

**VERMONT STATE ADVISORY PANEL ON SPECIAL EDUCATION
BYLAWS**

Adopted: November 15, 2017

Revised: March 29, 2024

ARTICLE I: AUTHORIZING STATUTES AND NAME

- A. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requires each State to “establish and maintain an advisory panel for the purpose of providing policy guidance with respect to special education and related services for children within the State.” IDEA further establishes the minimum membership requirements for each advisory panel and lists the duties of each advisory panel. 20 U.S.C. Section 1412 (a) (21). See also, 34 C.F.R. Sections 300.167-169.
- B. Vermont’s special education statute implementing the IDEA requirements includes additional State-specific requirements related to the purpose, membership, terms, compensation, duties, and meetings of the Panel. It also reflects the State’s intent to meet the unique needs of Vermont’s children with disabilities through its special education system. 16 V.S.A. Section 2945.
- C. The advisory panel in Vermont shall be called the State Advisory Panel on Special Education (Panel).

ARTICLE II: PURPOSE

The purpose of the Panel shall be to advise the Vermont Agency of Education (AOE) and the State Board of Education (SBE) regarding special education and related services for students age three (3) through twenty-one (21) with disabilities and their families. The Panel shall promote high quality services for students with disabilities and their families.

ARTICLE III: DUTIES AND FUNCTIONS

The Panel shall carry out the duties and functions specified in the IDEA and Vermont statute cited above.

The Panel shall:

- A. Advise the Vermont Agency of Education (AOE) of unmet needs within the State in the education of children with disabilities;
- B. Comment publicly on any rules or regulations proposed by the State regarding the education of children with disabilities;

- C. Advise the AOE in developing evaluations and reporting on data to the U.S. Secretary of Education under the IDEA.
- D. Advise the AOE in developing corrective action plans to address findings identified in Federal monitoring reports under the IDEA;
- E. Advise the AOE in developing and implementing policies relating to the coordination of services for children with disabilities;
- F. Advise the AOE on the education of eligible students with disabilities who have been convicted as adults and incarcerated in adult correctional facilities.
- G. Review periodically the rules, regulations, standards, and guidelines pertaining to special education and recommend to the State Board any changes it finds necessary;
- H. Comment on any new or revised rules, regulations, standards, and guidelines proposed for issuance; and
- I. Advise the State Board in the development of any State plan for the provision of special education.

ARTICLE IV: MEMBERSHIP

Section 1: Panel Membership

The Panel shall be composed of no more than 37 members appointed in accordance with Vermont statute. The membership shall include:

- A. Teachers;
- B. Representatives from state agencies involved in the financing or delivery of related services to children with disabilities;
- C. A representative of independent schools;
- D. At least one representative of a vocational, community, or business organization concerned about the provision of transition services to children with disabilities;
- E. A representative from the state juvenile and adult corrections agency;
- F. Individuals with disabilities;
- G. Parents of children with disabilities, provided the child shall be younger than 26 years old at the time his or her parent is appointed to the Panel;
- H. State and local education officials, including officials who carry out activities under the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act;
- I. A representative of higher education who prepares special education or related services personnel;
- J. A representative from the state child welfare department responsible for foster care;
- K. Special education administrators;
- L. A representative of the state Parent Training & Information Center
- M. A representative of the state Protection & Advocacy system

A majority of the appointed members shall be either individuals with a disability or parents of children with disabilities ages birth through 26.

Section 2: Ex-Officio Members

The Secretary of Education, State Director of Special Education, and AOE Liaison shall be ex-officio members of the Panel and shall have the duties set forth in Article V, Section 3 of these bylaws.

