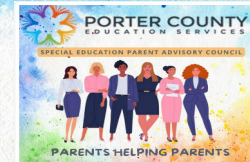


Please Sign In



WELCOME TO THE
Porter County Education Services (PCES)
Special Education Parent Advisory Council
(SEPAC)

CommUNITY Meeting
May 2026

WHAT IS A SEPAC?

A Special Education Parent Advisory Council (SEPAC) is a district-level (and/or in collaboration with an interlocal that contracts with local districts), parent-driven group that provides input to the local special education provider on system-level challenges regarding special education and related services. A local SEPAC provides direct input to school personnel and leaders about policies, programs, practices, and services that have an impact on students with disabilities and their families.

Its purpose is to advise, advocate and offer guidance, not to decide policy.

An effective SEPAC can increase the proactive involvement of families by inviting their input in ways that can be used to share local special education policy.

WE ARE
PARENTS HELPING PARENTS

WHO IS YOUR SEPAC TEAM?

- ❖ **Duneland** ~ Jackie Hood & Rebecca Shellito
- ❖ **East Porter** ~ Jessica Kruger & Jaclyn Rodriguez
- ❖ **Porter** ~ Alexis Kegebein & Maja Nikolov
 - ❖ **Portage** ~ Cass Pogue
 - ❖ **SELF School** ~ Kaley Piercy
- ❖ **Valparaiso** ~ Jessica Witherspoon & Jill Isley

Special Education Administration

- ❖ **Executive Director** ~ Erin Hawkins, ehawkins@pces.k12.in.us
- ❖ **CFO/Treasurer/HR** ~ Quinnlyn Van Rys, qvanrys@pces.k12.in.us
- ❖ **SELF Principal/IEP Trainer** ~ Jen Rogers, jrogers@pces.k12.in.us
- ❖ **SELF Assistant Principal/OT & PT Supervisor** ~ Erica Wood, ewood@pces.k12.in.us
- ❖ **M-Team Director/AT Supervisor/Medicaid Reimbursement/Complaint Compliance Coordinator** ~ Shannon Aardema, saardema@pces.k12.in.us
- ❖ **Shared Services Supervisor: Speech; Behaviorists & Student Service Coordinators; DHH & BLV programs; Nonpub Teacher; CPI Trainer; & Teacher Cohort** ~ Morgan Derby, mderby@pces.k12.in.us
- ❖ **Speech Coordinator** ~ Alice Tokoly, atokoly@pces.k12.in.us
- ❖ **Career & Tech Center Executive Director** ~ Audra Peterson, apeterson@pces.k12.in.us
- ❖ **Career & Tech Center Principal** ~ Kyle Becich, kbecich@pces.k12.in.us

~ Before We Begin ~



Engage Fully



What's Shared Here, Stays Here



What's Learned Here, Leaves Here



Take Care of Your Needs

Don't Agree With The IEP? Now What??

An Informational Overview



RESOLVING DISAGREEMENTS BETWEEN PARENTS AND SCHOOLS: DISPUTE RESOLUTION

- Training Sign In
- Resources
- Training Survey
- Certificate

<https://tinyurl.com/Dispute-Resolution-2>



RESOLVING DISAGREEMENTS BETWEEN PARENTS AND SCHOOLS

Dispute Resolution in Special Education



LEGAL DISCLAIMERS:

- The following information is provided for educational purposes and does not constitute legal advice. It is intended to provide a general background of the special education process.
- Law is constantly changing and can depend on individual facts. If you are seeking answers to legal questions, please be sure to consult with a competent attorney prior to taking any legal action.



OUR MISSION & VISION

Mission Statement

To provide high quality information, training, and support to families of children and young adults with disabilities and the individuals and organizations who serve them.

Vision Statement

Children and young adults with disabilities will thrive due to access to effective educational programming and appropriate individualized services.



ABOUT IN*SOURCE

- **Indiana's Parent Training and Information Center**
- **Established in 1975**
- **Current grants**
 - Indiana Department of Education, Office of Special Education
 - US Department of Education, Special Education
 - US Department of Education, Family Engagement
 - Lilly Endowment



HOW WE HELP

We support the special education process from birth to age 26 by providing:

- assistance by phone and email
- training classes
- support and information at school meetings
- ways for schools and families to work together
- special education liaisons who serve the entire state of Indiana
- transition-aged students with training on self-advocacy
- special education training for school interpreters
- a wealth of resources and trainings at www.insource.org.



DISPUTE RESOLUTION PROCEDURES

There may be times when the parent and school do not agree about the provision of special education or related services.

