

Governor's Advisory Council for Exceptional Citizens (GACEC)



ANNUAL REPORT FISCAL YEAR 2026

Submitted by: Pam Weir, Executive Director and Bill Doolittle, Chairperson



Aubryana Loury of Dover Air Base Middle School submitted the above artwork for GACEC's Annual Disability History and Awareness Month Poster Contest.

Table of Contents

<i>Acronyms</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>What is the Governor’s Advisory Council for Exceptional Citizens?</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>Mission</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>Statutory Responsibilities.....</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>Executive Director’s Report.....</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>Message from the Outgoing Chairperson, William Doolittle</i>	<i>10</i>
<i>Council Goals 2025-2026.....</i>	<i>11</i>
<i>Committee Reports.....</i>	<i>12</i>
<i>Infant and Early Childhood (I&EC) Committee Report</i>	<i>12</i>
<i>Children and Youth (C&Y) Committee Report</i>	<i>14</i>
<i>Adult and Transitions Services (ATS) Committee Report</i>	<i>16</i>
<i>Policy and Law (P&L) Committee</i>	<i>17</i>
<i>GACEC Stakeholder Engagement, Advocacy, and Outreach</i>	<i>19</i>
<i>GACEC Staff.....</i>	<i>23</i>
<i>GACEC Membership List 2025-2026.....</i>	<i>24</i>
<i>Legislative Tracking FY 2026</i>	<i>25</i>
<i>Regulatory Tracking- FY 2026</i>	<i>30</i>

Acronyms

To assist readers, below is a list of commonly used acronyms in the disability and exceptionality communities in Delaware. For an extensive list of commonly used acronyms, please visit:

[ACRONYM LIST \(delaware.gov\)](https://delaware.gov/ACRONYM%20LIST)

ACLU - American Civil Liberties Union ADA - Americans with Disabilities Act AGEC - Access to General Education Curriculum AI - Artificial Intelligence APER - Adult and Prison Education Resources APR - Annual Performance Report ASQ - Ages and Stages Questionnaire BIC - Brain Injury Committee CAC - Community Advisory Council CASA - Court Appointed Special Advocates CDS - Center for Disabilities Studies CEC - Council for Exceptional Children CFR - Code of Federal Regulations CTE - Career and Technical Education DCADA - Delaware Coalition for the Americans with Disabilities Act DDC - Developmental Disabilities Council DDDS - Division of Developmental Disabilities Services DDOE - Delaware Department of Education DECC - Delaware Early Childhood Center DeIDHub - Delaware Disability Hub DNREC - Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control DFS - Division of Family Services DHSS - Department of Health & Social Services DMMA - Division of Medicaid and Medicare Assistance DMV - Department of Motor Vehicle DOC - Department of Corrections DOL - Department of Labor DRD - Disability Rights Delaware DSAAPD - Division of Service to Aging and Adults with Physical Disabilities DSCYF - Department of Service for Children, Youth, and their Families DVR - Division of Vocational Rehabilitation ECIC - Early Childhood Inclusion Committee EPIC - Endless Possibilities in the Community ESSA - Every Student Succeeds Act FY - Fiscal Year	FOIA - Freedom of Information Act GACEC - Governor's Advisory Council for Exceptional Citizens HLADE - Hearing Loss Association of Delaware ICC - Interagency Coordinating Council IDEA - Individuals with Disabilities Education Act IEP - Individualized Education Plan LEA - Local Education Agency LEND - Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental and Related Disabilities LIFE - Legislation, Independence, Family Support Services and Education LRE - Least Restrictive Environment MDE - Multi-Disciplinary Evaluation MTSS - Multi-tiered Systems of Support DPH - Delaware Public Health OECI - Office of Early Childhood Intervention OEL - Office of Early Learning OCCL - Office of Childcare Licensing OCR - Office for Civil Rights Services OSEP - Office of Special Education Programs OSERS - Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services Part B - section under IDEA which authorizes assistance for the education of all children with disabilities or free appropriate public education (FAPE) Part C - section under IDEA which authorizes Early Intervention Programs for Infants and Toddlers with Disabilities PBS - Positive Behavioral Supports PIC - Parent Information Center QIS - Quality Improvement System SAP - State Advisory Panel SCPD - State Council for Persons with Disabilities SEA - State Education Agency SESPAC - Special Education Strategic Planning Council SLP - Speech Language Pathology SSIP - State Systemic Improvement Plan SRO - School Resource Officer
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What is the Governor's Advisory Council for Exceptional Citizens?

Mission

The mission of the Governor's Advisory Council for Exceptional Citizens (GACEC) is to serve as the review board for policies, procedures and practices related to the delivery of services for all residents with exceptionalities or disabilities in Delaware from birth to death. The GACEC also serves as the state advisory panel for agencies providing educational services and programs to children (birth through age 26) in Delaware through the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

Statutory Responsibilities

The GACEC is authorized by dual mandates that include both State and Federal responsibilities. At the State level, the Council is mandated by the following:

[Delaware Code: Title 14, Chapter 31, § 3111](#)

The Governor shall appoint an advisory council to act in an advisory capacity to the Department of Education, the State Board of Education and other state agencies on the needs of exceptional citizens. The General Assembly shall provide for the maintenance of the council. The council shall also serve in the capacity of the advisory panel as required by Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

[Delaware Code: Title 14, Chapter 24, § 2408](#)

The Governor's Advisory Council for Exceptional Citizens (GACEC), in its advisory capacity as authorized by § 3111 of this title shall meet annually with Department of Education and Department of Correction designated representatives to discuss the operation of the joint agency prison education program. No more frequently than every other year, the GACEC may conduct a site visit, which may include interviews and access to public records pursuant to its advisory authority under § 3111 of this title. Prior to commencing the review, the GACEC, Department of Correction and Department of Education shall agree upon the scope and purpose of the review. Any site visit, interviews, and public record reviews shall be coordinated by a representative(s) of the joint agency prison education program and shall be conducted in a manner consistent with any common law privileges, applicable federal and state laws, and security procedures and considerations. The GACEC will include findings related to site visits and program review and assessment in its annual report.

At the federal level, the Council serves as the State Advisory Panel (SAP) in accordance with the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) § 300.1- 300.818 for the [Individuals with Disabilities Education Act \(IDEA\)](#) and its amendments.

The [State Advisory Panel](#) § 300.167-169:

§ 300.167 - State advisory panel.

The State must establish and maintain an advisory panel for the purpose of providing policy guidance with respect to special education and related services for children with disabilities in the State.

(Approved by the Office of Management and Budget under control number 1820-0030) (Authority: [20 U.S.C. 1412](#)(a)(21)(A))

§ 300.168 - Membership.

(a) *General.* The advisory panel must consist of members appointed by the Governor, or any other official authorized under State law to make such appointments, be representative of the State population and be composed of individuals involved in, or concerned with the education of children with disabilities, including:

- (1) Parents of children with disabilities (ages birth through 26).
- (2) Individuals with disabilities.
- (3) Teachers.
- (4) Representatives of institutions of higher education that prepare special education and related services personnel.
- (5) State and local education officials, including officials who carry out activities under subtitle B of title VII of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, ([42 U.S.C. 11431](#) *et seq.*);
- (6) Administrators of programs for children with disabilities.
- (7) Representatives of other State agencies involved in the financing or delivery of related services to children with disabilities.
- (8) Representatives of private schools and public charter schools.
- (9) Not less than one representative of a vocational, community, or business organization concerned with the provision of transition services to children with disabilities.
- (10) A representative from the State child welfare agency responsible for foster care; and
- (11) Representatives from the State juvenile and adult corrections agencies.

(b) *Special rule.* A majority of the members of the panel must be individuals with disabilities or parents of children with disabilities (ages birth through 26).

