

PROFILES

INTENSIVE TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE



IEP Facilitation Multistate Workgroup (2011–2014)

“The IEP facilitator did a fantastic job of guiding the team, framing common understandings, honoring each party’s perspectives, promoting consensus, and summarizing points of agreement.”

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 IDAHO 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 Idaho State Department of Education (ISDE) Office of Dispute Resolution (ODR), along with four other states (Connecticut, Illinois, Ohio, and Texas), to participate in the three-year workgroup initiative.

IEP facilitation has been available in Idaho since 2004 and demand for facilitation has increased annually. Idaho’s interest in joining the CADRE workgroup was driven by a need to build efficiencies into its statewide IEP facilitation program, to address system-wide challenges, and make the most of opportunities to work with stakeholders. This *CADRE Profile* highlights what Idaho—with the support of

parents, educators, and other stakeholders—set out to accomplish, and what it achieved while participating in the workgroup.

Objectives

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

- Increase stakeholder support and understanding of IEP facilitation by expanding communication activities.
- Improve existing statewide IEP facilitation evaluation and tracking systems.
- Provide practitioners and stakeholders with training opportunities that address identified needs.
- Increase use of IEP facilitation to resolve disputes early and decrease reliance on formal complaints and hearing requests.
- Create a follow-up process to gain understanding of the long-term benefits of IEP facilitation.
- Provide facilitation services for evaluation and resolution meetings, and manifestation determinations.
- Develop a new brochure and other informational materials about IEP facilitation.

Significant Milestones and Accomplishments

Through the CADRE workgroup, Idaho made significant progress toward reaching its objectives. From 2010 to 2013, IEP facilitations increased by 15–20 percent each year, and during the 2013–14 school year, the success rate of IEP facilitation was 90 percent. Highlights include:

- The scope of the IEP facilitation program broadened, with it now being available for any special education meeting in the state.
- The success rate for IEP facilitation has been at least 80 percent since 2011.
- Evaluation activities are now conducted through an online survey tool, which has resulted in a threefold increase in the response rate.
- IEP facilitators now can access survey results in real time, which provides them with immediate feedback on their performance.
- ODR staff frequently present on the benefits of IEP facilitation and positive communication strategies at Idaho Parents Unlimited meetings and conferences, and at school district in-service trainings.

Essential Elements of Program Improvement

Idaho’s IEP facilitation program is managed by the state dispute resolution coordinator. Facilitators are ISDE dispute resolution contract practitioners, who may also be mediators, and administrative complaint resolution specialists. Facilitation services are provided at no cost to districts and parents. Other elements essential to improving Idaho’s statewide IEP facilitation program include:

- Developing program rules and procedures in cooperation with stakeholders, and incorporating them into the ISDE Special Education Manual.

- Improving data collection and tracking, in order to approximate cost per case (see the text box, Cost Comparison: IEP Facilitation vs. Administrative Complaint, for an example).
- Presenting frequently on IEP facilitation to parents and districts—this has led to increased use of the process.
- Designing a follow-up survey to collect information on the long-term value of IEP facilitation and its impact on family-school relationships.
- Creating an initial IEP facilitation evaluation survey and facilitator self-evaluation and summary form.
- Posting information about IEP facilitation on the ISDE website.
- Providing practitioners with regular training opportunities, including annual professional development and regular lunch-and-learn sessions.
- Mentoring new facilitators, using a co-facilitation model.
- Encouraging practitioners to network with IEP facilitators for best practice ideas.

Future Activities and Direction

Idaho plans to build upon its successful work to date through the following activities:

- Expanding outreach and conducting research through a partnership with

the state dispute resolution coordinator and Boise State University.

- Continuing to promote facilitation statewide because a slowdown in promotion appears to result in fewer requests for facilitation.
- Building local capacity by providing more widespread facilitation training and skill-building activities for stakeholders.
- Measuring more precisely the impact of facilitation on the use of other dispute resolution processes.
- Expanding application of the follow-up survey to measure long-term results.

Cost Comparison: IEP Facilitation vs. Administrative Complaint

	2012–13	2013–14
Cost of One Facilitation	\$703	\$769
Cost of One Administrative Complaint	\$2,907	\$3,931
Facilitation Cost as a Percent of Complaint Cost	24%	20%
Number of Facilitations per Complaint Cost	4.1	5.1

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