



WELCOME TO THE
Porter County Education Services (PCES)
Special Education Parent Advisory Council
(SEPAC)

Town Hall Meeting
January 2024

WHAT IS A SEPAC?

A Special Education Parent Advisory Council (SEPAC) is a district-level (and/or in collaboration with an interlocal that contracts with local districts), parent-driven group that provides input to the local special education provider on system-level challenges regarding special education and related services. A local SEPAC provides direct input to school personnel and leaders about policies, programs, practices, and services that have an impact on students with disabilities and their families.

Its purpose is to advise, advocate and offer guidance, not to decide policy.

An effective SEPAC can increase the proactive involvement of families by inviting their input in ways that can be used to share local special education policy.

WE ARE
PARENTS HELPING PARENTS

WHEN WERE WE ESTABLISHED?

- ◆ Our team was created fall of last academic year, under the name *Parent Network*
- ◆ That term has now dissolved as of August 2023
- ◆ We are now known as the *PCES Special Education Parent Advisory Council*

WHO IS YOUR SEPAC TEAM?

- ❖ **Duneland** ~ Jackie Hood
- ❖ **East Porter/Kouts** ~ Jessica Kruger
- ❖ **East Porter/Morgan** ~ Kim Hansen
- ❖ **East Porter/Washington** ~ Vanessa Moore
- ❖ **Portage** ~ Denise Hodges & Niki Ewing
 - ❖ **Porter** ~ Tracy Ruiz
 - ❖ **Union** ~ Amanda Taylor
- ❖ **Valparaiso** ~ Jessica Witherspoon

Special Education Administration

- ❖ **Executive Director** ~ Sandy Bodnar, sbodnar@pces.k12.in.us
- ❖ **East Porter** ~ Cheryl Hoard, choard@pces.k12.in.us
- ❖ **MSD Boone** ~ Cheryl Hoard, choard@pces.k12.in.us
- ❖ **Porter** ~ Cheryl Hoard, choard@pces.k12.in.us
- ❖ **SELF** ~ Jen Rogers, jrogers@pces.k12.in.us
- ❖ **Union** ~ Cheryl Hoard, choard@pces.k12.in.us
- ❖ **Duneland** ~ Morgan Derby, mderby@pces.k12.in.us
Jennifer Bognar, jbognar@duneland.k12.in.us
- ❖ **Portage** ~ Tracy Bauer, tbauer@pces.k12.in.us
Lisa Flynn, lisa.flynn@portage.k12.in.us
- ❖ **Valparaiso** ~ Morgan Derby, mderby@pces.k12.in.us
Chrissy Giraud, cgiraud@valpo.k12.in.us

Special Education Administration

- ❖ **Carrer & Tech Center** ~ Audra Peterson, apeterson@pces.k12.in.us
- ❖ **M-Team Coordinator** ~ Nikki Fitzgerald, nfitzgerald@pces.k12.in.us
- ❖ **M-Team & Speech Supervisor** ~ Shannon Aardema, saardema@pces.k12.in.us
- ❖ **Speech Coordinator** ~ Alice Tokoly, atokoly@pces.k12.in.us
- ❖ **OT & PT Supervisor** ~ Tracy Bauer, tbauer@pces.k12.in.us

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- ❖ **Format**
- ❖ **Etiquette**
- ❖ **Cell phone use**
- ❖ **Restrooms**
- ❖ **Handouts**

Early Childhood Transition

IDEA = Individuals with Disabilities Education Act

- ❖ Federal special education law
- ❖ **IDEA Part C**
 - First Steps age-range
 - Birth up to age 3
- ❖ **IDEA Part B (Section 619)**
 - Ages 3-5
- ❖ **IDEA Part B (Section 611)**
 - School-age students
 - Ages 3-22
- ❖ States must meet the requirements of IDEA
- ❖ States may require more, never less than federal law

IDEA Part C - Early Childhood

- ❖ Age range is birth up to age 3.
- ❖ An evaluation is required to determine eligibility
- ❖ If child meets eligibility criteria the family is assigned a Service Coordinator
 - Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) is developed to support the child and their family
 - Initiates referral to the public school for transition to preschool
 - Attends the transition Individualized Education Plan (IEP) meeting

IMPORTANT ELEMENTS OF THE EARLY CHILDHOOD TRANSITION PROCESS:



 **INSOURCE**
Special Education Parent Support

IDEA Part C to Part B Transition Timeline

- ❖ 6 months prior to child's 3rd birthday information is sent to the school district
- ❖ 90 days before 3rd birthday the transition conference should be scheduled
- ❖ At the transition conference special education & other services are to be reviewed, **parent rights** are to be explained and timeline is to be developed
- ❖ Educational evaluation
 - Parental consent is signed
 - Records from First Steps are passed on to the school district
 - Family input is documented
 - Educational evaluation is completed
- ❖ Case Conference Committee meeting
 - Must meet before 3rd birthday
 - Review educational evaluation report
 - Determine eligibility
 - Develop IEP, if child is found eligible for special education services