Section 3: Appointment

- A. Openings on the Panel occur each year as members' terms expire or they are no longer able to serve. As deemed necessary by the Panel Executive Committee, a membership committee may be formed to solicit recommendations for individuals to fill vacant positions on the Panel, and to develop materials and an orientation process for new members.
 - a. Individuals interested in being nominated for membership on the Panel may contact the Agency of Education. Openings are limited. Please be aware that many factors are considered in selecting members, including the need to recruit a diverse group that complies with requirements under IDEA. Applicants must identify which membership role they are applying to represent on their application.
- B. **Process for Panel Nomination to Agency of Education** - Prospective members must complete an application that identifies the legislatively mandated membership category they are seeking to fill and submit to Panel prior to being nominated. This can be completed prior to or at the first meeting as described below.
 - a. The Panel requests that prospective nominees attend one Panel meeting before deciding whether they wish to be nominated. At the end of the meeting, if the prospective nominee remains interested and there is an opening, they may briefly discuss their background, experiences and interest in serving on the Panel.
 - b. At the next meeting, current Panel members vote whether to support the individual's nomination. The individual's application and recommendation shall be forwarded to the Secretary of Education or designee for appointment. Assigned support from the Vermont Agency of Education shall submit nominations to the Governor's office and track / follow-up on appointments and membership status.
 - c. Each prospective member whose nomination has been approved by the Governor will receive a letter notifying them of their appointment.

Section 4: Terms of Service

- A. Members of the Panel shall serve for a term of three (3) years or until their successor is appointed.
- B. Terms shall begin on July 1 of the year of appointment.
- C. Members whose terms have expired, where there is no application to replace their seat, will continue to serve until their appointment is renewed, or their seat is replaced.

- D. For open seats that have been applied for, a prospective member may serve as a full panel member, after their application is submitted until they receive formal appointment.

Section 5: Responsibilities and Expectations

- A. Members will strive to be at all meetings, as attendance at Panel functions is essential to the work needing to be completed.
- B. Members will be expected to follow the group norms established by the Panel.
- C. Members will strive to serve on at least one committee.

ARTICLE V: OFFICERS AND DUTIES

Section 1: Election of Officers and Terms

- A. The Panel shall elect from its members a Panel Chair, Panel Vice-Chair, and Secretary. Officers shall be elected to serve a term of two (2) years upon vote of a quorum as defined in Section 2 of Article VI of these bylaws.
 - a. Officers may serve up to two (2) consecutive terms for the position to which they are elected.
- B. An Executive Committee of the Panel will be comprised of seven members. The majority of the executive committee shall be individuals with disabilities or parents of children with disabilities. The Panel Chair, Secretary and most recent past Chair will comprise three of the seven members. The remaining members will be voted by the full Panel for one-year terms and as necessary to fill any vacancies. The Vermont Special Education Director will be an ex-officio member of the Executive Committee and will not count towards the membership totals listed.
 - a. The purpose of the Executive Committee is to ensure smooth Panel operations, set the agenda, and are empowered to act on behalf of the full Panel in emergency matters when the full Panel cannot meet.

Section 2: Duties of Officers

The officers of the Panel shall perform the duties prescribed by these bylaws and in accordance with the parliamentary authority adopted by the Panel.

- A. The Panel Chair shall:
 - 1. Establish the time and location for Panel meetings;
 - 2. Prepare the agenda and disseminate to Panel members and the AOE Liaison;
 - 3. Establish short-term or standing committees or task groups and name the Chair;
 - 4. Preside over meetings of the Panel;
 - 5. Coordinate committee report writing and other communication;
 - 6. Assist with orientation of new members; and
 - 7. Ensure that minutes of each meeting are kept and approved by the Panel.

B. The Panel Vice-Chair shall:

1. Function in the place of the Panel Chair in his or her absence;
2. Recruit and orient new members and chair any committee established related to membership;
3. Monitor member participation and advise the Governor of vacancies; and
4. Assist with report writing and other communication.

C. The Panel Secretary shall:

1. Record the meeting minutes, including any advice or recommendations adopted by the Panel; and
2. Disseminate unapproved meeting minutes to the Panel members and the AOE Liaison for posting on the AOE website within five (5) days from the date of the meeting.

