

Legal Requirements and Effectiveness Training for Special Education Advisory Committees (SEACs) in Virginia

Presented by

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FACILITIES AND FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

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SEAC TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

- **Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) Training: January 3-January 31, 2024.** This online self-paced training will help SEAC members and other interested participants understand the role of the local Special Education Advisory Committee in Virginia and to build a more efficient and effective advisory committee. A certificate of completion will be provided for all who complete the training.
- **Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) LIVE Training: January 27, 2024, 8:00-11:30 a.m.** This LIVE training will be facilitated via Zoom. The training will help SEAC members and other interested participants understand the role of the local Special Education Advisory Committee in Virginia and to build a more efficient and effective advisory committee.

Regulatory Requirements

(Regulatory requirements can be found on pp. 72-73 of the *Regulations Governing Special Education Programs for Children with Disabilities in Virginia.*)

REGULATORY REQUIREMENT

A local advisory committee for special education, known commonly as the Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC), **appointed by each local school board**, shall advise the school board **through the division superintendent**.



SEAC MEMBERSHIP

- A majority of the committee shall be parents of children with disabilities or individuals with disabilities.
- The committee shall include **one** teacher.
- Additional local school division personnel shall **serve only as consultants** to the committee.

SEAC FUNCTIONS

- Advise the local school division of needs in the education of children with disabilities;
- Participate in the development of priorities and strategies for meeting the identified needs of children with disabilities;
- Submit periodic reports and recommendations regarding the education of children with disabilities to the division superintendent for transmission to the local school board;
- Assist the local school division in interpreting plans to the community for meeting the special needs of children with disabilities for educational services;

SEAC FUNCTIONS (CONTINUED)

- Review the policies and procedures for the provision of special education and related services prior to submission to the local school board; and
- Participate in the review of the local school division's annual plan.



ANNUAL PLAN

The local educational agency shall prepare annually and submit to the Virginia Department of Education an application for funding under Part B of the Act in accordance with the requirements outlined by the Virginia Department of Education. The annual plan shall include:

1. Assurances that the local educational agency has in effect policies and procedures for the provision of special education and related services in compliance with the requirements of the Act, the policies and procedures established by the Virginia Board of Education, and any other relevant federal and state laws and regulations;

ANNUAL PLAN (CONTINUED)

2. A report indicating the extent to which the annual plan for the preceding period has been implemented;
3. Budgets outlining the use of the federal funds; and
4. Any revisions to the local school division's interagency agreement regarding the provision of special education and related services in a regional or local jail, if applicable.

ANNUAL PLAN (CONTINUED)

Prior to submission to the Virginia Department of Education, the annual plan **shall be reviewed by the local school division's local advisory committee,** and approved by the local school board. State-operated programs and the Virginia School for the Deaf and the Blind at Staunton shall submit their annual plan to the state special education advisory committee for review prior to submission to the Virginia Department of Education.

PUBLIC NOTICE

Public notice shall be published annually listing the names of committee members and including a description of ways in which interested parties may express their views to the committee.



MEETING FREQUENCY

SEAC meetings shall be held **at least four times in a school year** and shall be open to the public.



Suggested Roles and Responsibilities

SUGGESTED ROLES

- SEAC Chairperson
- SEAC Members
- Director of Special Education
- Superintendent of Schools
- Other School Division Personnel
- School Board Members



SUGGESTED ROLES-SEAC CHAIRPERSON

- Provides leadership
- Facilitates meetings (from agenda development to follow-up)
- Serves as spokesperson
- Promotes collaboration
- Assists with recruitment of new members
- Mentors new members



SUGGESTED ROLES-SEAC MEMBERS

- Work collaboratively to fulfill the six functions defined in the state regulations
- Serve as advisors
- Consider needs/issues at a systems level
- Maintain a good working knowledge of special education law
- Attend regularly scheduled meetings

SUGGESTED ROLES-DIRECTOR OF SPECIAL EDUCATION

- Serves as a consultant to the SEAC
- Provides relevant and current information
- Assists the chairperson
- Provides administrative support
- Facilitates communication with the LEA
- Supports the SEAC in carrying out its functions

SUGGESTED ROLES-SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

- Receives and reviews SEAC reports and facilitates their presentation to the School Board
- Stays informed of the work of the SEAC
- Makes requests of the SEAC for advice and recommendations
- Considers recommendations made by the SEAC

SUGGESTED ROLES-OTHER SCHOOL PERSONNEL

- Serve as consultants to the SEAC
- Provide information on areas of expertise

Note: If a school employee serving as a consultant is also a parent of a child with a disability, the employee must be careful to represent area of expertise and not their personal agenda in order to avoid conflict of interest.

SUGGESTED ROLES-SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS

- Appoint members to serve on the SEAC
- Receive and review SEAC reports
- Respond to SEAC's recommendations, as appropriate
- Appoint a board representative to attend SEAC meetings
- Implement plans that incorporate SEAC recommendations, as appropriate

Ideas for Conducting SEAC Business

IDEAS FOR CONDUCTING BUSINESS

- Recruiting, Orienting, and Retaining New Members
- Establishing By-laws
- Planning the annual calendar
- Posting the Annual Notice of Members
- Communicating About Meetings
- Identifying Needs
- Setting Priorities
- Participating in the Budget Process and the Annual Plan
- Developing Periodic Reports
- Conducting Meetings
- Guidelines for Public Comment



IDEAS FOR CONDUCTING SEAC BUSINESS-RECRUITING MEMBERS

- Involve all members
- Use a recruitment “tool kit”
- Remove barriers
- Be specific and focused with your membership request
- Think outside the box
- Advertise and disseminate information
- Post meeting agendas and minutes
- Be intentional about diversity
- Support new members



