



GOVERNOR'S ADVISORY COUNCIL FOR EXCEPTIONAL CITIZENS (GACEC)
Leadership Committee Meeting
6:00 PM, March 6, 2025
VIRTUAL MEETING

MEMBERS PRESENT: Al Cavalier, Bill Doolittle, Tika Hartsock, Jessica Mensack, Molly Merrill, Trenee Parker, Erika Powell, and Jennifer Pulcinella

STAFF PRESENT: Pam Weir/Executive Director

MEETING NOTES: The meeting was called to order at 6:03 pm. The agenda for tonight's meeting and the minutes from the February meeting were unanimously approved.

The meeting covered various operational and strategic topics, legislative updates, and committee work. Discussions focused on policy changes, funding concerns, and resource allocation for disability services and education. The team also reviewed ongoing projects, addressed organizational challenges, and planned for future initiatives and collaborations. The team discussed the importance of sharing their stories to influence policy changes. They mentioned a call to action, emphasizing the need for personal stories, particularly regarding Medicaid funding and the impact of agency closures. They also highlighted the significance of legal cases and the role of stories in informing legal proceedings. Bill Doolittle mentioned a Supreme Court ruling that could have significant implications for federal budgeting.

Pam shared documents related to the transition report of Governor Meyer, which were to be sent to Lieutenant Governor Gay. There was also a discussion about the usefulness of the documents, which were being shared on social media. Pam discussed the upcoming conversation with Lieutenant Governor Gay and Governor Meyer. She outlined the feedback received from Council members and the need for further discussion on various topics, such as raising awareness, providing resources, and ensuring children with complex medical needs receive Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE). Pam emphasized the need for a comprehensive document to be sent to the Lieutenant Governor, detailing the work of the GACEC. She asked for feedback on the document and requested the Leadership Committee's assistance in completing it.

Pam discussed the need to address public education funding for the GACEC. She suggested including a dedicated section on funding issues in the Leadership Committee's agenda to efficiently tackle this topic. Bill agreed with her approach but also expressed a need for a work group for funding in the future. Pam will share her proposed agenda with the team, which will include dedicated sections for policy manual development, public education funding, Department of Education updates, and old/new business.

Pam provided an update on the DelDHub Advisory Committee's work to improve the DelDHub website. The committee has added an advisory committee tab to the website, which includes meeting information, goals, and resources. One of their priorities for the year is to address concerns about transition-age students being excluded from Governor Myers' Executive Order on student earn and learn opportunities. Bill Doolittle suggests incorporating a disability services clearinghouse into the DelDHub, possibly using the Family Shade model. Pam and Molly discussed the potential for collaboration between GACEC, Division of Services for Aging and Adults with Physical Disabilities (DSAAPD) and Delaware Health and Social Services (DHSS) to avoid duplication of efforts in mapping disability resources and services. The group agrees that GACEC is uniquely positioned to support this mapping work for people with disabilities across all ages.

During the meeting, Pam discussed the ongoing work with the Department of Education (DOE) and the need for a retreat to revisit the DOE's focus areas. Bill mentioned significant discussions about unfilled prison education positions, highlighting the challenges faced by educators in terms of responsibilities and compensation. Erica discussed the progress of the GACEC in narrowing down their focus areas and the need to address unanswered data requests from the DOE. Bill added that the Joint Finance Committee (JFC) discussed unfilled positions, particularly in prison education.

Pam mentioned the work of the Infant Early Childhood Committee, the Restraint & Seclusion and School Resource Officer Ad Hoc Committee, Prison Education Ad Hoc Committee, and the Individuals with Complex Medical Conditions and Education Ad Hoc Committee (ICE). Jessica reported on the challenges faced by the ICE ad hoc committee and the upcoming meeting with Dale Matusevich. The conversation ended with updates on the work being done in the ad hoc committees, the need for more outside representatives, and the importance of regular updates to the Leadership Committee.

NEXT MEETING: The next meeting is scheduled for April 1, 2025.

ADJOURNMENT: The meeting was officially adjourned at 7:00pm.

OLD ACTION ITEMS:

1. Pam to meet with Trenee to discuss how the Child Protection Accountability Commission structure could potentially be applied to the GACEC.
2. Pam to compile bullet points from Council members on the federal funding freeze and dismantling of the Department of Education issues. (Completed)
3. Pam to create a one-pager with call-to-action items for contacting government officials about the federal funding issues. (completed)
4. Pam to draft a letter addressing concerns about dismantling the U.S. Department of Education. (will be discussed with Lt Governor Gay at meeting)
5. Pam to contact the Attorney General's office about the federal funding and Department of Education issues. (completed)
6. Pam to reach out to Jon Sheehan in the Governor's office to start a conversation about the Council's concerns. (waiting to see who the Governor's Educational Associate will be)

7. Pam to create work plans for each committee with 1-3 priority goals. Erika to share examples of work plan templates and agenda formats with Pam. (completed)
8. Tika to ask the Governor's transition coordinator about the best way to send information to the Governor's office.

NEW ACTION ITEMS:

1. Pam to send the document reviewing Governor Myers' transition plan to Lieutenant Governor Gay.
2. Pam to work with the Leadership Committee on developing a second document detailing how the GACEC will address key talking points.
3. Leadership Committee to prepare for discussions on public education funding.
4. Pam to update the Leadership Committee agenda to include regular sections on policy manual, funding issues, and next steps for the Department of Education.
5. Pam to add the need for a centralized disability resources clearinghouse as a talking point in the letter to Lieutenant Governor Gay.
6. GACEC to collaborate with DSAAPD and DHSS on mapping disability resources and services.
7. Pam to look into potential funding options for GACEC retreats, including exploring MOUs with other state agencies.
8. Prison Education Ad Hoc Committee to focus on gathering data and information on unfilled prison education positions.
9. ICE Ad Hoc Committee to meet with Dale Matusevich to discuss updates on the data button, Infinite Campus rollout, and nursing availability for medically fragile students.
10. Leadership Committee to review Regulation 929 in preparation for upcoming discussions.
11. Pam to set up a meeting with DOE Secretary Martin to discuss GACEC's areas of focus and collaboration with the Department of Education.
12. Staff to send invitation letters to potential new members for the Restraint & Seclusion and School Resource Officer Ad Hoc Committee.