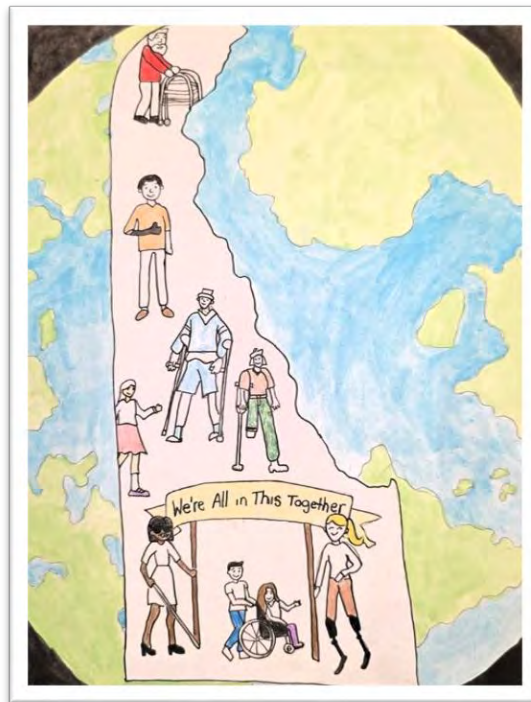
(Approved by the Office of Management and Budget under control number 1820-0030) (Authority: [20 U.S.C. 1412](#)(a)(21)(B) and (C))

§ 300.169 - Duties.

The advisory panel must –

- (a) Advise the SEA of unmet needs within the State in the education of children with disabilities;
- (b) Comment publicly on any rules or regulations proposed by the State regarding the education of children with disabilities.
- (c) Advise the SEA in developing evaluations and reporting on data to the Secretary under section 618 of the Act.
- (d) Advise the SEA in developing corrective action plans to address findings identified in Federal monitoring reports under Part B of the Act; and
- (e) Advise the SEA in developing and implementing policies relating to the coordination of services for children with disabilities.

(Approved by the Office of Management and Budget under control number 1820-0030) (Authority: [20 U.S.C. 1412](#)(a)(21)(D))



Executive Director's Report

On behalf of the Governor's Advisory Council for Exceptional Citizens (GACEC), I am pleased to present this Annual Report highlighting the Council's work, impact, and continued commitment to improving the lives of Delawareans with disabilities and exceptionalities. Throughout the reporting period, GACEC advanced its advisory, oversight, policy, advocacy, and public-engagement responsibilities while strengthening the internal systems needed to support informed, transparent, and effective Council action.

Facilities, Technology, and Accessibility

Massey Station, which houses the GACEC, received important maintenance and technology improvements during the reporting period. The Office of Management and Budget (OMB), Division of Facilities Management (DFM), Delaware Department of Technology and Information (DTI), and Advantech Security Systems provided essential guidance and assistance in maintaining an accessible, welcoming, secure, and functional environment from which GACEC could serve Delawareans with disabilities and exceptionalities.

Staff also partnered with Versalign to improve the accessibility and reliability of hybrid Council meetings. Improvements included establishing an ongoing maintenance agreement, replacing six failing microphones, and installing a dedicated desktop computer to reduce internet-related disruptions for in-person and virtual participants. Monthly coordination with DTI further supported accessible, reliable, and secure technology.

Council Operations and Governance

GACEC staff maintained the administrative and operational infrastructure necessary to support the Council's work. Staff convened regular Council, committee, leadership, strategic-planning, and office-hours meetings. Staff also coordinated closely with the Council Chair and the Delaware Department of Education's Director of Exceptional Children Resources; and prepared legal briefs, policy background materials, governance resources, and other information to support Council deliberations. Staff helped facilitate the leadership transition to Chair Bill Doolittle, whose term began July 1, 2025, and worked with him to develop an annual Council work plan and clarify the respective responsibilities of the Chair and Executive Director.

To strengthen governance and consistent decision-making, GACEC convened discussions with the Delaware Department of Justice, Delaware Public Integrity Commission, and Disability Rights Delaware concerning legal, ethical, governance, and operational matters. Staff also developed educational briefs, templates, and reference materials addressing Delaware Freedom of Information Act requirements, parliamentary procedures, meeting minutes, committee responsibilities, special education mandates, legislative issues, and advocacy priorities. These resources were intended to clarify expectations, address procedural gaps,

preserve institutional knowledge, and strengthen members' ability to participate effectively in Council work.

Staff maintained Council membership rosters, appointment records, committee assignments, vacancies and resignations. In coordination with the Governor's Office of Boards and Commissions, GACEC worked to support the Council's required membership composition and compliance with Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) State Advisory Panel requirements. Staff and members of the GACEC Membership Committee conducted informational sessions for prospective applicants, coordinated the review process, recommended six qualified applicants for appointments, and developed onboarding and orientation sessions to help newly appointed members participate successfully in Council activities.

Data, Accountability, and Special Education Oversight

To support its responsibilities as Delaware's IDEA State Advisory Panel and its broader statutory mandates, GACEC requested data, policies, and related information from state partners. These requests were intended to deepen the Council's understanding of existing practices, identify unmet needs and systemic barriers, and support evidence-informed policy recommendations.

GACEC requested comprehensive information from the Delaware Department of Education, Adult and Prison Education Resources and the Delaware Department of Correction concerning special education services in correctional settings. The requests addressed identification, evaluation, Individualized Education Program (IEP) development and implementation, related services, transition planning, procedural safeguards, records access, staffing, service delivery, interagency responsibilities, and program monitoring.

Following the Adult and Transition Services Committee's review of due process decisions, GACEC sought additional information regarding recurring concerns involving evaluation data, IEP quality, differences between documented and delivered services, progress monitoring, direct instruction, and transitions between placements and systems. The Council framed this work as a collaborative effort to strengthen accountability and help ensure that incarcerated students with disabilities receive a free appropriate public education, individualized services, procedural protections, and effective transition support.

The Council also requested classroom-level data to examine class composition, staffing patterns, and the participation of students receiving basic, intensive, and complex special education services in regular education classrooms. This information was sought to support GACEC's evaluation of inclusive educational opportunities and implementation of IDEA's least restrictive environment requirements.

In addition, GACEC requested information from the Delaware Comprehensive School Safety Program regarding the use and responsibilities of school resource officers and school constables in traditional, charter, and vocational-technical schools. The request was intended to

inform the Council's consideration of school safety practices and their effects on students with disabilities while identifying opportunities for interagency collaboration.

Redistricting and Systems Change

GACEC maintained significant involvement in Wilmington redistricting and district-reorganization planning to help ensure that the needs of students with disabilities remained central to the process. On December 2, 2025, the Council hosted a hybrid Wilmington Redistricting Special Education Impact Workshop attended by more than 50 students, family members, educators, advocates, school representatives, community members, and Redding Consortium members.

Participants identified concerns involving inconsistent special education programs; potential disruptions to Individualized Education Program services, trusted relationships, transportation, and school stability; staffing and funding shortages; and inequities involving charter, magnet, and vocational-technical schools. Recommendations included establishing a unified special education framework, providing centralized and accessible family communications, maintaining existing services during transitions, securing adequate resources before students are reassigned, ensuring equitable evaluation practices, establishing transparent timelines, and maintaining meaningful opportunities for stakeholder participation. GACEC shared the findings with the Redding Consortium before its December 16th vote and continued to advocate for an equitable, transparent, and student-centered transition.

Communications and Professional Development

Throughout the year, staff prepared and distributed materials supporting Council operations, policy development, public engagement, and informed decision-making. Deliverables included the published GACEC Annual Report; monthly meeting notices, agendas, minutes, reports, and Council packets; policy and legal briefs; legislative and regulatory updates; feedback letters; governance resources; and correspondence concerning prison education and students with complex medical conditions.

Staff improved the accessibility, organization, and usability of Full Council packets by reducing separate attachments, organizing related materials, and identifying issues referred for legal analysis or additional member review. Meeting materials were distributed to members and interested parties, posted in Microsoft Teams, and added to Delaware's Public Meeting Calendar in accordance with Delaware Freedom of Information Act requirements. Staff also maintained official records and policy repositories, responded to community inquiries, and connected individuals with relevant disability-related information, services, and resources. Professional development strengthened staff expertise in special education, Section 504, accessibility, leadership, emergency preparedness, technology, cybersecurity, human resources, and responsible artificial intelligence. Training included the Office of Special Education Programs National Conference, a Section 504 conference, State Advisory Panel and State

Interagency Coordinating Council goal-setting training, the statewide Continuity of Operations Plan exercise, and ongoing courses through the Delaware Learning Center.

Challenges and Opportunities

Delaware's continuing Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) "Needs Assistance" determination, along with reported academic and transition outcomes for students with disabilities, underscored the urgency of GACEC's work. These findings reinforced the need for:

- Timely evaluations;
- Individualized and consistently implemented Individualized Education Programs (IEPs);
- Qualified personnel;
- Meaningful family participation;
- Inclusive educational environments;
- Coordinated early-intervention and transition services;
- Reliable data and effective monitoring; and
- Prompt correction of noncompliance.

