

PROFILES

INTENSIVE TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

CADRE
Center for Appropriate Dispute
Resolution in Special Education



IEP Facilitation Multistate Workgroup (2011–2014)

*Connecticut launched
the Statewide IEP/
PPT Facilitation
Program during the
2014–15 school year.*

About CADRE

CADRE is a national center that provides intensive technical assistance to state education agencies using a multistate workgroup model, creating a forum for learning together through shared knowledge, practices, and experiences. CADRE offers ongoing support, consultation, and resources to workgroup members. Activities include teleconferences, virtual and face-to-face meetings, webinars, and opportunities to engage with experts through trainings, presentations, and consultations.

Focus on CONNECTICUT Accomplishments

Families of children with disabilities and the professionals who serve them may find themselves in conflict over a child's special education services. When poorly managed, these disputes can result in damaged relationships and resources spent on conflict rather than on education. A growing body of evidence indicates that individualized education program (IEP) facilitation services can address these conflicts, while building trust and better relationships between families and schools.

In response to this need, the National Center for Appropriate Dispute Resolution in Special Education (CADRE) convened a multistate workgroup, using a peer-to-peer intensive technical assistance approach, to help states maximize their investments in IEP facilitation. CADRE selected the Connecticut Department of Education Bureau of Special Education (BSE) and State Education Resource Center (SERC), along with four other states (Idaho, Illinois, Ohio, and Texas), to participate in the three-year workgroup initiative.

Connecticut's interest in participating in the workgroup was driven by the increasing number and complexity of administrative complaints and requests. Recognizing the importance of maintaining positive school-family relationships, the BSE and SERC joined the CADRE workgroup to explore offering facilitation for IEP/planning placement team

(PPT) meetings. This *CADRE Profile* highlights what the BSE and SERC set out to accomplish, and what they achieved while participating in the workgroup.

Objectives

After reviewing current needs and goals, Connecticut determined that the objectives for its participation were to:

- Develop a statewide IEP/PPT facilitation program with the support of parents, educators, and other stakeholders.
- Encourage schools and families to address and resolve disputes early, using informal processes that preserve relationships, such as IEP/PPT facilitation.
- Reduce reliance on administrative complaints and hearing requests to resolve disputes.
- Support PPTs in working together through difficult issues and toward better outcomes for students.

Significant Milestones and Accomplishments

Through the CADRE workgroup, Connecticut made significant progress toward reaching its objectives. Highlights include:

- In collaboration with Quinnipiac University School of Law, BSE, SERC, and CADRE staff provided an intensive, highly rated, two-day IEP facilitation training event for stakeholders (e.g., facilitators, advocates, educators, and Birth to Three staff).
- BSE and SERC rolled out the statewide IEP/PPT facilitation program at the 2014–15 back-to-school meeting, to more than 300 special education directors and supervisors.
- Nine facilitated IEP meetings were held during the pilot year (2013–14 school year).
- BSE and SERC provided IEP/PPT meeting facilitation training to the Connecticut Council of Administrators of Special Education in September 2014.
- SERC added IEP/PPT facilitation training to its menu of annual professional development offerings.

Essential Elements of Program Development

During the pilot year, six trained facilitators provided services statewide. School districts paid for the IEP/PPT facilitation services. Other elements essential to developing Connecticut’s statewide IEP/PPT facilitation program included:

- Developing operational procedures and protocols cooperatively with stakeholders.
- Establishing fees for IEP/PPT facilitation services with facilitators, using a consensus process.
- Identifying IEP facilitator requirements, including special education and/or mediation experience, and knowledge of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act and IEP/PPT process.

- Developing and making available IEP/PPT facilitation forms and materials, including:
 - An IEP/PPT-facilitated meeting request form,
 - A frequently asked questions (FAQs) brochure,
 - A meeting participation agreement template, and
 - A list of available facilitators and brief biography for each.
- Developing IEP/PPT facilitation training and issuing a request for proposals to secure trainers. [Joyce and Doug Little of Key2Ed were selected.] A total of 24 individuals—including Connecticut stakeholders and representatives from other CADRE workgroup states—participated in the training. Participants identified the most valuable aspects of the training as being: the benefit of learning useful strategies and tools to facilitate IEP/PPT meetings; the importance of careful preparation, planning, and use of visuals; the role of good listening skills; and tips on working with a variety of people and multiple issues. In anonymous surveys, participants strongly agreed that the training was of high quality, useful, and relevant. The training was recorded, and portions are available on the CADRE website (www.directionservice.org/cadre).

Future Activities and Direction

Feedback on Connecticut’s statewide IEP/PPT facilitation program has been very positive, though the cost of facilitators seems to limit many school districts from using the process. With this information, the BSE and SERC plan to build upon their successful work to date through the following activities:

- Continuing to publicize the availability of the process to school districts, parents, parent associations, disability groups, legal professionals, and other advocacy groups.
- Training BSE personnel in IEP facilitation, so they may provide affordable facilitation services.
- Making IEP/PPT facilitation available to parents and districts at no charge.
- Providing facilitation skill-building training to new special education directors.
- Developing an evaluation system for the IEP/PPT facilitation program and practitioners.
- Recruiting and training facilitators who are bi- or multilingual.

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www.directionservice.org/cadre

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