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 65 boards, task forces, committees and workgroups;
- The GACEC has once again begun to provide information to the public utilizing hybrid in-person and virtual formats due to the continuing presence of the pandemic. Council was able to connect with over 1270 individuals in various online and in person conferences on issues relevant to the disability community;
- The updated Delaware DisABILITY Hub transition website received over 15,247 hits with over 12,656 unique visitors; and
- The GACEC continued to monitor services provided in the Department of Education and Department of Correction 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 in Delaware between the ages of 3 and 21 through the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and its amendments. The primary function of the GACEC is to advise and advocate as

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necessary in order to accomplish 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.

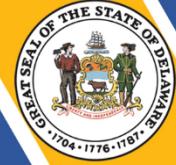
In Fiscal Year 2022, the GACEC used its annual Fall Planning Retreat to meet with the new director of Exceptional Children Resources (ECR) at the Delaware Department of Education (DDOE) to promote a spirit of collaboration and communication. The ECR director and staff present discussed ways to ensure Council receives what it needs from the ECR and that the ECR can count on the Council as a thought partner in the process of servicing students with special needs rather than as an adversary. Council also established goals and activities to promote comprehensive, high quality, family focused services and programs for children and adults with exceptionalities. The hybrid event was the first use of the new tech package installed in Massey Station for Council use and worked incredibly well. Council also heard information on Indicator 4a (Suspension and Expulsion of Students with Disabilities as compared to students without disabilities) and 4b (Suspension and Expulsion of Students with Disabilities as compared to students without disabilities by race and ethnicity) of Delaware's State Performance Plan Annual Performance Report. ECR staff provided an in-depth look at where the data comes from, formulas used and what happens after the data is reported.

GACEC members continue to function as stakeholders with the DDOE, Special Education Strategic Plan Workgroup (SESPAC) and the Redding Consortium as these groups move forward with strategies to improve outcomes for students with disabilities in Delaware. Council staff also work with national groups to ensure that the voices of Delawareans with disabilities are heard.

The GACEC was able to review, discuss impact and comment on 17 bills and 25 regulations over the past fiscal year. Council supported House Bill No. 271 on services for young adults aging out of foster care; as well as House Bill Nos. 300 and 301, which dealt with the provision of mental health services in Delaware schools. Council supported and noted the importance of ensuring adequate resources are available to implement House Bill No. 303, which requires insurance companies to provide coverage for behavioral health annual well visits. Council also noted the importance of a public awareness campaign to ensure that individuals who will benefit from the legislation are made aware of its passage and the importance of including experts on dual diagnoses on the advisory committee to be created by the bill.

The GACEC supported Senate Bill No. 136, which transfers responsibility for Infants and Toddlers Early Intervention Program/Part C from the Department of Health and Social Services /Division of

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Public Health to the Department of Education. However, with loss of staffing and implementation issues, Council wrote to support a request to push back the original implementation date to ensure that the transition is a smooth one for everyone involved, especially children and their families.

The GACEC continues to promote Disability History and Awareness Month (DHAM) in October as established by House Bill No. 123 in 2011. Information on how schools and districts can observe DHAM were shared with all districts and charter schools in Delaware. The DHAM Poster Contest was also brought back for the first time since the pandemic began in March of 2020. The contest is open to all students in Delaware public and private schools. Winners will be selected in five categories, with prizes for the first, second and third place winners.

## On the Web

For more information, visit [gacec.delaware.gov](http://gacec.delaware.gov).

## Performance Measures

| IPU   | Performance Measure Name  | Fiscal Year 2022 Actual | Fiscal Year 2023 Budget | Fiscal Year 2024 Governor's Recommended |
|---|---|-------------------------|-------------------------|---|
| 77-01-01  | <b>Advisory Council for Exceptional Citizens</b>  |                         |                         |   |
|   | # of letters on legislation and regulations written to elected officials and agencies   | 1350                    | 1360                    |   |
|   | # of boards, councils and committees with participation by GACEC staff and members  | 65                      | 75                      |   |
|   | # of individuals reached via GACEC presentations, co-sponsorship of conferences, press releases and workshops by members and staff* | 1270                    | 1500                    |   |
| <i>*Performance results have been impacted by COVID-19.</i> |   |                         |                         |   |