Improving special education is more than a matter of procedural compliance. It is both an educational and civil-rights responsibility with lifelong implications for children and families.

A continuing institutional challenge was the limited or delayed inclusion of GACEC in policy, regulatory, programmatic, and budgetary discussions that fell within its advisory responsibilities. More than 20 Governor-appointed, bipartisan Council members contributed over 3,000 hours of professional expertise and lived experience during the reporting period. Engaging this expertise earlier could help state partners identify disability-related implications, strengthen implementation, reduce the need for later corrective action, and create more inclusive systems from the outset.

GACEC maintained strong working relationships with individual program offices and partners; however, many statewide challenges require sustained executive-level and cross-agency coordination. Earlier consultation, clearer response protocols, transparent data sharing, and documented consideration of Council recommendations would strengthen accountability and maximize the value of GACEC's volunteer expertise.

Moving Forward

In the coming year, GACEC will strengthen its oversight of federal, state, and local developments affecting students with disabilities and their families. Priorities will include the following: monitoring federal special education leadership, funding, enforcement, and civil-rights protections; Delaware's IDEA determinations and student outcomes; district and charter school compliance; school district reorganization; education funding changes; and legislation involving restraint, seclusion, accessibility, and other disability-related concerns.

The Council will continue advocating for uninterrupted services, inclusive educational opportunities, qualified personnel, equitable funding, meaningful family and student participation, transparent public reporting, and accountability for measurable improvement. Additional areas of focus will include prison and adult education, transition services, students with complex medical conditions, discipline and disproportionality, dispute resolution, accessible transportation and technology, and protections for students in residential, correctional, and other specialized settings. Internally, GACEC will continue developing and implementing Standard Operating Procedures to clarify responsibilities, improve Council and committee workflows, promote consistent follow-through, and support efficient, transparent, and accountable Council work.

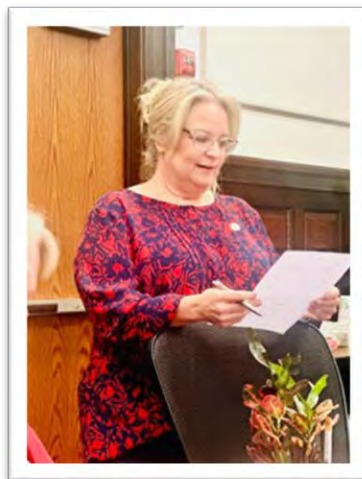
I extend my deepest gratitude to our Council members, whose dedication, expertise, and lived experience guide and strengthen this work. I am equally grateful to our exceptional staff, whose professionalism, commitment, and extraordinary work ethic enable the Council to fulfill its mission with integrity and meaningful impact.

I am especially proud to recognize Kathie for receiving the State Service Award at the LIFE Conference in honor of her more than 25 years of dedicated service to the GACEC. This well-deserved recognition reflects her remarkable commitment and the lasting difference she has made.

It is a privilege to serve alongside such an accomplished and devoted group of Council members, staff, and partners. Together, we remain steadfast in our commitment to building a more inclusive and equitable Delaware—one in which all individuals with disabilities are valued, heard, respected, and supported

Yours in Service,

Pam Weir



Message from the Outgoing Chairperson, William Doolittle

Fellow GACEC Members,

I am stepping down as Chair effective immediately. Although several factors contributed to this decision, a primary consideration is my belief that significant work remains to ensure that improving educational opportunities and outcomes for students with disabilities is consistently prioritized across Delaware's education system. While we have made meaningful structural progress with the Delaware Department of Education during the past year, continued attention, accountability, and, in some instances, external guidance may be necessary to achieve lasting systemic improvement. I believe stepping away from the Chair position will allow me to continue supporting these efforts as a Council member without creating potential conflicts.

I look forward to remaining active as a Council member and continuing to work alongside each of you. I have full confidence in Molly's ability to serve as Chair and look forward to supporting her leadership and the Council's ongoing efforts.

Bill



Council Goals 2025-2026

GOAL 1: To improve the academic, social-emotional, and health outcomes of all students with exceptionalities.

a: To improve the delivery of special education, related services and other whole child services supported by evidence-based practices.

b: To increase the degree to which these services are delivered in the least restrictive and most natural environments.

GOAL 2: To improve the quality of life of all persons with exceptionalities.

a: To establish, promote and enhance sound policies and adequate funding that permits access to inclusive childcare, health, independence, community living, housing, transportation, employment and recreation by persons with exceptionalities.

b: To establish, promote and enhance programs that provide access to inclusive childcare, health, independence, community living, housing, transportation, employment and recreation by persons with exceptionalities.

c: To improve legislation and corresponding regulations for persons with exceptionalities.

d: To effectively communicate and collaborate with legislators, professional organizations and other agencies, councils, stakeholders and relevant entities.

GOAL 3: To increase and enhance the voice of all persons with disabilities in relevant decision making of state governmental agencies.

a: To establish mechanisms ensuring that the voices of students with exceptionalities and their families are included and meaningfully considered in decision making of Local Education Agencies (LEAs) and the Delaware Department of Education.

b: To establish mechanisms ensuring that the voices of persons with exceptionalities are included and meaningfully considered in relevant decision making of other state governmental agencies.

GOAL 4: To mitigate the negative impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on all students, their parents, educators, and administrators.

a: To establish, promote, and enhance programs that assist in re-establishing the knowledge and competencies of students with exceptionalities that decreased as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

b: To establish, promote, and enhance services that support the social-emotional well-being of students, their parents, educators, and administrators that diminished as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Committee Reports

Infant and Early Childhood (I&EC) Committee Report

Chair: Jennifer Pulcinella

Vice Chair: Molly Merrill

Committee Members: Jennifer Pulcinella, Molly Merrill, Kristina Horton, Mindi Failing, Ann Fisher

Reporting Period: October 2025 – June 2026

Committee Purpose and Scope

The Infant and Early Childhood Committee advocates for children from birth to five years of age with exceptionalities. Its mission centers on enhancing access to inclusive, high-quality early intervention and educational services; fostering collaborative partnerships with state agencies; and providing policy recommendations to improve academic, social-emotional, and health outcomes. Responsibilities include monitoring legislative and programmatic developments, reviewing relevant data, and aligning efforts with the strategic priorities of the Delaware Early Childhood Council and the Governor's Advisory Council for Exceptional Citizens.

FY 2026 Committee Goals and Progress

Goal 1: Sustain Collaborative Partnerships with Birth to Three (B23) and the Interagency Coordinating Council (ICC)

Progress: The Committee maintained consistent engagement with B23 and ICC representatives throughout the year. Joint meeting planning advanced in accordance with Title 14 requirements (Senate Bill 136), with preference expressed for efficient formats that leverage existing cross-representation. Committee discussions prioritized wait-time analysis and family outcome data. B23 staff, including transition coordinators and program representatives, participated in multiple meetings, providing updates on service delivery and systemic challenges. Progress toward sustaining partnerships was identified as the strongest area of advancement during mid-year goal reviews.



Goal 2: Deepen Collaboration with the Office of Early Childhood Intervention (OECI)

Progress: Substantial collaboration occurred through formal presentations and ongoing dialogue with OEI leadership, including Dr. Amber Shelton and supporting staff. Topics addressed included IDEA implementation, developmental screening modernization (ASQ), Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health consultation, and the Early Childhood Inclusion Framework developed in partnership with the University of Delaware. The Committee received detailed briefings on the Bright Beginnings strategic plan, Office of Child Care Licensing operations, and Quality Improvement System initiatives. These interactions strengthened alignment between GACEC priorities and OEI programmatic efforts.

Goal 3: Advance Inclusive Practices in Educator Preparation and Address Suspension/Expulsion

Progress: The Committee monitored the University of Delaware/SPARQ LRE inclusion pilot designed to support young children with disabilities remaining in community child care settings. Discussions highlighted persistent data gaps regarding suspension and expulsion rates in early childhood settings, as well as ongoing efforts to address racial disparities and promote prevention strategies. Progress on the Early Childhood Inclusion Framework was reviewed, with emphasis on professional supports and social-emotional development. Finalization and dissemination of a Dear Colleague letter on PreK suspension/expulsion remained an outstanding action item at year-end.