Article 7 provides steps to resolve disagreements which include a continuum of options that range from less formal to more formal.



RESOLVING DISPUTES

- Good communication is the best way to avoid disagreements.
- Students have better outcomes when parents and schools work together.
- It is best if parents and schools work out their differences.
- The law provides a formal dispute resolution process.



LESS FORMAL DISPUTE RESOLUTION OPTIONS

Parent may ask to meet with staff with authority to resolve disagreement by:

- Reconvening conference, or
- Meeting with public agency representative



FORMAL DISPUTE RESOLUTION OPTIONS

- Complaint
- Mediation
- Due process hearing
- Resolution session
- Civil suit



COMPLAINT TO IDOE

- May be filed by anyone
- Addresses possible procedural violation:
 - School not following Article 7 rules or
 - School not following a student's IEP
- Use I-CHAMP, Indiana's Complaint, Hearing, and Mediation Process at:
 - <https://ichamp.doe.in.gov>
- Send copy of complaint to school



WHEN FILING A COMPLAINT

- State facts of alleged violation.
- Fully complete all requested information.
- If complaint involves a specific student, include:
 - **Proposed resolution to the problem, if known.**
 - **Include student's name, address and school.**



COMPLAINT: THE FIRST 10 DAYS

The school has 10 calendar days from receipt of the complaint to do one of the following:

- Provide written response to the complainant and forward to IDOE.
- Meet with complainant to resolve and provide written agreement to IDOE.
- Agree in writing with complainant to mediate issues within twenty (20) calendar days.
- Notify IDOE to investigate.



COMPLAINT: DAYS 11-40

Complaint Investigator will:

- Gather and examine facts.
- Issue a written report with results of investigation.
- If the school is found in violation, corrective action may be required.
- School must comply with corrective action.



RECONSIDERATION OF COMPLAINT

- Either party may disagree with outcome/results.
- Reconsideration must be requested in writing to IDOE within ten (10) calendar days.
- Specify facts, areas to be reconsidered.
- If revised, the updated complaint report is issued within sixty (60) calendar days from the date the complaint was filed.
- Reconsideration is twenty (20) days or less.



MEDIATION

A voluntary, confidential process that allows the parent and school to attempt to resolve their issues.

MEDIATION:

- Can be initiated by parent or school at <https://ichamp.doe.in.gov/>.
- Both parties must agree on it in writing.
- May occur prior to or concurrently with a request for due process or complaint.
- Agreement is legally binding.



MEDIATION MAY HELP RESOLVE

- Student's identification and eligibility for services.
- The appropriateness of:
 - an educational evaluation,
 - proposed or current special education services,
 - proposed or current placement.
- Disputes involving Free Appropriate Public Education.
- Reimbursement for services obtained by the parent.
- Issues in a current complaint or due process hearing.



DUE PROCESS HEARING

Held before an independent hearing officer (IHO)

- Both the parent and school may testify and present evidence.
- IHO makes final determination and issues a written decision.

Requesting a due process hearing:

- Must be requested by parent, student 18 or older, school or IDOE through <https://ichamp.doe.in.gov/>.
- Generally must be requested within two (2) years of alleged violation.



AFTER DUE PROCESS REQUEST IS MADE

IHO may issue subpoenas, clarify and issue rulings.

If hearing request made by parent, school must:

- Inform parent of mediation, low cost legal services.
- Send parent written notice.
- Send parent written response to issues, 10 calendar days.
- Offer resolution meeting, 15 calendar days.



RESOLUTION MEETING

If hearing request was made by parent, the schools must offer a meeting to:

- Discuss facts of the hearing request.
- Provide opportunity to resolve dispute.

Does not need to be held if both parties waive the meeting or agree to mediation.

If agreement is reached at the meeting:

- Written agreement, signed by both parties.
- Legally binding after 3 business days.



PARENTS' HEARING RIGHTS

- To seek legal counsel
- Inspect and review all records prior to hearing
- Separation of witnesses
- Allow hearing to be open or closed to the public
- Receive copy of transcript, finding of fact, hearing decision at no cost
- Recover attorney's fees in civil court **if** parent prevails in due process or judicial review



JUDICIAL REVIEW: DISAGREEMENT WITH DUE PROCESS DECISION

- File a petition for judicial review with a civil court with jurisdiction **within 30 calendar days.**
- May/may not involve oral arguments.
- Court reviews proceedings and additional evidence upon request and grants relief based on preponderance of evidence.