Section 3: Duties of Ex-Officio Members

A. The AOE Liaison shall:

1. Process the expenditures of the Panel;
2. Publicly post the Panel agendas and meeting minutes;
3. Prepare and provide AOE updates;
4. Ensure adherence with 1 VSA Sections 310-314, Vermont's open meetings law;
5. Assist with report writing and other communications, upon request;
6. Assist the Panel in procuring meeting sites;
7. Ensure that Panel concerns, advice, and recommendations are directed to the appropriate level of authority within the AOE; and
8. Support the Panel in carrying out their duties and functions as well as acting on requests from the Panel to further assist them in carrying out their duties and functions.

B. The State Director of Special Education shall:

1. Provide relevant and current topical information to the Panel regarding the state of special education in Vermont and additional information upon request;
2. Report progress on the Annual Performance Plan and State Performance Plan
3. Report on District Level of Determinations based on compliance with the IDEA;
4. Ensure that Panel concerns, advice and recommendations are directed to the appropriate level of authority (designee) within the AOE;

5. Support the Panel in carrying out their duties and functions; and
 6. Carry out the duties of the AOE Liaison, as necessary.
- C. The Secretary of Education shall:
1. Meet with the Panel annually and upon request to discuss Panel concerns, goals, and recommendations.

ARTICLE VI: MEETINGS

Section 1: Procedure

The Panel may follow Robert's Rules of Order as accepted by the Panel members, to the extent that such procedures are not inconsistent with the Panel bylaws, enabling federal statutes and regulations, or Vermont law.

Section 2: Quorum

A quorum shall consist of 1/3 appointed or prospective (application submitted, awaiting appointment) members of the Panel attending any appropriately announced meeting. In holding a meeting without quorum, panel members will give consideration to whether representation from all member groups is present.

While the panel may not vote on any matters without a quorum, the members may hold a meeting, and take unofficial notes. During a meeting held where there is no quorum, the Panel is prohibited from voting on any items.

Section 3: Meetings

- A. Panel meetings shall be held at such time and place as established by the Panel Chair, in consultation with the AOE Liaison, as needed.
- B. The Panel shall meet at least annually before July to:
 1. Elect Officers;
 2. Establish Committees;
 3. Establish Priorities; and
 4. Establish Goals for the year.
- C. The Panel shall also meet at the call of the Panel Chair as often as necessary to conduct its business.
- D. Meetings for the coming year shall be scheduled at the last meeting of each year.
- E. Members unable to participate in a meeting shall notify the Panel Chair or AOE Liaison of their inability to participate.

Section 4: Accessibility

- A. All Panel meetings are open to the general public and shall be held at an accessible site.

- B. All meetings shall include, at a minimum, a telephone conferencing line. Panel members participating in a meeting over the conference line shall be considered in attendance and shall count toward a quorum for purposes of conducting Panel business.
- C. Accommodations for individuals with disabilities shall be directed to the AOE Liaison.

Section 5: Meeting Cancellation

In the event that a meeting is canceled, designated AOE staff shall notify Panel members and will post the cancellation on the AOE website.

Section 6: Special Meetings

Special meetings may be called by the Panel Chair, in consultation with the AOE Liaison, as needed. Members of the Panel may also request special meetings through written request submitted for approval by the Panel Chair.

Section 7: Notice of Open Meetings

All regular and special meetings of the Panel shall be in compliance with the Vermont "Open Meeting" law found at 1 VSA Sections 310-314.

Section 8: Voting

- A. Except as otherwise stated in these bylaws, all actions shall require a majority vote of a quorum as defined in Article VI, Section 2.
- B. Members participating in a meeting of the Panel by means of conference call, video conference, or other such means that allow for each participant to hear and be heard by each other participant at the same time, shall be deemed in attendance at such meeting.
- C. Voting on all matters shall be by voice vote or by roll call.
- D. The Panel Chair will have a vote on any measure before the Panel. The Panel Chair may not make or second motions.