Goal 4: Engage External Committees on Issues Impacting Children Birth to Five with Exceptionalities

Progress: Committee members engaged with multiple external partners, including the Office of Child Care Licensing, Office of Early Learning, Division of Public Health/Birth to Three, and other stakeholders. Legislative monitoring encompassed maternal and infant health bills (e.g., SB 301 regarding discharge planning, doula coverage, implicit bias training, and neonatal standards), with focused attention on equity, racial disparities, and rural access. Discussions also addressed the Redding Consortium, ECAP funding structures, and the importance of least restrictive environment continuity during transitions into preschool special education (619).

Goal 5: Monitor and Support the IDEA Part C Lead Agency Transfer

Progress: The transfer of Birth to Three services from the Department of Public Health to the Department of Education (target date July 1, 2028) remained a central focus. Internal planning discussions addressed sustainability, budget constraints, provider shortages (particularly in speech-language pathology), and the capacity to deliver individualized services amid rising referral volumes. The Committee emphasized the need to strengthen Delaware's early intervention systems to protect children and families during periods of federal and state transition. Regular updates from OEI and B23 staff informed ongoing oversight.

Additional Activities and End-of-Year Observations

In addition to formal goal-related work, the Committee received a comprehensive presentation on the ASQ developmental screening system, including proposed legislative and policy revisions intended to shift emphasis from mandatory universal screening toward informed family consent, developmental monitoring, and expanded outreach beyond licensed child care settings. Landscape analysis related to the Family Early Care and Education Resource and Referral Network (FERN) approached completion. At the June 2026 end-of-year meeting, members reviewed progress and began formulation of goals for the subsequent year.

Overall, the Committee demonstrated steady advancement on partnership sustainability and OECl collaboration, while identifying the need for accelerated action on joint ICC sessions, suspension/expulsion data collection, and formalized recommendations related to the Part C transfer.

Children and Youth (C&Y) Committee Report

Chair: Tika Hartsock

Vice Chair: Vacant

Committee Members: Al Cavalier, Bill Doolittle, Karen Eller, Maria Olivere, Trenee Parker

FY 2026 Committee Goals and Progress

Goal 1: Review at least 30% of DOE due process decisions from the 2024–2025 school year and provide written feedback with questions and/or recommendations to DOE.

Progress: The committee continued implementation of the due process review process established during the previous year. Members refined review procedures, discussed recommendations related to family communication, compensatory services, corrective action, and accountability, and prepared for systematic review of at least 30% of due process decisions. Additional discussion included strengthening parent supports, improving transparency, and requesting more timely reporting from the Department of Education.

Next Steps:

- Complete annual due process review cycle and submit written recommendations to DDOE.
- Continue monitoring implementation of corrective actions and family supports.
- Strengthen collaboration with the Policy & Law Committee.

Goal 2: To examine the impact of the special education teacher shortage on students with disabilities.

Progress: The committee identified special education teacher shortages as a statewide systems issue affecting services for students with disabilities. Members reviewed the issue, discussed the need for additional data regarding certified and uncertified teachers of record, and requested presentations and research to better understand recruitment, retention, and workforce challenges.

Next Steps:

- Receive DDOE updates on workforce data and recruitment efforts.
- Develop recommendations to improve recruitment and retention of special educators.

Goal 3: Develop and pilot a statewide monitoring system for Parent Councils by creating a standardized rubric and data tracker, collecting baseline data from at least 25% of districts and producing a brief summary of initial trends and gaps.



Progress: The committee reviewed district implementation of Parent Councils, discussed transparency across LEAs, explored the New Jersey Parent Center model, and began developing a standardized monitoring system to identify trends, gaps, and opportunities for strengthening family engagement across Delaware.

Next Steps:

- Pilot the Parent Council tracking tool.
- Expand statewide data collection and identify best practices for family engagement.

Goal 4: Collect, validate, and analyze baseline enrollment data to determine the proportion of students with disabilities in charter schools versus district schools, and produce a preliminary findings brief identifying initial disparities and priority areas for deeper investigation.

Progress: The committee initiated work to collect and validate statewide enrollment data to better understand representation of students with disabilities in charter schools compared with

district schools. Members also began reviewing research and requested additional information to support future policy recommendations.

Next Steps:

- Complete baseline analysis.
- Review research and DDOE reports before making policy recommendations.

Additional Committee Work

- Received presentations from DDOE on Indicator 4 (Suspension & Expulsion/Disproportionality).
- Received presentations from DDOE on Indicator 5 (Educational Environments/LRE).
- Discussed School Climate & Culture Survey participation.

Adult and Transitions Services (ATS) Committee Report

Chair: Vacant

Vice Chair: Erika Powell

Committee Members: Nancy Cordrey, Cassandra Pierce, Harley Doolittle, Mary Andrews, and Chris Budeshiem

FY 2026 Committee Goals and Progress

Goal 1: Strengthen oversight of Delaware's Joint Agency Prison Education Program to improve access, accountability and educational outcomes for students with disabilities.

Progress: The committee made prison education a primary area of focus during FY26. Members reviewed due process decisions, identified recurring implementation concerns and developed recommendations to improve oversight of special education services in correctional settings. Based on this work, the committee advanced recommendations for requesting statewide implementation data, seeking additional information from the Delaware Department of Education and Adult Prison Education Resources (APER), and continuing Council review of prison education as a standing priority. The committee also began discussing how prison education oversight should be incorporated into future committee goals.

Goal 2: Improve transition systems and resources that support students with disabilities as they move from school to adulthood.

Progress: The committee continued to examine statewide transition practices, with an emphasis on improving communication across agencies, increasing access to transition resources and identifying opportunities to strengthen transition



planning for students and families. Committee discussions included coordination among agencies, transition timelines, family supports and promoting greater consistency across Delaware's transition system. The committee also received presentations from community partners, including CLASI, to increase awareness of alternatives to guardianship and supported decision-making as important components of adult transition planning.

Policy and Law (P&L) Committee

Chair: Beth Mineo

Vice Chair: Jessica Heesh Mensack

Committee Members: Brenn  Shepperson, Stefanie Ramirez, Daniella Spitelli-Sarnecky

FY 2026 Committee Goals and Progress

Goal 1: Provide timely review and feedback on proposed laws and regulations to education and special education in Delaware and submit formal comments to the Legislature, Department of Education, State Board of Education, Professional Standards Board and other relevant entities.

Goal 2: Review and provide feedback on proposed laws, regulations and practices to promote full accessibility, inclusivity and responsiveness across childcare, healthcare and wellness, community living, employment and recreational opportunities in Delaware. Submit comments to the Legislature, state agencies, professional organizations and other public and private entities as appropriate.

Goal 3: Strengthen collaboration across individual committees, with a focus on partnering with the Policy & Law Committee on issues of shared interest and impact.

Progress on Goals 1, 2 & 3: The Policy & Law Committee is responsible for reviewing and analyzing proposed regulations, legislation, and other policy matters affecting individuals with disabilities and exceptionalities. During the reporting year, Committee members reviewed and discussed 23 regulations and 13 bills. A complete list of the legislation and regulations reviewed, along with Council responses and resulting outcomes, is provided in the appendices of this annual report.

In addition to formal legislative and regulatory review, the Committee and Council strengthened direct engagement with policymakers. The GACEC Chairperson and Executive Director communicated with bill sponsors through meetings and email correspondence to share Council concerns, ask questions, and provide disability-specific perspectives, sometimes in lieu of formal written correspondence. On several occasions, legislators invited GACEC to review and provide input on draft legislation before it was formally introduced. These interactions created opportunities for earlier dialogue and more timely consideration of the potential impact of proposed policies on individuals with disabilities and their families.



Committee members provided analysis and commentary on a range of significant and emerging policy matters, including Classroom Aide Permit legislation, Senate Bill 198 and Section 504 protections, Senate Bill 269, House Bill 313, private-placement issues, developmental screening requirements for licensed childcare programs, school choice applications and enrollment criteria, the proposed Standards Board for Education Professionals, and expansion of the Parents as Teachers Program.

Across its legislative and regulatory work, GACEC considered both the intended benefits of proposed policies and their potential implications for individuals with disabilities. Council feedback consistently emphasized disability protections, equitable access, clear accountability, coordination with Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requirements and systems, meaningful data collection, and adequate resources for effective implementation.

The Council also participated in the Senate Joint Resolution 11 Task Force and collaborated with Medicaid representatives, legal partners, advocacy organizations, state agencies, and other stakeholders to examine systemic barriers affecting individuals with disabilities. Together, these activities supported GACEC's continued efforts to bring disability-specific expertise and perspectives into policy development and strengthen communication and collaboration with policymakers and partner agencies.

