

Leadership Institute: State-Level Policy and Advocacy

July 8, 2023

Agenda

- **Overview: Role of CAN Coordinator**
- **CEC's Policy and Advocacy Resources**
- **Strategies for Unit/Division Work**
- **Q&A/Discussion**

CEC Policy and Advocacy Structure

3

- ❑ CEC actively engages in federal policy
 - Congress
 - Department of Education/other agencies
- ❑ Units engage in federal/state/local
 - Amplify CEC's federal work
 - Engage in state/local work
- ❑ Divisions engage in topical advocacy
 - i.e. CASE for administrator priorities, DEC for early childhood...
- ❑ Units and Divisions have CAN Coordinator to lead policy/advocacy work

Job Description

Position: CAN Coordinator

Estimated Time Commitment: 1-2 hours per month

Summary Children and Youth Action Network (CAN) Coordinators are CEC members selected by their respective units or divisions. CAN Coordinators must be committed to advancing CEC's policies through effective grassroots advocacy.

Responsibilities

- Development of an effective network of advocates at the state and local level
- Regular communication with the network to keep members informed about policy and advocacy, including circulation of CEC's weekly policy newsletter Policy Insider
- Activation of the network for CEC calls to action via our online letter-writing campaign tool, the [Legislative Action Center](#)
- Attendance and participation in CEC policy and advocacy webinars and events
- Attendance at CAN trainings offered virtually and at the annual convention, if in attendance
- Active participation in the CEC CAN Community

Qualifications

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- Must be a member of CEC
- Knowledge of or the strong desire to learn about policy and advocacy
- A commitment to the policy priorities of CEC, as articulated through CEC's [position statements](#)
- A willingness to devote the necessary time to carry out all responsibilities related to this position

Advocacy in Washington, DC

- CEC encourages CAN Coordinators to attend/lead state teams at the Special Education Legislative Summit, an annual advocacy event for special educators which includes a two-day training, culminating with meetings with lawmakers on Capitol Hill.

CEC Resources for Strengthening Policy/Advocacy

7

- Legislative Action Center
- Policy Insider
- Policy/advocacy webinars
- Special Education Legislative Summit
- Policy/advocacy landing page on website
- CAN Community
- Me! ktavalin@exceptionalchildren.org

Getting Back to Basics: MI CEC

8

ABSTRACT

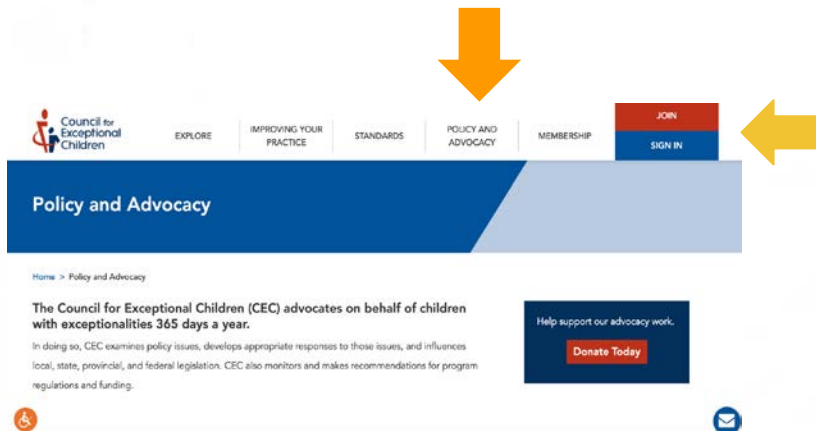
For those with special education current issue experience from classroom to home, we'll present hot topics in our state and nation along with information about our Legal Advocacy and Action Committee's work. We'll review advocacy skills and encourage you to speak up for all students by telling your stories.

LEARNER OBJECTIVES

- Gain updated information about current legislative action at our state and national level.
- Gain knowledge and share information with legislative committee members and guest speakers.
- Explore personal advocacy actions, skills, and stories.

[Our Policy Agenda LINK HERE](#) Also included members

10



Home > Policy and Advocacy

The Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) advocates on behalf of children with exceptionalities 365 days a year.

In doing so, CEC examines policy issues, develops appropriate responses to those issues, and influences local, state, provincial, and federal legislation. CEC also monitors and makes recommendations for program regulations and funding.