13 ELIGIBILITY CATEGORIES

Autism Spectrum Disorder	Blind or Low Vision	Intellectual Disability
Deaf or Hard of Hearing	Deaf-Blind	Emotional Disability
Language or Speech Impairment	Multiple Disabilities	Orthopedic Impairment
Other Health Impairment	Specific Learning Disability	Traumatic Brain Injury
	Developmental Delay	



EARLY CHILDHOOD TRANSITION

Part C Services	Part B Services
<input type="checkbox"/> Eligibility based on developmental need for infants and toddlers with disabilities, birth through age 2	<input type="checkbox"/> Eligibility based on educational need for children with disabilities, starting at age 3
<input type="checkbox"/> 45 calendar days to determine eligibility	<input type="checkbox"/> Evaluation must take place, eligibility must be determined, and services provided on or before the 3rd birthday
<input type="checkbox"/> IFSP (Individualized Family Service Plan)	<input type="checkbox"/> IEP (Individualized Educational Program)
<input type="checkbox"/> Focus is on the family	<input type="checkbox"/> Focus is on the child's educational needs
<input type="checkbox"/> Year-round services	<input type="checkbox"/> School calendar for services
<input type="checkbox"/> Services are provided in the child's natural environment	<input type="checkbox"/> Services are provided in the child's least restrictive environment



Summer Birthday?

Notice of Procedural Safeguards

- At many IEP meetings the parent(s) are given a copy of the procedural safeguards
 - Outlines the rights of the parent(s) of a student with or a suspected disability



It is the parent's *responsibility* to read through the safeguards to better understand their rights

Preschool Experience

As parents ourselves, we will briefly share some of our experiences as we walked through this transition process.

Summer Resources

Local Summer Resources

- ❖ Camp Lakeside
- ❖ Chasing Dreams
- ❖ Center for Possibilities
- ❖ Wabash Center
- ❖ String of Lights
- ❖ Penguin Project
- ❖ Tradewinds
- ❖ Timbernook
- ❖ Camp Invention
- ❖ Challenger Baseball
- ❖ Porter County Special Olympics
- ❖ Exceptional Equestrian Unlimited
- ❖ Kyle's Legacy

Fees vary between no cost, private pay and/or waiver; scholarship opportunities

Other Summer Resources

- ❖ Camp Millhouse
- ❖ Camp Riley
- ❖ CHASA Family Retreat
- ❖ Camp Sharing Meadows
- ❖ Joni and Friends
- ❖ ICanBike
- ❖ Jameson Camp
- ❖ America the Beautiful
- ❖ Six Flags Accessibility Pass

Fees vary between no cost, private pay and/or waiver; scholarship opportunities

School Summer Resources

- ❖ SELF summer enrichment program
- ❖ District specific summer school

General Resources

- [NWI First Steps](#) - 219-662-7790 / mkochvar@1st-kids.org
- indianafirststeps.org
- [IN*SOURCE](http://insource.org) - insource.org
- [BDS](http://in.gov/fssa/ddrs/developmental-disability-services/) - in.gov/fssa/ddrs/developmental-disability-services/
- [Social Security](http://ssa.gov/benefits/disability/) - ssa.gov/benefits/disability/
- [Vocational Rehabilitation](http://in.gov/fssa/ddrs/rehabilitation-employment/vocational-rehabilitation-employment/) - in.gov/fssa/ddrs/rehabilitation-employment/vocational-rehabilitation-employment/
- [Family to Family \(Indiana\)](http://inf2f.org/) - inf2f.org/
- [The Arc of Indiana](http://arcind.org) - arcind.org
- [Indiana Department Of Education](http://in.gov/doi) - in.gov/doi
- [IEP Technical Assistance Center](http://iepta.org) - iepta.org

HOW DID WE DO?



Wrap-Up Announcements

- ❖ Next SEPAC Town Hall will be March 6, 2024
 - Will review Medicaid Waivers and Vocational Rehabilitation
- ❖ SEPAC Parent Representative Vacancies
 - If interested in learning more about joining SEPAC, connect w/Parent Representative tonight
- ❖ Bring a friend to next SEPAC Town Hall 😊
 - Friend can be a parent of student w/IEP within PCES territories
 - Friend can be a parent of a child getting an IEP evaluation

CONTACT US

PCES Special Education Parent Advisory Council

✉ - pcesparentgroup@pces.k12.in.us

🌐 - www.pces.k12.in.us/sepac/

📘 - www.facebook.com/PCESESEAC