



Gearing Up For Your Transitions

The Governor's Advisory Council For Exceptional Citizens

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requires that each State establish and maintain an advisory panel for the *purpose of advising the State special education staff regarding the education of eligible children with disabilities*. At the federal level, the Governor's Advisory Council for Exceptional Citizens (GACEC) serves as the State Advisory Panel for the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) in Delaware. The GACEC monitors services and makes recommendations on behalf of students with exceptionalities to the Governor, General Assembly, Secretary of Education, and the State Board of Education. Students with exceptionalities include both students in special education and students who are considered gifted and talented. Delaware increased the role of the Council to include advising and advocating on the unmet service needs of all citizens with exceptionalities in Delaware from birth to death.

The mission statement of the GACEC is to provide leadership through advice and advocacy for the unmet needs of citizens of all ages who are exceptional, in order to improve their lives. The Council sends observations and recommendations on regulations and legislation to the Delaware General Assembly, Department of Education (DOE), Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS), and other agencies in order to assist these agencies with their understanding of the implications of regulatory and legislative changes impacting the lives of persons with disabilities.

Council members and staff participate on over sixty councils, boards or committees, such as the DOE Access to General Education Curriculum (AGEC), Developmental Disabilities Council (DDC), State Council for Persons with Disabilities (SCPD), and the Delaware Coalition for Americans with Disabilities (DCADA), to name a few. Involvement on the various committees or task forces and collaborations with other councils assists the GACEC in its ability to advise and advocate for systemic changes.

The GACEC also works with individuals in the private sector to assist with advocacy projects that provide information and assist individuals with disabilities. Through its participation with other groups, Council is able to assist in the design of programs, community services and supports for persons with special needs. Council educates Delawareans on issues and services related to children, youth and adults; believing that increased education on disability issues will lead to improvements in inclusion, productivity and equality for persons with disabilities. Council also advises and provides recommendations for systemic change activities that allow individuals with disabilities and their families to have input into the design of and provision of needed community services. This may include individualized supports and other forms of assistance that promote self-determination, independence and productivity through culturally competent programs.

The GACEC works in collaboration with the Exceptional Resources workgroup of the Delaware Department of Education on issues affecting the education of students with exceptionalities.

Council believes strongly in its role to advise and advocate on behalf of individuals with exceptionalities in order to improve their lives. [Review the GACEC Annual Report.](#) There are multitudes of ways to improve the lives of individuals with disabilities in Delaware; the Council is very creative in its efforts.