Section 9: Designees

- A. A member of the Panel may send a designee to a Panel or Committee meeting in his or her place.
- B. Said member shall notify the Panel Chair or AOE Liaison of his or her designee prior to or at the meeting.
- C. Any designee shall be considered a non-voting representative of the Panel member.

ARTICLE VII: COMMITTEES

- A. The Panel may establish such standing, advisory, or ad hoc committees as necessary to carry out the work of the Panel.

- B. The purpose of the committee shall be determined by a charge agreed upon by the Panel.
- C. Each committee may establish procedures for the conduct of the committee's work.
- D. Each committee must report regularly to the Panel and is accountable to the full Panel.

Section 1: Committee Membership

- A. Only Panel members shall serve on a committee. Any Panel member may be asked to serve on a specific committee. Committee membership is voluntary. However, Panel members are expected to serve on at least one committee.
- B. If the committee deems it appropriate to seek outside technical assistance from experts not on the Panel, such non-Panel representatives may be identified and invited to participate in an advisory capacity only.

Section 2: Activities of Committees

- A. Committees are not required to have a Chair or Facilitator but may select one if desired.
- B. Committees may seek input from state and local agencies, businesses, nonprofits, and the public at large, as needed to conduct their business.
- C. The committee may use electronic communications, phone conferences, and/or face-to-face meetings as desired.
- D. Committees are expected to report regularly to the Panel on their activities.

ARTICLE VIII: RECORD KEEPING

Section I: Records of Meetings

The Panel shall maintain records of all meetings, including public access to meetings and records generated by the Panel in accordance with 1 V.S.A. Sections 310-314.

- A. Written notices, agendas of meetings and reports shall be distributed by the AOE Liaison to all members and ex-officio members at least one week before each meeting.
- B. All Panel meetings, agenda items, and procedures of public comment must be publicly announced prior to any meetings and such meetings shall be open to the public.
- C. All requests for time on the agenda of a meeting shall be directed to the Panel Chair for consideration.
- D. Public comment time will be included in meeting agendas.

- E. Interpreters and other necessary accommodations needed by member participants or the general public for Panel meetings must be requested in advance. These services may be paid for with federal funds as per regulation.
- F. Minutes of all meetings shall be kept by the AOE Liaison and a permanent record maintained. Copies shall be distributed to all members and ex-officio members and the Chairperson of the Vermont State Board of Education. Minutes shall also be made available to the general public upon request.
- G. By July 1 of each year, the Panel shall submit an annual report of its activities and recommendations to the Vermont AOE. This report shall be made available to the general public in accordance with federal regulations.

ARTICLE IX: CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

No member of the Panel shall cast a vote on any matter that is likely to provide a direct personal or financial interest to that member or otherwise give the appearance of a conflict of interest.

ARTICLE X: EXPENSES AND COMPENSATION

Section 1: Compensation for Panel Members

- A. Panel members shall receive compensation for actual and necessary expenses incurred to attend a regular or special meeting of the Panel or any Panel committees in accordance with 16 V.S.A. Section 2945 (c) and 32 V.S.A. Section 1010, as amended.
- B. Funds for reimbursement of Panel member expenses may come from federal sources according to federal regulations.

Section 2: Compensation for Members Who Are State Employees

- A. Actual and necessary expenses for Panel members who are State employees shall be charged to their departments or institutions.
- B. Members who are State employees shall receive no additional compensation for their services as a Panel member.

ARTICLE XI: AMENDMENT OF BYLAWS

These bylaws may be amended or repealed by favorable vote of not less than two thirds of Panel members at a regular or special meeting of the Panel. Proposed amendments shall be filed with the Panel Chair and sent to each member of the Panel no less than 30 days prior to the meeting at which the amendment(s) shall be considered. Notice to the general public and access to the proposed amendment(s) shall also be provided 30 days prior to a vote by the Panel.