

# PROFILES

INTENSIVE TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

**CADRE**  
Center for Appropriate Dispute  
Resolution in Special Education



## IEP Facilitation Multistate Workgroup (2011–2014)

*Illinois' statewide  
IEP facilitation  
vision and mission  
statement were  
created with  
stakeholders.*

### 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 ILLINOIS 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 Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE), along with four other states (Connecticut, Idaho, Ohio, and Texas), to participate in the three-year workgroup initiative.

Discussions about IEP facilitation were ongoing in Illinois for several years before ISBE joined the CADRE workgroup. For ISBE, the CADRE workgroup provided a prime opportunity to learn from states that have successful statewide IEP facilitation programs, while building the foundation for a statewide system in Illinois. In addition to developing and implementing

a statewide IEP facilitation system, ISBE set a long-range commitment to provide district personnel with training in conflict resolution techniques. This *CADRE Profile* highlights what ISBE set out to accomplish, and what it achieved while participating in the workgroup.

### Objectives

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

- Engage a broad group of stakeholders throughout the development and implementation of the statewide IEP facilitation system.
- Encourage the use of IEP facilitation to resolve disputes early, leading to stronger school-family relationships.
- Develop a website and outreach materials to disseminate information broadly about IEP facilitation.
- Secure highly qualified state-sponsored IEP facilitators and trainers.
- Conduct pilot programs in several districts across the state.

## Significant Milestones and Accomplishments

Through the CADRE workgroup, ISBE made significant progress in reaching its objectives. Highlights include:

- Forming an ISBE internal IEP facilitation workgroup that meets regularly to work on the system and associated processes.
- Gathering and reviewing information on how different states implement IEP facilitation.
- Convening an external stakeholder group with district and parent representation, which met throughout the year as the system was being developed.
- Developing an overview and process for Illinois' statewide IEP Facilitation System in collaboration with stakeholders.
- Preparing a promotional flyer which was inserted into the 2014 Special Education Directors Conference program.
- Conducting a statewide survey to measure district interest in participating in the pilot program. Approximately 25 districts indicated interest in participating.
- Issuing a request for sealed proposals for an IEP facilitation training entity/contractor.

requirements; an IEP facilitator self-assessment tool; and forms to request and evaluate IEP facilitation. [See the graphic, IEP Facilitation System—Coming Soon to Illinois, for an example of outreach materials.]



### IEP Facilitation System—Coming Soon to Illinois (Spring 2015) Promoting productive child-centered IEP meetings that are conducted in a respectful and collaborative manner.

Updates on the IEP Facilitation System, including when it will be available to all districts and parents will be provided on the Illinois State Board of Education website and through the State Superintendent's Newsletter and special education listservs.

#### IEP Facilitation System Overview

##### IEP Facilitation

IEP facilitation is a process that fosters effective communication between parents and districts as they develop a mutually acceptable IEP. This process may be used as a preventative measure in which a trained facilitator promotes whole team participation, acknowledging and addressing differing opinions in a respectful and neutral manner. IEP facilitation can improve the relationships between school districts and parents in order to effectively plan services to meet the student needs.

##### Why IEP Facilitation?

States and school districts are increasingly turning toward this less costly measure and finding improved relationships between districts and parents, a greater number of mutually acceptable IEPs, and a reduction in the number of districts and parents utilizing formal dispute resolution options. As a result of the interest in IEP facilitation among districts and parents in Illinois, the Illinois State Board of Education has committed to developing an IEP Facilitation System.

##### State-Sponsored IEP Facilitation

State-sponsored IEP Facilitation is a voluntary service offered at no cost to districts and parents of students with disabilities. A parent or a district representative may make the request for a state-sponsored facilitator. However, these services will initially only be available to those districts who have volunteered to participate in the pilot project and parents from those identified districts. The pilot project will begin during the 2014-2015 school year.

##### State-Sponsored Facilitator's Role

An IEP facilitator focuses on the process of the meeting and supporting all parties' full participation. The facilitator is not a member of the IEP team or an advocate for any person on the team. The facilitator does not make a decision for the group. The facilitator keeps team members on task, clarifies points of agreement and disagreement, and provides team members opportunities to consider alternative solutions.

##### How does Facilitation Compare to Mediation?

	Facilitation	Mediation
<b>Who guides the process?</b>	Facilitator	Mediator
<b>Meeting Type</b>	IEP Meeting	Informal Meeting
<b>Participants</b>	IEP Team	Small Group of Decision Makers
<b>Goals</b>	Promoting effective communication; Developing a mutually acceptable IEP	Resolving special education disagreement; Developing a legally binding mediation agreement



- Securing highly qualified state-sponsored IEP facilitators.
- Piloting the system in several districts across Illinois. This includes selecting urban and rural districts with varying levels of dispute resolution activity, developing program agreements with the districts, evaluating system performance, and making adjustments prior to implementing the statewide IEP Facilitation System.

## Future Activities and Desired Outcomes

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

- Roll out the IEP facilitation pilot successfully in Fall 2015.
- Connect IEP facilitation data collection and tracking to ISBE's existing data system.
- Post IEP facilitation resources to ISBE web pages.
- Develop local-level capacity, training, and materials for district staff and parents.
- Continue to solicit feedback from participants and stakeholders, and work to ensure their satisfaction with the statewide IEP Facilitation System and process.
- Increase the use of IEP facilitation in lieu of more formal dispute resolution processes.

*Illinois' statewide IEP Facilitation System overview was shared at the 2014 Special Education Directors Conference.*

## Essential Elements of System Development

Elements essential to developing ISBE's statewide IEP Facilitation System include:

- Developing outreach and procedural materials, including: a Q&A about IEP facilitation; a brochure on preparing for IEP facilitation; a facilitation and mediation process comparison chart; an IEP facilitator job description that identified education and experience

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