

**GOVERNOR'S ADVISORY COUNCIL FOR EXCEPTIONAL CITIZENS (GACEC)**  
**GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING**  
**(Held at the GACEC Fall Planning Retreat)**  
*Saturday October 19, 2019 8:30 am*  
**Dover Downs Hotel and Conference Center**  
**Dover, DE**

*During the meeting there were technical difficulties that resulted in an unusable recording.  
The information provided is from notes taken by staff.*

**MINUTES**

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Susan Campbell, Al Cavalier, Bill Doolittle, Karen Eller, Ann Fisher, Terri Hancharick, Tika Hartsock, Danna Levy, Mary Ann Mieczkowski, Beth Mineo, Robert Overmiller, Jennifer Pulcinella, Kimberly Warren and Cara Wilson on behalf of Laura Waterland.

**OTHERS PRESENT: Guests:** Cindy Brown/Delaware Department of Education, Dale Matusевич/Exceptional Children Resources, DOE, Charisse Craig MS, CCC-SLP/Appoquinimink Speech Language Pathologist (SLP), Tracy Bombara, MS, SLP/Appoquinimink Early Childhood SLP, and Samantha Weatherford, MPH, MS, CCC-SLP/Delaware Speech-Language-Hearing Association President.

**Staff present:** Wendy Strauss/Executive Director; Kathie Cherry/Office Manager; Sybil Baker/Administrative Coordinator.

**MEMBERS ABSENT:** Dafne Carnright, Nancy Cordrey, Cathy Cowin, Thomas Keeton, Carrie Melchisky, Emmanuel Jenkins and Brenn  Shepperson,

The meeting was called to order by GACEC Chairperson Ann Fisher. A motion was requested for approval of the agenda with flexibility. **Motion made and approved.** Ann asked for a **motion** to approve the September meeting minutes with the addition of Al Cavalier as being present. A **motion was made and approved.**

**Public comment:** Nina Batagower came to Council to share about her 23-year-old son who is on the Autism spectrum and in her opinion, not receiving all of the necessary services under Medicaid. She shared that his supplements are not covered. Genetic testing and neurotransmitter bloodwork are not covered either. She also expressed concern that dental cleaning was only covered annually and not twice a year. After sharing Council members asked clarifying questions and made suggestions about potential solutions or contacts that might offer solutions. Ann thanked her for sharing her story with Council.

**Chair/Director's Report:** A **motion was made and approved** to accept the proposed meeting dates for general membership meetings. Council was asked to approve the goals for FY2020. A **motion was made and approved** to accept them as submitted. Wendy discussed the process of meeting with the other councils and recommending legislative priorities. She shared that

Legislative leadership wanted a potential list of the “top three” priorities. These would not necessarily be ones that everyone would work on nor would they be exclusive of other priorities. Wendy shared that the top four that were discussed were: Access to public transportation for individuals with disabilities, continued work on getting full funding for K-3 basic special education, the consolidation and restructuring of the education of low incidence populations and funding parity for direct support workers. **A motion was made and approved with one abstention** to accept the priorities as outlined.

The Council heard from speakers who have expertise in the field of Speech Language Pathology. The following are questions that were asked and answered during the discussion.

What are the current recruitment practices for those who employ SLPs as well as for the University of Delaware (UD) graduate program?

- Jacquie shared that in her experience job fairs are not successful tools for recruiting, but classroom presentations from potential employing organizations were considered helpful by the graduate program students. Even word of mouth from students who attended presentations to their classmates who may not have attended is helpful. Others discussed that often recruiters with companies that contract with the state are able to offer immediate employment where the school districts are limited to when they can post listings. Many districts use these contract companies to support students either in addition to or in lieu of district employees. The UD program does not steer students in any one direction for employment as this would bring up ethical issues.

Is the University or the state offering incentives to entice graduates to work within the Delaware school system?

- There are currently no incentives aside from some loan forgiveness. While it may be more appealing to work for a district and have benefits and time off, contract companies are often able to offer more immediate positions and students leaving the programs are looking for work right away.

Has there been any further discussion about the use of SLP assistants?

- The discussion centered on the fact that SLPs would likely not be able to manage supervision of assistants AND their caseloads. Delaware, unlike some states, does not have a caseload cap. And while we sometimes hear about waiting lists, Easterseals, for example, does not have a waiting list. Samantha shared that what does happen is when serving students, especially in the home, often times scheduling is more of an issue. You have to match a provider’s schedule with the needs of the child and the availability and willingness of the families. Delaware does not currently have eligibility criteria or standards for SLPAs.

Are there continuing education opportunities in Delaware for SLPs?

- UD does offer some continuing education units (CEUs), but they are held up north. There are mobile classrooms available at the Lewes location but those are underutilized.

UD is offering incentives for students to train in Sussex County, such as providing housing.

What impact are we seeing, as a state, as a result of the program at UD?

- Just the fact that we now have a program is bringing additional SLPs to the area. There are also partnerships ongoing with the program and other state programs using the graduate students in ways to expand the capacity of some services.

Do you have data for the number of students who have graduated and of those how many have remained in Delaware?

- Of the 26 first year graduates, eight remained in Delaware and 53% took school positions. The second year saw 22 graduates with nine remaining in Delaware and 61% took school positions.

Has there been a significant increase in the number of early childhood students identified as needing SLP services? What about the general school age population? Are we able to meet those needs?

- The general consensus is that yes, there has been an increase. Given the increase in Autism diagnosis and the continued push for early identification and intervention the numbers are certainly growing. The question of meeting those needs goes back to our earlier discussion on perceived waiting lists. While many districts may have waiting lists, often contractors, like Easterseals have openings, but fitting those in need into those openings given schedules and other obstacles is the issue.

What would you identify as the biggest hurdle in attracting SLPs to Delaware?

- We hear location was an issue, though we also heard from some who stated that the location, depending on the applicant, could be an advantage given our proximity to many of the urban centers on the east coast. The program at UD is young and relatively expensive so more time is needed to see their base grow.

Ann thanked the members of the panel for their participation and information.