Ideas for Conducting SEAC Business – Orienting and Retaining Members

- Toolkit could contain:
 - roles and responsibilities
 - by-laws
 - the latest annual report to the school board
 - SEAC priorities
- Arrange for members to get to know each other and lay groundwork for collaboration by using team building activities and by providing informal “get to know each other” time
- Provide training and recognition

Ideas for Conducting SEAC Business – Establishing Bylaws

Bylaws are the rules implemented by an association, group or organization, which govern its activities:

- Define meeting roles and responsibilities
- Detail routine procedures
- Ensure an orderly approach to doing business
- May be developed by the school division or by the SEAC (school board's decision)

Ideas for Conducting SEAC Business – Planning the Annual Calendar

- Establishes meeting dates, times, and locations
- Outlines the major topics to be considered at each meeting
- Informs the school community and the community-at-large of the intended work of the committee and of opportunities to make public comment

Ideas for Conducting SEAC Business – Posting the Annual Notice of Members

- Student Handbook
- Social media accounts
- School division website
- Cable TV Channel
- Provide at Annual IEP Meeting
- Attach to Procedural Safeguards



IDEAS FOR CONDUCTING SEAC BUSINESS – COMMUNICATING ABOUT MEETINGS

- Articles in School Newsletters
- Information about the SEAC and meetings in the Annual Student Handbook
- Cable TV Channel
- Social media accounts
- Opt-in e-mails from schools
- Public listing in local paper
- Announcement on school division web-site



Ideas for Conducting SEAC Business – Identifying Needs

Establish opportunities to collect information to assist with identifying needs. Ideas for consideration include:

- Focus Groups
- Surveys
- Planning Meetings
- Public Comments
- Data from Parent Resource Centers



IDEAS FOR CONDUCTING SEAC BUSINESS-SETTING PRIORITIES

- Based on the data from collection of information regarding needs
- Focus on a small number of items
- Keep in mind the budget impact
- Priorities provide the foundation for periodic reports
- Focus on systems issues, not personal issues
- May result in additional data collection

Ideas for Conducting SEAC Business – Participating in the Budget Process and the Annual Plan

- Know the timelines
- Be clear on priorities
- Offer recommendations



Ideas for Conducting SEAC Business – Developing Periodic Reports

- Prepared by the SEAC
- Submitted to the school board through the superintendent
- Balance of strengths and needs identified through various methods
- Limit recommendations to a few
 - 1. Back up findings and recommendations with data
 - 2. Use to develop a dialogue with the school board and superintendent

Ideas for Conducting SEAC Business – Conducting Meetings

- Consider logistics
- Use an agenda
- Prepare for informed discussions
- Consider using a formal rule such as Robert's Rules of Order
- Establish Meeting Norms or Rules



Ideas for Conducting SEAC Business – Conducting Meetings (continued)

Establishing Meeting Norms or Rules

- Respect confidentiality by not referring to families, students, or school employees by name.
- Respect each member and differing points of view.
- Respect people's time and stay on agenda.

Ideas for Conducting SEAC Business – Guidelines for Public Comment

- Limit total time devoted to public comment
- Limit time for each public comment
- Listen to public comment
- Record summary of comments for future use



Ideas for Conducting SEAC Business – Guidelines for Public Comment (continued)

- Follow up the following month with a report from administration on any action that may have occurred (while protecting confidentiality)
- Aggregate data regularly to inform the committee of issue trends



Additional Information

COIA and FOIA

VA Conflict of Information Act (COIA)

Ensures that there is no conflict between a member's life activities and the activities of government entities.

VA Freedom of Information Act (FOIA)

- Ensures transparency of government
- Meetings must be public
- Three people constitute a meeting
- Your school board attorney may provide additional assistance to your SEAC Chair and Special Education Director, as necessary

ROADMAP

- FOIA Policy - § [2.2-3700](#)
- Definitions - § [2.2-3701](#)
- Meeting Requirements
 - Open Meetings - §§ [2.2-3707](#), [2.2-3707.1](#), [2.2-3707.2](#), and [2.2-3710](#)
 - Closed Meetings - §§ [2.2-3711](#) and [2.2-3712](#)
- Electronic Meetings - § [2.2-3708.2](#) and § [2.2-3708.3](#)

OPEN MEETINGS – REQUIREMENTS

§§ 2.2-3707, 2.2-3707.1, 2.2-3707.2, AND 2.2-3710

- Notice to the Public
- Open to the Public
- Minutes

WHERE SHOULD NOTICE BE POSTED?

§ 2.2-3707 (C)

- FOIA requires all public bodies to post notice in three locations:
 1. Official public government website, if any
Definition: “any Internet site controlled by a public body and used, among any other purposes, to post required notices and other content pursuant to this chapter on behalf of the public body.”
 2. Prominent public location in which notices are regularly posted; and
 3. At the office of the clerk of the public body OR at the office of the chief administrator

FOIA

Virginia Freedom of Information Advisory Council

<http://foiacouncil.dls.virginia.gov/>

foiacouncil@dls.virginia.gov

(804) 698-1810

INFORMATION FOR FAMILIES

- VDOE website-[Information for Families page](https://www.doe.virginia.gov/programs-services/special-education/information-for-families)
(<https://www.doe.virginia.gov/programs-services/special-education/information-for-families>)
- Subscribe to [Gov Delivery](https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/VADOE/subscriber/new) updates
(<https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/VADOE/subscriber/new>) to receive email updates from the Virginia Department of Education. For Special Education and Student Services news, select the "Information for Parents and Families" checkbox from step three in the sign-up process.
- Follow us on X (formerly Twitter) @VDOE_SESS
#FamilyEngagementFriday

SURVEY



QUESTIONS

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