The following section provides additional information on a few of the bills on which the GACEC provided commentary this fiscal year.

Legislative Highlights and Council Impact

Senate Bill 198 Delaware Equal Accommodations Law – This bill amended the Delaware Equal Accommodations Law to adopt the protections of the federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973's Section 504. It aims to ensure that Delawareans with disabilities are protected by State law in the event there are changes at the federal level to deregulate the protections currently in place for persons with disabilities. Senate Bill 198 was signed by the Governor on June 10, 2026.

House Substitute 1 to House Bill 48 Accessible Parking – This bill defined "accessible parking space" and makes it illegal for any vehicle "other than a vehicle being used by a person with a disability" to park in an accessible parking space. It also clarified that it is illegal to park in access aisles and increased the penalties for illegal parking. Council submitted a letter of support. This legislation was signed by the Governor on September 25, 2025.

Senate Bill 253 School Bullying – This bill revised the parent notification requirements for school bullying policies by repealing the requirement that notification be made using a form generated

by the Delaware Department of Justice (DOJ). Council worked closely with the State Council for Persons with Disabilities (SCPD), Disabilities Rights Delaware (DRD) and Delaware Department of Education to update language in the legislation that may have negative impact on students with disabilities.

Please see the legislative and regulatory tracking chart at the end for a complete list of examined regulations and bills, along with Council responses and resulting outcomes.

[GACEC Stakeholder Engagement, Advocacy, and Outreach](#)

Throughout the reporting period, the Governor's Advisory Council for Exceptional Citizens (GACEC) maintained an active presence across Delaware's disability, education, advocacy, and public-policy communities. Council members and staff participated in numerous statewide councils, committees, task forces, advisory groups, school boards, and community organizations. These partnerships supported GACEC's responsibility to identify emerging issues, strengthen interagency collaboration, share the perspectives of individuals with disabilities and their families, and provide informed advice and recommendations to state leaders and agencies.

Statewide Collaboration and Partnerships



GACEC participated in a broad range of collaborative bodies, including the Public Education Funding Commission; State Council for Persons with Disabilities (SCPD); Delaware Developmental Disabilities Council (DDC); Center for Disabilities Studies (CDS) Community Advisory Council; Delaware Transition Cadre; Child Protection Accountability Commission Education Subcommittee; Juvenile Justice Educational Transitions Task Force; Special Education Strategic Planning Council; Redding Consortium; Action for Delaware's Children; State Board of Education; and local school district boards.

Staff also participated in the Department of Education's Special Education Leadership Workgroup to remain informed about statewide special education trends and provide input on issues affecting students with disabilities. GACEC maintained involvement with the Interagency Coordinating Council (ICC) on early childhood matters, including issues associated with the transition of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Part C program from the Division of Public Health to the Delaware Department of Education (DDOE). The Council also participated in the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) Advisory Panel and the national U.S.

Office of Special Education Programs-supported State Advisory Panel/State Interagency Coordinating Council (SAP/SICC) workgroup supporting states' implementation of IDEA.

GACEC staff met with the Parent Information Center of Delaware to gather family perspectives and identify system-level concerns, and convened a meeting with the Executive Director of the Delaware School Safety Center. Regular coordination with SCPD, DDC, Disability Rights Delaware, and The Arc of Delaware strengthened policy research, coordination of advocacy priorities, and the disability community's collective ability to respond to statewide issues.

GACEC also maintained representation on the SCPD Policy and Law Committee and the SCPD Brain Injury Committee, which addresses policies, programs, services, legislation, and other issues affecting Delawareans with brain injuries and their families.

Policy, Legislative, and Advocacy Activities

Throughout the reporting period, GACEC maintained an active role in state and federal policy, legislative, regulatory, and advocacy efforts affecting individuals with disabilities and their families. The Council distributed more than 600 letters to the Governor, members of the Delaware General Assembly, the Delaware Department of Education (DDOE), and other agencies to provide advice, recommendations, and advocacy on disability-related issues.

GACEC reviewed proposed legislation and regulations and prepared policy briefs, formal correspondence, and feedback letters, including analysis of six draft legislative proposals submitted by DDOE.

GACEC also responded to significant federal developments with potential implications for Delaware. In October 2025, the Council wrote to Delaware Secretary of Education Cindy Marten regarding reported staffing reductions within the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP). GACEC identified potential risks to federal oversight, technical assistance, grant administration, fiscal accountability, data reporting, compliance monitoring, and protections for students with disabilities and their families. The Council encouraged DDOE to seek federal clarification, consider state-level contingency strategies, communicate transparently with stakeholders, and collaborate with GACEC and community partners to help preserve IDEA services, oversight, and protections.

The Council continued its engagement with DDOE on broader education policy and accountability. Secretary Marten presented the Department's statewide strategic plan to GACEC, providing Council members an opportunity to examine how statewide education priorities would address students with disabilities. Members asked how student outcomes would be measured and publicly reported and raised issues related to absenteeism, literacy, meaningful diploma attainment, services for students with significant disabilities and complex medical needs, access to one-to-one nursing, and the potential effects of artificial intelligence. The discussion provided an important opportunity to elevate disability-specific considerations within statewide education planning and accountability efforts.

At the federal level, GACEC prepared for and participated in the National Disability Policy Seminar and coordinated Delaware's Hill Day advocacy. On March 24, 2026, representatives of GACEC, partner organizations, and Delaware's disability community met with staff from the offices of U.S. Senators Chris Coons and Lisa Blunt Rochester. The delegation discussed priorities including accessible, affordable, and integrated housing; IDEA funding and oversight; special education workforce development; Medicaid-funded long-term services and supports; home- and community-based services; the personal attendant and direct support professional workforces; and preservation of Section 504 civil rights protections.



Throughout these advocacy efforts, GACEC emphasized the importance of including individuals with disabilities, families, advocates, and other stakeholders early in policy development. Their lived experience, data, and subject-matter expertise are essential to identifying potential impacts, strengthening policy decisions, and advancing equity, independence, community integration, educational opportunity, and meaningful outcomes for Delawareans with disabilities.

Community Outreach and Public Engagement

GACEC expanded its visibility throughout Delaware through conferences, resource fairs, transition events, educational programs, and other community activities. Public engagement included the annual LIFE Conference, Disability History and Awareness Month activities, Smart Cookie Day, the SCPD Annual Partnership Event, county transition fairs, Delaware Transition Cadre presentations, the Special Education Town Hall, and other statewide events.

GACEC continued its involvement with the LIFE Conference Planning Committee, collaborating with representatives from disability organizations and state agencies to support the annual statewide conference. The 2026 LIFE Conference welcomed hundreds of in-person attendees and provided information and resources related to legislation, independence, family supports, services, and education.

During Disability History and Awareness Month (DHAM), GACEC hosted its annual statewide Poster Contest around the theme, "We're All in This Together." The contest encouraged

students to explore inclusion and unity through their artwork. Participating students were recognized at a cookie reception, where each received a certificate from GACEC. The Council



appreciates the students, families, schools, judges, elected officials, and community partners who helped make the event successful.

GACEC also partnered with the YMCA for a DHAM Resource Fair designed to connect Delawareans with disability-related resources, highlight the contributions of people with disabilities, and promote inclusion. More than 20 vendors participated, and several members of the Delaware General Assembly attended to learn about available services and supports.

A WBOC Delmarva Life interview featuring GACEC's Executive Director and Office Manager further expanded public awareness of Disability History and Awareness Month and highlighted the importance of disability history, awareness, and inclusion.

Transition Outreach and DelDHub

Increasing awareness of the Delaware Disability Hub (DelDHub) remained an important component of GACEC's outreach efforts. The Council continued collaborating with the DDOE Transition Cadre and the DelDHub contractor to provide regular presentations to educators, transition professionals, and service providers, including representatives from the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, developmental disability services, and the Parent Information Center of Delaware.

GACEC participated in transition fairs in all three counties, reaching more than 350 parents, students, and educators. Staff also provided Council and DelDHub information to more than 600 middle school students at the Governor's Central Delaware Career Expo and more than 500 early childhood stakeholders and parents at the Make a Difference Conference at Delaware Technical Community College's Terry Campus.

Additional community outreach included participation in the City of Lewes Juneteenth Celebration at George H.P. Smith Park, which drew more than 600 attendees. GACEC's participation provided another opportunity to introduce community members to the Council and connect individuals and families with DelDHub and other disability-related resources.

