



The Governor's Advisory Council for Exceptional Citizens (GACEC)

FY2027 Budget Presentation

February 12, 2026

1



The Governor's Advisory Council for Exceptional Citizens (GACEC)

<https://gacec.delaware.gov/>

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 Council is to provide leadership through advice and advocacy for the unmet needs of citizens of all ages who are exceptional- persons of all ages who have special needs- in order to improve their lives.

2

GACEC Statutory Responsibilities - State

The GACEC is ruled by dual mandates that include both State and Federal responsibilities.

At a State level, Council mandates include:

[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).

And

[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.

3

GACEC Statutory Responsibilities - Federal

At a 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.
- ❑ § 300.168 - Membership- 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. A majority of the members of the panel must be individuals with disabilities or parents of children with disabilities (ages birth through 26).
- ❑ § 300.169 - Duties- defines the five distinct responsibilities for advisement to the State Education Agency (SEA).



4

State Advisory Panel (SAP) *Duties*

§ 300.169 - Duties- defines the five distinct responsibilities for advisement to the State Education Agency (SEA).

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))

5

Advisement and Advocacy

- Council Structure & Engagement: Utilizes issue-specific and ad hoc workgroups to gather feedback, identify emerging trends, and engage directly with individuals and families; participates in statewide and national policy forums to inform recommendations.
- Policy Review & Impact: Reviewed eight bills and 23 regulations; supported legislation such as House Bill 79 to strengthen oversight of mechanical restraint and seclusion; emphasized student safety and transparency.
- Cross-Council Collaboration: Strengthened partnerships across Delaware's disability community to reduce silos and elevate lived experiences, particularly for individuals relying on Medicaid.
- Federal Advocacy & Public Awareness: Met with Delaware's congressional delegation during the Disability Policy Seminar; created and distributed accessible one-page briefs to inform the public and support engagement with policymakers.
- Unified Statewide Response: Helped form a joint council coalition to ensure coordinated messaging, accurate information-sharing, and strong advocacy for Delawareans with disabilities.

6

The DelAWARE DisABILITY Hub (DeIDHub) www.deldhub.com

Transition is a lifelong process progressing from one important stage of development to another. The move from adolescence to adulthood can be very challenging, especially for individuals with disabilities, and it is often fraught with a wide range of personal questions and concerns. The goal of the DeIDHub website is to provide a depository of many types of information to assist them with their questions as they transition from high school to post-secondary education, employment, and community living.

To make the most of your visit to DeIDHub, we have prepared [a few brief instructional videos](#) to explain how to use our website.

If your journey in the disability community has just begun, you may find [New to Disability](#) helpful.



7

DeIDHub User Data and Continuous Improvement

- **Growing Statewide Use:** DeIDHub received 22,339 visits and 16,542 unique users this year, reflecting its importance as a central statewide resource for students, families, educators, and providers.
- **Continuous Quality Maintenance:** Over 130 outdated links—including 13 federal resources—were removed to ensure accuracy and reliability.
- **New Advisory Committee:** GACEC established a DeIDHub Advisory Committee to align the site with DDOE's Transition Cadre and address communication inconsistencies across districts.
- **Barriers Identified:** Annual review highlighted district-to-district variation in services, limited public awareness of DeIDHub, and inconsistent user experience.
- **Improvement Plan:** Upcoming work includes expanded marketing, user focus groups, and clearer statewide messaging to strengthen transition supports for students with disabilities, with support from the Adult & Transition Services Committee.

8



GACEC Vacant Positions:

NONE



GACEC Federal Funding Impacts:

NONE

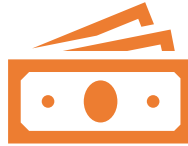
9

Performance Measurements

- Policy Advisory Output: Issued 602+ letters to state agencies and legislators, providing analysis on proposed regulatory and legislative changes affecting individuals with disabilities.
- Statewide Representation: GACEC members and staff actively serve on 55+ boards, committees, and task forces to ensure disability perspectives are represented in statewide decision-making.
- Public Outreach & Awareness: Engages the community through public meetings, events, partner collaborations, social media, and accessible one-page briefs to elevate disability issues and inform families and providers.
- Expanded Accessibility: Uses hybrid, virtual, and in-person formats to reach stakeholders; connected with 2,700+ individuals through conferences, workshops, and events this year.
- Community Partnerships: Partnered with the YMCA of Delaware for the third consecutive year to promote Disability History & Awareness Month and host resource fairs, while continuing to address persistent barriers to engagement and access.

10

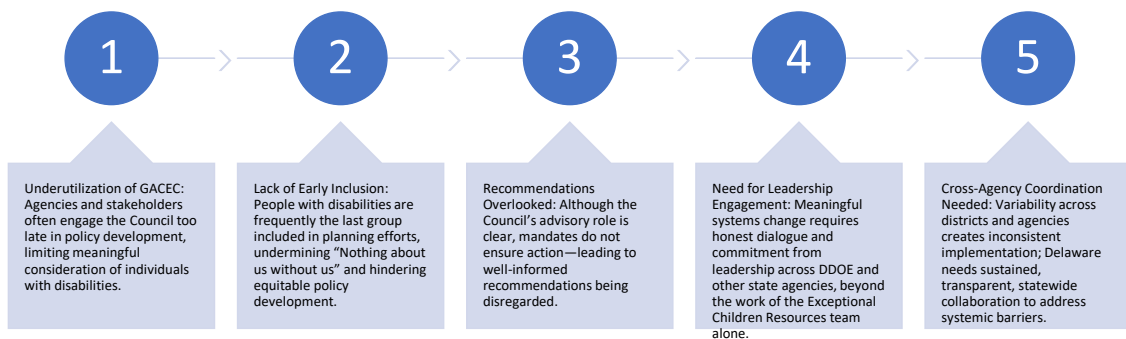
Budget Request



No New Requests: Aside from the contingency funds directed by OMB, the Council has no additional budget requests this fiscal year.

11

GACEC Barriers



12

Questions?

13

For more information on the GACEC
and the DelDHub, please contact GACEC staff:

- Pam Weir, Executive Director pam.d.weir@delaware.gov
- Kathie Cherry, Office Manager kathie.cherry@delaware.gov
- Lacie Spence, Administrative Coordinator lacie.spence@delaware.gov
- Theresa Moore, Operations Support Specialist theresa.moore@delaware.gov

14