FEDERAL LAWS

- Article 7 comes from federal law, IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act).
- The ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) is federal law enforced by Department of Justice and other federal agencies depending on the alleged ADA violation area.
- Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act is a civil right and is enforced by the Office of Civil Rights.
- Offenses related to these types of laws beyond Article 7 violations would involve a different processes for filing and pursuing a civil lawsuit, depending on the issue.



COMPLAINT OR DUE PROCESS?! (1)

"My child has 30 minutes of speech therapy per week in his IEP. They are only receiving 15 minutes per week."

Complaint



COMPLAINT OR DUE PROCESS?! (2)

"My child is in a self-contained classroom with students of various disabilities and is not progressing towards their goals."

Due Process



COMPLAINT OR DUE PROCESS?! (3)

"The IEP has identified the student as one who needs one-on-one assistance. This assistance is being provided by a peer because there is no money for an aide."

Complaint



COMPLAINT OR DUE PROCESS?! (4)

"The IEP says that my child will be in a resource room for 30 minutes daily. They are receiving no services in the resource room."

Complaint



COMPLAINT OR DUE PROCESS?! (5)

"At my child's case conference to review their special education evaluation, the school says that they do not qualify for an IEP. I don't agree with the school."

Due Process



COMPLAINT OR DUE PROCESS?! (6)

“A student is identified as orthopedically impaired. They have developed problems with reading, but the school is denying the reading services because they are not related to the orthopedic impairment.”

Complaint



IN SUMMARY

- Build positive relationships.
- Reconvene/meet with staff to resolve disagreements when possible.
- Complaint process when Article 7 is not followed.
- More formal dispute options such as mediation or due process hearing available.
- **Focus on the student's needs.**



VOLUNTEER PROGRAM

Consider being a volunteer:

- Help parents with special education issues.
- Assist IN*SOURCE staff at trainings, information fairs and fundraisers.
- Attend case conferences to support parents/students.

Gain expertise, leadership skills and more:

- Comprehensive and ongoing training.
- Newsletters and webinars.
- Contact with IN*SOURCE staff.



CONTACT US

LET'S CONNECT! 
¡VAMOS A CONECTAR!



574.234.7101
www.insource.org

RESOLVING DISAGREEMENTS BETWEEN PARENTS AND SCHOOLS: DISPUTE RESOLUTION

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If you've finished the Case Conference Meeting Feeling.....

Confused, overwhelmed, unsure of your rights, or concerned that your student's needs are not fully understood...

It's important to remember that you do not have to navigate this alone!

- Reach out to your SEPAC Parent Representative
- Reach out an Advocacy Specialist
- Most importantly, remember that successful IEP meetings happen when families & schools work together as a team, centered on what is best for the student.

YOU
are not
alone.

What Options Do You Have?

- Pause, take a deep breath and remember that you have an equal voice at the table
- Ask questions and request clarification
- Remember that you do not have to sign the IEP at the meeting or immediately after
- Request a follow up case conference meeting, if needed
- Submit your concerns in writing before or at the meeting
- Ask for additional data, evaluations, and progress updates, if needed
- Bring an advocate or support person

When Agreement Still Cannot Be Reached

- Independent Educational Evaluation (IEE)
- Mediation
- Facilitated IEP meetings
- Prior Written Notice (PWN)
- Due Process (in some situations)

General Resources

- NWI First Steps - indianafirststeps.org
- IN*SOURCE - insource.org
- CoAction - coaction.care
- Area Agencies on Aging - in.gov/fssa/da/area-agencies-on-aging/
- BDS - in.gov/fssa/ddrs/developmental-disability-services/
- Social Security - ssa.gov/benefits/disability/
- Vocational Rehabilitation - in.gov/fssa/ddrs/rehabilitation-employment
- Family to Family (Indiana) - inf2f.org/
- The Arc of Indiana - arcind.org
- Indiana Department Of Education - in.gov/doe
- IEP Technical Assistance Center - iepta.org

HOW DID WE DO?



Wrap-Up Announcements

- ◆ This our *final* CommUNITY Meetings for this academic year! Thank you for your participation! Do you have a topic idea for next year? Let us know!
- ◆ End Of Year Parent Survey is completed ~ please take the time to give your feedback (ask a SEPAC member how).
- ◆ SEPAC Opportunities
 - Don't have the time to join SEPAC but interested in helping the mission? Chat with a SEPAC member to discuss opportunities that may fit you!
 - Share what ideas you may have for SEPAC - We're eager to hear from you!

CONTACT US
PCES Special Education Parent Advisory
Council

✉ - pcesparentgroup@pces.k12.in.us

🌐 - www.pces.k12.in.us/sepac/

📘 - www.facebook.com/PCESEEPAC