



Spotlight on WEST VIRGINIA



IEP Facilitation Multistate Workgroup (2015-2017)

Office of Federal Programs (OFP) Facilitated Individualized Education Program (FIEP) 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 West Virginia Department of Education Office of Federal Programs (OFP), along with six other states (Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Missouri, New Jersey, and New York), to participate in the three-year workgroup initiative.

West Virginia's interest in joining the workgroup was driven by the desire to develop an alternative dispute

resolution option for parents and schools that would improve IEP team collaboration, ultimately resulting in better services and outcomes for students with IEPs. This spotlight on West Virginia highlights what OFP set out to accomplish, and what it achieved while participating in the workgroup.

Objectives

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

- Make improvements to the facilitation program already under development, including examining and refining facilitator qualifications, skills, evaluation, and training
- Improve marketing and outreach strategies with schools and families
- Strengthen family-school relationships and reduce reliance on state complaints and due process hearings by encouraging the use of facilitation to resolve disputes early

“We see IEP facilitation as a dispute prevention and early resolution option for parents and schools.”

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.

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Significant Milestones and Accomplishments

The Office of Federal Programs made significant progress in reaching its objectives. One of OFP's first accomplishments was the inclusion of IEP facilitation as a dispute resolution option under policy 2419. Other highlights include:

- Development and statewide roll-out of the FIEP process in the first year of implementation
- Readily available and easily disseminated web-based guidance documents, brochures, checklists, forms, and letters that allow facilitations to be scheduled as soon as requests are received
- A pool of 40 trained IEP facilitators
- Increased use of the FIEP process in the second year of implementation
- Support from West Virginia Department of Education Office of Research to compile and analyze FIEP program data

2016-2017 Results

- The West Virginia Department of Education received 20 requests for Facilitated IEP (FIEP) meetings, 15 from districts and 5 from parents, resulting in 15 FIEP meetings.
- 13 out of 15 meetings resulted in an IEP (12 reached agreement).



92% of participants were completely or mostly satisfied with the FIEP process.

Essential Elements of Program Development

In order for West Virginia to continue to develop its facilitation program, OFP has identified several essential elements of program improvement. Some of these include:

- Gathering input from a varied group of stakeholders which includes facilitators, school personnel, parents, mediators, and advocates allows the OFP to consider multiple perspectives and make improvements that will best meet the needs of those who interact with and use the program
- Using a co-facilitation model where experienced facilitators work with newly-trained facilitators to provide ongoing support, partnership, and mentorship
- Offering continuing professional development opportunities to facilitators including, advanced training sessions and regular group meetings where facilitators can brainstorm and collaborate to identify further training needs
- Evaluating the facilitation program using participant surveys and multiple other data sources and using the data to guide continuous improvement activities

Future Activities and Desired Outcomes

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

- FIEP surveys will be revised to better assess whether the use of FIEP has led to a decrease in the use of other dispute resolution processes, including state and due process complaints.
- Evaluations will be conducted through follow-up interviews with participants 6-9 months

following a facilitated meeting to determine the capacity of the FIEP process to create durable agreements.

- Experienced facilitators will mentor new facilitators and establish partnerships that will benefit all participants in the process.
- The regular examination of project data and feedback from stakeholders will inform program improvements.

West Virginia Workgroup Leads

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<http://wvde.state.wv.us/osp/compliance/facilitatedIEP.html>