Help support our advocacy work.

[Donate Today](#)

Child and Youth Action Network



CEC's Children and Youth Action Network (CAN) is an organized group of volunteers dedicated to helping advance policy affecting students with disabilities and gifts and talents.

Position Statements



Our position statements help guide the work of CEC's policy efforts as we continue to serve as a leading voice for the field of special education.

Coalitions



CEC highly values the power of coalitions to bring a collective voice to pressing policy priorities. That's why we are an active member of the following coalitions.

Policy Insider



Learn about the special and gifted education issues Congress and the administration are considering by reading CEC's Policy Insider. Sign up today to receive weekly e-mail updates!

Take Action



Use CEC's Legislative Action Center to take action on a number of legislative issues by filling out your information and sending a letter to your Members of Congress.

Advocacy Basics



Find out how you can advocate for infants, toddlers, children, and youth with exceptionalities and the professionals who support them 365 days a year.

Special Education Legislative Summit



Held each July in Washington, D.C., our Special Education Legislative Summit (SELS) is an opportunity for educators across the country to make a difference by advocating for change with Members of Congress.

From the WHO to the WHAT...

Audiences/Partners for our Advocacy Work

11

Federal Level

- Members of Congress
- OSERS/OSEP Staff
- Other Agencies or Professional Organizations

State Level

- Governor's Office
- State Legislators
- State Board of Education
- State Department of Education (MDE/OSE)
- Other Agencies or Professional Organizations

Local Level

- ISD Board/Administration
- Local Board of Education
- Administrative Groups or Individuals
- Teacher/Parapro Unions
- City Administration
- Community/Civic Organizations
- Colleagues

Supporting SWD in a Charged Political Environment: CEC FL

12

Comparison of Public Schools vs. Private Schools

13

Students with disabilities (SWDs) and their parents/guardians are not legally guaranteed the same protection, rights, and services in private schools as they are in public schools.

Public School

- The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act or IDEA guarantees a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) to all SWD
- IDEA guarantees parents, guardians, and students Procedural Safeguards
- Public schools are subject to school legal definitions and requirements specified in education laws and statutes and they are under the jurisdiction of the Department of Education

Private School

- No guarantee of FAPE
- Enrollment in a private school means the parent is opting out of procedural safeguards or legal protections for SWDs
- The Florida Department of Education does not accredit, regulate, approve, or license K-12 private schools
- Free and/or reduced breakfast and lunch program is not mandated

Comparison of Public Schools vs. Private Schools

14

Students with disabilities (SWDs) and their parents/guardians are not legally guaranteed the same protection, rights, and services in private schools as they are in public schools.

Public School

- Transportation is provided for students at their zoned school if they meet qualifications
- Students with disabilities enrolled in public school are guaranteed specialized transportation services at their zoned school per IDEA.
- Free specialized services and supports as defined in a student's Individual education plan (IEP) will be provided to SWDs

Private School

- The Family Empowerment Scholarship may not cover the full cost of educational expenses or private school tuition
- Specialized transportation is not mandated by law for students with disabilities
- Private schools may elect to not provide SWDs the accommodations or services outlined in their IEP

Questions Parents of Students With Disabilities Should Ask Potential Schools

15

1. Do all teachers have a four year college or university degree? Do teachers hold a current Professional Teacher Certification in Exceptional Student Education (ESE) K-12?
2. Are teachers provided with continuing education opportunities? Do teachers receive training related to working with students with disabilities?
3. Is the school accredited by an accreditation agency that is recognized by the Florida Department of Education?
4. What is the average student to teacher ratio? Student to aide or paraprofessional ratio?
5. Is the school flexible in providing alternative accommodations, educational modifications, or related services when needed?
6. What are the priorities of the special needs classes (academic, behavior, communication, social) ?
7. How does the school and administration support the participation of SWD in extracurricular activities, field trips, content area courses, electives, and school events?
8. How do teachers promote the independence of students with disabilities?

Strategies for Building Unit/Division Work

16

- Present at your annual conference to inform and engage your peers
- Work with peers to strategize approaches that respond to the unique circumstances of your State
- Work with your board: present policy updates; engage your board in policy; strategize on how to mobilize
- Plan engagement events: calling legislators, writing letters, etc.
- Plan a state-level advocacy event
- What else have you done!?