

# PROFILES

## INTENSIVE TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE



## IEP Facilitation Multistate Workgroup (2011–2014)

*Statewide IEP  
facilitation in Texas  
is available as of  
the 2014–2015  
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 TEXAS 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 Texas Education Agency (TEA), along with four other states (Connecticut, Idaho, Illinois, and Ohio), to participate in the three-year workgroup initiative.

Texas has invested approximately \$4 million in IEP facilitation training and services since 2006. These funds, provided to the Education Service Centers (ESCs), have resulted in more than 5,000 Texans (e.g., parents, teachers, administrators, and advocates) receiving training in IEP facilitation concepts and skills.

In 2013, the Texas Legislature enacted a law (SB 542) that created a state-sponsored IEP

facilitation program, while continuing to allow local educational agencies (LEAs) and ESCs to use their own facilitation processes in IEP team meetings. This *CADRE Profile* highlights what TEA set out to accomplish, the evolution of these goals in relation to the enactment of SB 542, and what it achieved while participating in the workgroup.

### Objectives

When TEA joined the workgroup, driving interests included increasing awareness and understanding of IEP facilitation, improving school-family relationships, and cultivating a statewide culture of trust and shared commitment. After reviewing related needs and goals, TEA determined that the objectives for its participation were to:

- Engage a broad group of stakeholders in developing and implementing the state-sponsored IEP facilitation program.
- Establish a state-sponsored IEP facilitation program with consistent expectations across all geographical regions for facilitated IEP team meetings and facilitator qualifications.
- Encourage the use of IEP facilitation to resolve disputes early and highlight the importance of school-family relationships.

- Collect statewide IEP facilitation data to determine best practices and provide direction for TEA supervision.
- Strengthen relationships among the TEA, families, LEAs, and ESCs to maintain an open dialogue about the facilitation process.
- Maintain a comprehensive, primarily free, facilitation training network for parents, school staff, and others.
- Employ meeting practices that improve outcomes for all students with disabilities.

## Significant Milestones and Accomplishments

Through the CADRE workgroup, TEA made significant progress in reaching its objectives, which include:

- Increasing awareness and support for local and state-sponsored IEP facilitation (e.g., through presentations, public awareness initiatives, and marketing materials).
- Using evaluation data collected in 2013–14 from IEP facilitation participants to identify aspects of implementation that were working well or needed adjustment.
- Engaging stakeholders in a public rule-making process that resulted in a state rule detailing program implementation and requirements for facilitators.
- Expanding TEA's dispute resolution data tracking system to include state-sponsored IEP facilitation.
- Issuing a request for qualifications for an IEP facilitator employment/training entity.
- Contracting with and training IEP facilitators.
- Engaging a broad range of stakeholder groups (including parents, advocates,

educators, administrators, school boards, and ESC staff), in developing the statewide IEP project.

## Essential Elements of Program Development

TEA's state-sponsored IEP facilitation option is available when an IEP team is in disagreement and opts to reconvene the IEP team meeting to resolve the dispute. TEA manages and coordinates these cases, while local IEP team meeting facilitation continues to be offered by LEAs and ESCs. Other elements essential to developing TEA's state-sponsored IEP facilitation program included:

- Obligating an initial annual budget of approximately \$800,000.
- Creating a logic model to guide implementation of state-sponsored IEP facilitation.
- Developing procedural forms and outreach materials, including: a facilitator job description and self-assessment tool; forms to request, consent to, and evaluate IEP facilitation; and web resources, including ESC videos about IEP facilitation.
- Constructing a state-sponsored IEP facilitation data tracking system.
- Establishing in rule facilitator qualifications that include demonstrated knowledge and experience relating to conflict resolution, consensus building,

special education, related services, and working with educators and families of students with disabilities.

## Future Activities and Direction

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

- Supporting the efforts of parents, educators, district personnel, ESC staff, and others to improve their communication and conflict resolution skills.
- Continuing to develop and promote state-sponsored IEP facilitation.
- Demonstrating long-term benefits of IEP facilitation through stronger relationships, high-quality decision making, and reduced use of adversarial dispute resolution processes.

*Rules and requirements for the state-sponsored IEP facilitation program were developed in collaboration with stakeholders.*

## Texas Workgroup Leads

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