Annual Planning and Organizational Development



GACEC held its 2025 Annual Fall Planning Retreat in two sessions on August 19 and September 16. The retreat provided an opportunity to complete essential Council business while beginning work toward a renewed strategic planning process. Discussions focused on strengthening internal procedures, clarifying decision-making responsibilities, improving organizational efficiency, and identifying approaches to better support the Council's mission.

Continuing Partnerships

GACEC members and staff remain actively engaged with numerous organizations, councils, committees, advisory groups, and community partners. These relationships provide important opportunities to exchange information, identify unmet needs and emerging concerns, coordinate resources, strengthen disability advocacy, and ensure that GACEC's work is informed by diverse professional expertise and lived experience.

The Council values these partnerships and recognizes that meaningful progress for Delawareans with disabilities requires sustained collaboration among individuals with disabilities and their families, advocates, educators, service providers, state agencies, policymakers, and community organizations.

Thank you to our 2025-2026 Presenters and Speakers

Dale Matusevich, Exceptional Children Resources (ECR), DDOE	Amber Shelton, Office of Early Childhood Intervention, DDOE
Dawn Alexander, Office of Early Learning, DDOE	Hope Sanson, DHSS
Joyce Leatherbury, ECR, DDOE	Susan Veenema, ECR, DDOE
Secretary Cindy Marten, DDOE	Representative Kim Williams
Lisa Lawson, Superintendent, Brandywine School District	Sarah Celestin, Senior Director of Student Services, Red Clay Consolidated School District

GACEC Staff

Pam Weir, Executive Director
Kathie Cherry, Office Manager
Lacie Spence, Administrative Coordinator
Theresa Moore, Operations Support Specialist



GACEC Membership List 2025-2026

Mary Andrews	Molly Merrill
Al Cavalier	Beth Mineo
Nancy Cordrey	Maria Olivero
Bill Doolittle	Trenee Parker
Harley Doolittle	Cassandra Pierce
Karen Eller	Erika Powell
Mindi Failing	Jennifer Pulcinella
Ann Fisher	Stefanie Ramirez
Cory Gilden	Brenné Shepperson
Tika Hartsock	Daniella Spitelli-Sarnecky
Jessica Heesh Mensack	Meedra Surratte
Kristina Horton	Renee Yarrington



Legislative Tracking FY 2026

Bill Number	Summary and Council Action	Status
Senate Bill No. 198 Delaware Equal Accommodations Law	Synopsis: This Bill is intended to amend the Delaware Equal Accommodations Law to adopt the protections of the federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973’s Section 504 and its implementing regulations as those regulations existed on January 1, 2025. It aims to ensure that Delawareans with disabilities get broad and full protection within Delaware. The bill also adds that references to Section 504 in other parts of Delaware law or regulation will be considered a reference to the Delaware Equal Accommodations Law. Council Action: Council supported this proposed legislation. We appreciate Senator Poore, Representative Neal and Representative Heffernan for proposing this legislation on behalf of Delawareans with disabilities. Passage of this bill will protect at the state level, the guidance memorialized in the regulations, in the event there are changes at the federal level to deregulate.	Signed by Governor 6/10/26
Senate Bill No. 2 & Senate Bill No. 3 Absentee Voting	Synopsis: These bills are “the first leg” of constitutional amendments to specifically authorize 1) early, in-person voting for the general election, a primary election, and a special election filling a vacancy in the General Assembly (SB 2) and 2) to eliminate the limitations on when an individual may vote absentee and provide an absolute right to vote by absentee ballot without an excuse (SB 3; often called “no excuse absentee voting”). Council Action: Letter written to support these proposed pieces of legislation.	SS 1 for SB 2 – early voting constitutional amendment. Passed and must go back through the General Assembly again next session S1 for SB 3 – No-excuse absentee voting constitutional amendment – Passed and now must go back through the General Assembly again next session

House Bill No. 29 DOE Reporting	Synopsis: This bill would change the requirements around Delaware’s school data reporting, currently known as School Performance Data Reports. These reports are available on the Department’s website as the Delaware Report Card. Council Action: Council supported the proposed legislation.	Signed by Governor 9/2/25
HS 1 to HB No. 48 Accessible Parking Space	Synopsis: This bill amends 21 Del Code §4183 to define an “accessible parking space”. It makes it illegal for any vehicle “other than a vehicle being used by a person with a disability” to park in an accessible parking space. It clarifies that it is illegal to park in access aisles and increases the maximum fines to \$250 and \$500. It states that minor variations in parking space features, including the lack of a sign, are not a defense to the charge of parking illegally in an accessible parking space. Council Action: A letter was sent in support of the proposed legislation.	Signed by Governor 9/25/25
Senate Bill No. 161 Oversight of Behavioral Health Providers	Synopsis: This Act authorizes the Division of Substance Abuse and Mental Health to issue licenses and adopt and enforce comprehensive regulations for behavioral health provider organizations and treatment programs. It requires provider organizations to obtain licenses to operate behavioral health treatment programs, with exemptions for certain practitioners and programs. It creates civil and criminal penalties for the provision of treatment services or the operation of programs without proper licensing or in violation of law or regulation. Council Action: A letter was sent in support of the proposed legislation	Signed by Governor 8/31/26

Senate Bill No. 2 & 3 Absentee Voting	Synopsis: These Acts provide the following: 1) SB 2 provides early, in-person voting for the general election, a primary election and a special election filling a vacancy in the General Assembly and 2) SB 3 to eliminate the limitations on when an individual may vote absentee and provide an absolute right to vote by absentee ballot without an excuse. Council Action: A letter was sent in support of the proposed legislation.	Substituted on 4/09/25 Passed by Senate. Reported out of House Administrative Committee 5/21/25 SS 1 for SB 2 – early voting constitutional amendment. Passed and must go back through the General Assembly again next session S1 for SB 3 – No-excuse absentee voting constitutional amendment – Passed and now must go back through the General Assembly again next session
House Bill No. 313 Department of Services for Children, Youth and Their Families and Educational Services	Synopsis: This Act codifies the Education Unit in the Department of Services for Children, Youth and Their Families (DSCYF). The Education Unit provides educational services to children and youth residing in facilities operated by DSCYF. Council Action: Letter sent with recommendations and questions.	Signed by Governor 7/23/26

House Bill No. 180 An Amendment to Article V of the Delaware Constitution Relating to Voting	Synopsis: The bill proposes to restore voting rights to individuals who have been convicted of a felony and have completed the related incarceration. Council Action: Letter sent by Council supporting the removal of the literacy test and suggesting that the bill be re-examined with input from various stakeholders to ensure that the rights of all persons involved are protected.	Passed 7/1/26 and must go back through the General Assembly again next session The 154th General Assembly must pass this for it to become part of the Constitution.
Senate Bill No. 253 School Bullying	Synopsis: The bill revises the parent notification requirements for school bullying policies by repealing the requirement that notification be made using a form generated by the Delaware Department of Justice (DOJ), which is DOJ's current practices and procedures related to involvement with student behavior issues. It also makes technical corrections. Council Action: Letter sent by Council supporting the proposed legislation and sharing suggestions.	Signed by Governor 7/23/26
House Bill No. 300 Creation of a Title IX Coordinator in the Delaware Department of Education	Synopsis: This bill establishes a statewide Title IX Coordinator position within the Department of Education to oversee athletics compliance in public schools serving grades 6 through 12. Council Action: Council supported this legislation proposed by Representative Melanie Ross Levin and Senator Laura Sturgeon as it promotes equity in student athletics, including equity for students with disabilities. May also be beneficial to all Delaware students to have Title IX expertise and accountability given the recent dismissals at the United States Department of Education.	Signed by Governor 9/08/26

