

PROFILES

INTENSIVE TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE



Stakeholders were involved throughout the process of evaluating and selecting a new panel of facilitators.

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 OHIO 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 Ohio Department of Education Office for Exceptional Children (OEC), along with four other states (Connecticut, Illinois, Idaho, and Texas), to participate in the three-year workgroup initiative.

Beginning as a one-year, volunteer pilot in 2006, OEC's statewide facilitation program has grown into an integral part of Ohio's special education dispute resolution system. Facilitation provides evaluation and IEP teams with the opportunity to work with a facilitator, who helps them be productive and stay focused on the student's needs. Driving the OEC's interest in joining the workgroup were the need to cultivate trust in

the system and develop program efficiencies in response to rising demand. This *CADRE Profile* highlights what the OEC set out to accomplish, and what it achieved while participating in the workgroup.

Objectives

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

- Engage a broad range of stakeholders in the process of improving the facilitation program.
- Increase confidence in the OEC and its dispute resolution system, including the facilitation program and practitioners.
- Explore various avenues of marketing and communication regarding the facilitation process.
- Reduce reliance on state complaints and due process complaints by encouraging the use of facilitation to resolve disputes early and strengthen school-family relationships.
- Make improvements to the facilitation program, including examining and refining facilitator qualifications, skills, and training needs.

IEP Facilitation Multistate Workgroup (2011–2014)

- Review and analyze how other states are evaluating their facilitation systems, with an emphasis on processes, procedures, and practitioner performance.

Significant Milestones and Accomplishments

Through the CADRE workgroup, OEC made significant progress in reaching its objectives. OEC expanded facilitation services to all special education-related meetings, and rebranded the program. In 2014, the rate of agreement in facilitated IEP meetings rose to 90 percent. Other highlights include:

- Engaged a broad stakeholder group (e.g., parents, advocates, educators, administrators) in thorough evaluations of operations and efficacy for both the facilitation program and facilitator panel.
- Promoted facilitation at the 2014 Special Education Leadership Conference.
- Presented regularly at State Support Team meetings to increase awareness and support for facilitation.
- Developed new professional development requirements for facilitators—20 hours of special education-related self-study within two years, in addition to OEC training.
- Added three new practitioners to the facilitator panel, and provided training to all by a nationally recognized trainer.

Essential Elements of Program Improvement

Facilitation is provided to school districts and families at no charge. The OEC receives requests and coordinates cases, and a request for proposal process is used to hire facilitators. Facilitators also serve as special education mediators. Other elements

essential to improving Ohio's facilitation program include:

- Developing a logic model that emphasized stakeholder engagement to use as a guide to program improvement throughout the process.
- Assessing facilitator training needs and revising training protocols in collaboration with stakeholders.
- Revising outreach and procedural forms, including: an information sheet; a request for proposals for recruiting and hiring facilitators; a facilitated meeting agreement form; and a participant evaluation tool.
- Changing the name of the OEC section that houses the facilitation program from Procedural Safeguards to Dispute Resolution, to reflect the programmatic shift.
- Including facilitation as a suggested activity in state complaint corrective action plans, where appropriate.

- Enhancing the OEC website to include the facilitation program among the dispute resolution options.

Future Activities and Desired Outcomes

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

- Increasing the number of stakeholders involved in developing materials and processes related to the statewide facilitation program.
- Improving schools' and families' communication and conflict resolution skills, toward better outcomes for students with disabilities.
- Using case management and data collection to track use of facilitation services and outcomes.

Ohio Facilitation Results

	2010–11	2011–12	2012–13	2013–14
Facilitation Requests	77	135	111	125
Facilitations Held	62	108	91	88
Agreements Reached	50	85	76	79
Agreement Rate	81%	79%	84%	90%

April 2015

CADRE provides technical assistance pursuant to U.S. Department of Education Office of Special Education Programs Cooperative Agreement No. H326X130001, Tina Diamond, Ph.D., Project Officer.



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