House Bill No. 214 Interagency Autism Committee (ICA) Changes	Synopsis: This Act removes the Director of Autism Resources ("Autism Resources"), formerly the "Statewide Director of the Delaware Autism Program," as a member of the Interagency Autism Committee ("ICA"). Changing this member to a representative of the Department lends more flexibility in selecting a member to represent the Department. This Act also removes the Delaware Family Voices member, because Delaware Family Voices now falls under the Parent Information Center, who already has representation on the ICA. In addition, under this Act the ICA or DNEA may make recommendations on the family and self-advocate ICA positions for consideration by the Governor. This Act also updates the appointing authority for ICA members that represent non-governmental entities, because the power of appointment cannot be delegated to an entity which is not a part of the state government. Council Action: Letter sent to share our observations on proposed changes to the membership of the Interagency Autism Committee.	Signed by Governor 7/23/26
Senate Substitute 2 for Senate Bill No. 269 Hearing Aid Coverage	Synopsis: This bill will increase the minimum required coverage for hearing aids by requiring insurers to cover the entire cost of medically necessary hearing aids for individuals younger than 24 years of age, covered as a dependent by the policyholder. Council Action: Letter sent by Council supporting the proposed legislation	5/20/26 Senate Finance Awaiting consideration in Committee
House Bill No. 309 Delaware Autism Program	Synopsis: This bill makes several changes to implement the transfer of the Delaware Autism Program to the Delaware Department of Education (DDOE). Council Action: Letter sent requesting time to discuss this proposed legislation	Signed by Governor 7/23/26

Regulatory Tracking- FY 2026

Regulation	Summary and Council Action	Response/Update
29 DE Reg. 82 Division of Professional Regulation/Delaware Board of Pharmacy Emergency Regulations (August 1, 2025)	This Board of Pharmacy (BoP) emergency regulation is in response to the mass closure of Rite Aid pharmacies throughout Delaware. This emergency regulation has been introduced due to the potential disruption of access to medications, especially medications for individuals with disabilities and chronic conditions. Council Action: Letter written stating: Council supports this emergency regulation and thanks the Board of Pharmacy for proactively responding to this crisis. Council would also like to share one suggestion. We would suggest that the Board of Pharmacy coordinates with the Delaware Emergency Management Agency (DEMA) as they have related plans and protocols already in place that the pharmacy system may be able to use.	Effective date 7/1/25
29 DE Reg. 93/14 DE Admin. Code 1596 DDOE Charter School Leader regulation (August 1, 2025)	This regulation is the Delaware administrative regulation governing the Charter School Leader Standard Certificate. It establishes the requirements for individuals to be certified as instructional administrators or leaders within Delaware charter schools. Council Action: Letter written stating: Council would again like to encourage the DDOE to look to existing training for other certifications/licensures and determine how to enhance the training for charter school leaders. This will address charter school disparities for students with disabilities and ensure Delaware students with disabilities receive a free appropriate public education (FAPE). Council would also like to note concerns around the federal attempt to roll back protections provided through the Individuals with	Final Regulation published 11/01/25 Regulation was approved without changes.

	Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). This potential decrease in IDEA protections makes the state investment in ensuring we have proper safeguards in place even more important.	
29 DE Reg. 177/14 DE Admin. Code 616 DDOE Uniform Due Process Procedures for Alternative Placement Meetings and Expulsion Hearings regulation (September 1, 2025)	This regulation concerns procedures for implementing alternative placement or expulsion as discipline for violations of the student code of conduct. This is a republication with amendments following public comment. Council Action: Letter written with recommendations and requests.	Final Regulation published 4/01/26 DDOE did not acknowledge GACEC comments. Similar comments from SCPD were acknowledged but no changes were made to the regulations as a result of comments received.
29 DE Reg. 180 PSB and DDOE Proposed Initial License Regulation (1510 Initial License) (September 1, 2025)	Council reviewed the Professional Standards Board (PSB) and Delaware Department of Education (DDOE) proposal to revise the requirements of an initial license for an educator. Council Action: Letter written stating: Council supports this proposed revision. This proposed regulation provides a means for educators employed by an agency to deliver services in districts or charter schools, with an alternate means to establish initial and ongoing professional development. This may help charter schools and districts to address staffing shortfalls by contracting with outside agencies.	Final Regulation published 12/01/25 Acknowledged Council support of the proposed amendments.
29 DE Reg. 186 DHSS/DMMA Proposed Title XIX Medicaid State Plan Buy In Amendment Regulations (September 1, 2025)	The proposed regulation would specifically "...provide clarity that DMMA accretes clients to the Buy-In for Part A, as needed, and Part B for all Medicaid programs where a client is dually eligible for Medicare and Medicaid."	Final Regulation published 12/01/25 Acknowledged Council comments and noted that "The Delaware State Plan is being

	Council Action: Letter written with observations and questions.	updated per CMS request to clarify Delaware's current Buy-In process. Delaware is a direct Buy-In state for most dual eligible individuals, however for the QWDI program, Delaware utilizes the group payer method."
29 DE Reg. 189 DHSS/DMMA Proposed Title XXI Medicaid State Plan CHIP Juvenile Justice Initiative Regulations (September 1, 2025)	Proposal to amend Title XXI Medicaid State Plan regarding CHIP Juvenile Justice Initiative. This proposed regulation will amend the State Plan to bring it into compliance with requirements in the Federal Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2023 (CAA). This proposal is specific to the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) program. The CAA included several provisions impacting access to state funded health services for incarcerated juveniles with Medicaid and/or CHIP. Prior to the CAA changes, while incarceration was not a barrier to eligibility for Medicaid, it was a barrier to CHIP. While any child can apply for and be found eligible for Medicaid during incarceration, that was not the case with CHIP. However, a child who was eligible for CHIP prior to incarceration would not lose eligibility during their period of continuous eligibility, even while incarcerated. The CAA makes several significant changes to these rules. Council Action: Letter written: Council supports the proposed State Plan Amendment changes with respect to CHIP eligibility, moving from terminations to suspensions during detention, and changes around discharge transition screenings, diagnostic services or case	Final Regulation published 12/01/25 Acknowledged Council comments and stated that "...the state will take your comments into consideration as we move forward."

	management services. Helping to promote effective transition and medical services is a critical benefit to juveniles with disabilities.	
29 DE Reg. 191 DHSS/DMMA Proposed SSI Related Programs; 29 DE Reg. 191 DHSS/DMMA Proposed Medicaid Long Term Care; and 29 DE Reg. 194 DHSS/DMMA Children's Community Alternative Disability Program (CCADP) Regulations (September 1, 2025) 2500 Children's Community Alternative Disability Program (CCADP)	The proposed amendments in 29 DE Reg. 191, 191 and 194. Since all three of these regulations are proposed to waive resource test reviews at renewal for individuals getting Medicaid through Widow, DAC, LTC, and CCADP categories, Council will respond to them together in this letter. The stated purpose of the three regulations is to decrease workload and increase the number of cases that can be renewed without the service recipient having to participate directly. This may mean fewer terminations at renewal for failure to complete the renewal processes. This amendment would decrease the reporting and renewal burdens on people with disabilities and their families. Council Action: Council supported this proposed amendment since it would potentially eliminate significant stress for individuals with disabilities and their representatives who may find it difficult to complete and respond to renewal paperwork in a timely manner	Final Regulation published 01/01/26 GACEC was thanked for their support.
29 DE Reg. 208 Office of Child Advocate (OCA) Proposed Fostering Independence Through Education Tuition Waiver Program Regulation (September 1, 2025)	Council has reviewed the Office of Child Advocate (OCA) proposal to enact regulations regarding the administration of the Fostering Independence Through Education Tuition Waiver Program. This program pays for higher education for certain individuals who were in the custody of the Department of Children Youth and Families and meet certain criteria. Council Actions: Letter written. Overall, this appears to be a beneficial program; however, Council notes that there are provisions that may be problematic for applicants/recipients with disabilities. Because Delaware provides special education services	Final Regulation published 11/01/25 OCA acknowledged GACEC concerns and responded that "...the applicable timeframes and eligibility requirements are in statute and cannot be altered through

	until as late as the end of the school year in which an individual turns 22, conceivably a student could graduate at 22. That same student may need five years to complete a college degree but would run out of time to complete his/her degree due to aging out at 26. Another potential issue is that a student with a disability may need more than five years to complete the student's degree. Council would therefore like to recommend that OCA add exceptions or flexibility to make exceptions for such circumstances. Council would also like to inquire how this regulation will apply to Delaware Technical and Community College (DTCC) trade programs given the proposed regulation's language only around bachelor's degrees. Council would encourage OCA to explore future legislative changes to provide similar assistance for other types of education, including trade schools.	regulations. OCA may consider proposing a statutory amendment in the future to provide an exception for students who receive special education services. Additionally, these students may be eligible for other assistance, such as Ivyane Davis scholarship funds, to help with higher education expenses after eligibility for the Program expires."
29 DE Reg. 267 DHSS/DMMA Proposed Delaware Healthy Children Program Amendment Regulations (October 1, 2025) 18000 Delaware Healthy Children Program	The proposal to amend the State Plan to bring it into compliance with requirements in the Federal Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2023 (CAA) in regard to the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP). Council Action: Letter written: Council supported the proposed changes since the amendment will bring Delaware into compliance with CAA and will promote more effective transition and medical services benefits for juveniles with disabilities. However, we would like to share one observation and request additional review.	Final Regulation published 01/01/ 26. DHSS thanked Council for its support.
29 DE Reg. 277 DHSS/DSS Proposed Income Exclusions for	Proposed regulation to add an exception to income exclusions for the food benefit program.	Final Regulation published 12/01/25.

Food Benefits Amendment Regulations (October 1, 2025)	Council Action: Letter written in support of the proposed amendment, sharing observations and recommendations	DHSS thanked GACEC for support and edits.
29 DE Reg. 326 DHSS/DMMA Proposed DDS Home and Community Based (Lifespan) Waiver Amendment Regulations (October 1, 2025)	Proposed Amendments to the DDS Home and Community Based (Lifespan) Waiver regulations. Council Action: Council shared queries and observations.	Final Regulation published 06/01/26.
29 DE Reg. 352/14 DE Admin. Code 258 DDOE Federal Program General Complaint Procedures regulation (November 1, 2025)	Proposal to amend 14 Del. Admin. C. §258 concerning the complaint procedures for alleged violations of federal laws. Council Action: Council sent letter supporting the proposed amendments as these changes will require the DDOE to fully document responses to complaints, including the relevant laws, facts and reasoning for decisions. This additional information will provide clearer understanding of decisions. This change will also improve the ability of parents to know if they wish to pursue an appeal to the United States Secretary of Education. Council also shared a concern.	Final Regulation published 03/01/26. DDOE acknowledged GACEC comments but only made one non-substantive change to the regulation
29 DE Reg. 357/14 DE Admin. Code 616 DDOE Proposed Uniform Due Process Procedures for Alternative Placement Meetings and Expulsion Hearings regulation (November 1, 2025)	This is a second republication of the proposal to amend 14 Del. Admin. C. § 616 which concerns procedures for implementing alternative placement or expulsion as discipline for violations of the student code of conduct. Council appreciates those areas that were changed based on comments received from the GACEC and others. Council Action: Council appreciated those areas that were changed based on comments received from the GACEC and others. Shared Council's recommendations and requests in reference to this latest version of the regulations.	Final Regulation published 04/01/26 DDOE only acknowledged comments submitted by SCPD and made no changes based on comments received. GACEC comments were

		very similar to SCPD comments.
29 DE Reg. 380 Department of Safety and Homeland Security (DSHS) Board of Examiners of Constables Reg. (November 1, 2025)	DSHS proposes to change the minimum training standards and in-service training provisions of the regulations in section 9.0. Council Action: Letter sent stating that Council recommends DSHS add requirements around general disability training, including ADA and 504 compliance training to prevent police discrimination and unnecessary force against people with disabilities. Council also noted that the Mid Atlantic ADA Center is a resource available to states and local governments and offered to provide contact information on this group.	Final Regulation published 02/01/26. DSHS Board acknowledged comments received but did not list the submitters. Stated that the requested changes were not necessary, but that DSHS would consider implementing additional clarifying language as requested the next time it revised the regulation.
29 DE Reg. 662/14 DE Admin. Code 610 DDOE Use of Seclusion and Restraint regulation (February 1, 2026)	The purpose of this regulation is to establish standards and procedures for the use of physical restraint, chemical restraint, mechanical restraint, and seclusion. The Department has made several changes to align the regulation with most recent changes to Delaware Code. Council Action: Letter sent stating Council supports the changes made to the regulations and requests that the DDOE consider the comments and recommendations Council is making. Council restated opposition to the use of seclusion and restraint on children with disabilities. Other available options should always be considered.	Final Regulation published 08/01/26. DDOE did not acknowledge comments from GACEC, only SCPD. GACEC comments were similar to SCPD. No changes were made based on comments submitted.

29 DE Reg. 664/14 DE Admin. Code 616 DDOE Proposed Uniform Due Process Procedures for Alternative Placement Meetings and Expulsion Hearings regulation (February 1, 2026)	The regulation establishes mandatory, uniform due process protections and procedural timelines across all Delaware public and charter schools when a student faces short-term suspension, long-term suspension, alternative school placement, or expulsion. Council Action: Letter written The Governor’s Advisory Council for Exceptional Citizens (GACEC) reviewed earlier versions of the Delaware Department of Education (DDOE) proposal to amend 14 DE Admin. Code § 616, Uniform Due Process Procedures for Alternative Placement Meetings and Expulsion Hearings in July, September and November of 2025. Council thanked the DDOE for addressing many of our recommendations and asked that additional consideration be given to continuing issues of concern listed in the letter.	Final Regulation published 04/01/26. DDOE only acknowledged comments submitted by SCPD and made no changes based on comments received. GACEC comments were very similar to SCPD comments.
29 DE Reg. 742/14 DE Admin. Code 503 DDOE Proposed Instructional Program Requirements regulation (March 1, 2026)	Regulation establishes mandatory curriculum standards and instructional requirements for public schools. Council Action: Council supported the proposed amendments and shared observations.	Final Regulation published 09/01/26 DDOE acknowledged GACEC comments. No substantive changes were made to address concerns.
29 DE Reg. 743/14 DE Admin. Code 505 DDOE Proposed High School Graduation Requirements and Diplomas regulation (March 1, 2026)	Regulation to address changes needed to include financial literacy as a graduation requirement as mandated by House Bill 203. Council Action: Council supported the proposed amendment and shared observations on the impact of financial literacy on students with disabilities.	DDOE re-published regulation due to numerous comments as a new proposed regulation on June 1, 2026.

29 DE Reg. 750/14 DE Admin. Code 1527 DDOE Proposed Student Support Personnel regulation (March 1, 2026)	Regulation establishes the Student Support Personnel Permit to address school staffing needs. Creates a specialized permit pathway to help combat staff shortages and support workforce development for student support roles in schools. Council Action: Letter sent stating that Council supports the new regulation, as it will help with addressing school staffing shortfalls and will be an additional opportunity for workforce development on the job. Requested information on the type of data collection or program assessment the Department plans to use to measure the success of student support personnel professionals in supporting student success.	Final Regulation published 06/01/26. DDOE acknowledged GACEC support. Requested information has not yet been received
29 DE Reg. 837 DHSS Division of Health Care Quality Proposed 3103 Temporary Staffing Agencies regulation (April 1, 2026)	Establishes initial standards for Temporary Staffing Agencies operating within Delaware's healthcare sector. Introduces formal oversight rules to monitor and structure the companies providing interim personnel to medical and care facilities Council Action: Letter sent endorsing the proposed regulation.	Still in Proposed status as of September 1, 2026
29 DE Reg. 919 DHSS/DMMA Fair Hearing Practice and Procedures Regulations (May 1, 2026)	Amends regulations relating to the timeframe to request Medicaid Fair Hearings to appeal decisions about an individual's Medicaid benefits. Council Action: Letter sent supporting the proposed regulation and sharing recommendations.	Final Regulation published 07/01/26. DHSS acknowledged GACEC comments and agreed to make one change and stated second recommendation was already in progress.

29 DE Reg. 960/14 DE Admin. Code 505 DDOE Proposed High School Graduation Requirements and Diplomas regulation (June 1, 2026)	DDOE previously published regulations as proposed on March 1, 2026. Based on public comments received, additional substantive amendments were identified as needing inclusion in the regulations to include financial literacy in high school graduation requirements and diploma regulations. Council Action: Letter sent sharing Council observations and recommendations.	Final Regulation published 09/01/26. DDOE acknowledged GACEC observations on the re-proposed regulation. No changes were made.
29 DE Reg. 978, 980 and 984 DHSS/DMMA Medicaid Retroactive Eligibility Regulations (June 1, 2026)	Amends the Administrative Code regarding retroactive eligibility for certain Medicaid groups. Council Action: GACEC objected to the implementation of this very significant policy change, without the addition of language that requires contractors of DMMA to provide provisional plans for services while individualized plans are developed. This will help protect beneficiaries from medical debt, will accelerate the provision of needed services, and also protect service providers from risk of uncompensated care._	Final Regulation published 09/01/26. DHSS did not acknowledge GACEC comments. Other similar comments received a response but no changes were made to address observations