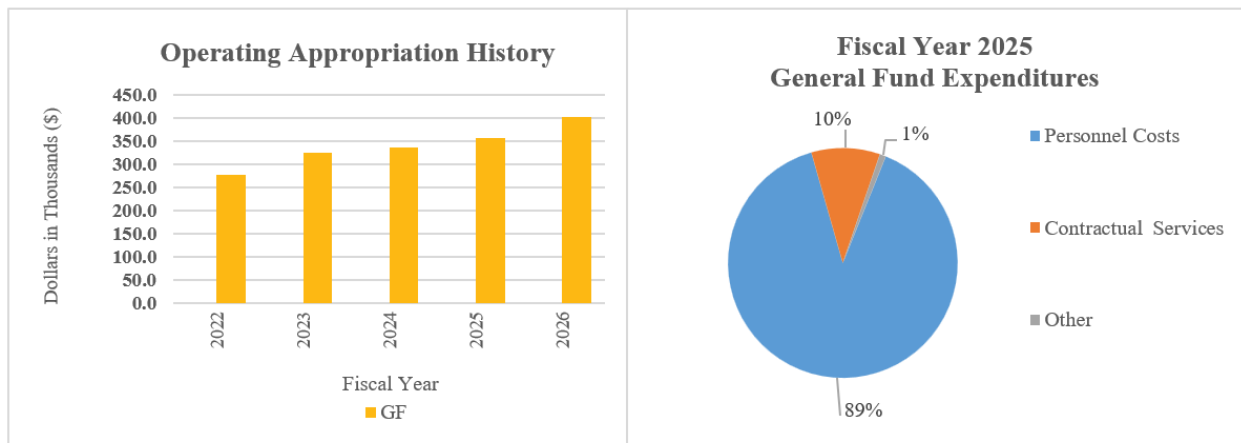


Advisory Council for Exceptional Citizens



At a Glance

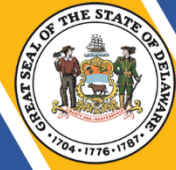
- In FY25, the GACEC submitted 602 letters on legislation and regulations to elected officials and agencies on educational services and the service needs of individuals with exceptionalities, in addition to in-person discussions with bill sponsors and public comment discussion opportunities;
- GACEC members participated on over 55 boards, task forces, committees and workgroups; in addition to the four GACEC issues committees and four GACEC ad hoc committees;
- The GACEC provided information to the public utilizing hybrid and in-person formats to connect with over 2700 individuals on issues relevant to the disability community around the State;
- The DelAWARE DisABILITY Hub (DeIDHub) transition website received over 22,339 hits, which is almost 1,500 more than last year, with over 16,542 unique visitors, which is over 4,300 more than last year; and
- The GACEC discussed collaboration with the Department of Education (DOE) and Department of Correction (DOC) and reviewed next steps needed to continue the mandate to monitor services in the prison education program.



Overview

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 (SAP) for agencies providing educational services and programs to children in

Advisory Council for Exceptional Citizens



Delaware between the ages of 3 and 22 through the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and its amendments. The GACEC initially served as the State's Advisory Council for Exceptional Children beginning in 1972 and was later renamed the Governor's Advisory Council for Exceptional Citizens (GACEC) to encompass the expansion of its role in the State. The passage of Senate Bill No. 20 in 2015 expanded the role of the GACEC to include acting in an advisory capacity with the Delaware Department of Education (DOE) and the Department of Correction (DOC) on the provision of educational services to inmates with disabilities in the joint agency prison education system.

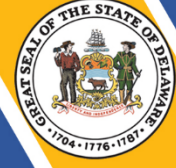
In Fiscal Year 2025, the GACEC continued its collaborative efforts with the DOE to ensure the needs of students are being addressed, particularly students in special education. DOE representative Dale Matusevich met with GACEC members monthly and at the annual planning retreat to discuss the status of current projects at DOE and new developments being implemented around the State.

The GACEC reviewed, discussed impact and commented on eight bills and 23 regulations during the past fiscal year. Council supported various pieces of legislation that will improve the lives of citizens throughout Delaware. Council submitted a letter of support for House Bill No. 79. This bill expands reporting requirements related to the use of mechanical restraint and seclusion in public schools. While public school personnel are prohibited from using mechanical restraint or seclusion without a waiver, law enforcement officers remain permitted to do so. The bill directs the Department of Education to collect data on these practices in addition to existing reporting on restraints and to include this information in its annual report. The bill was signed into law by the Governor on July 30, 2025.

GACEC members continue to serve as stakeholders with Interagency Resource Management Committee (IRMC), Redding Consortium, Special Education Strategic Plan (SESPAC) workgroup and Educational Equity Council as these groups work towards developing and enhancing strategies to improve educational outcomes for students with disabilities in Delaware. Council staff also work with the United States Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) and SAP/State Interagency Coordinating Council (SICC) workgroup to support the implementation of IDEA in all states.

The GACEC continues to promote Disability History and Awareness Month (DHAM) in Delaware. The poster contest was held with the theme of "Share Our Similarities. Celebrate Our Differences." Over 200 posters were received from around the State. An award ceremony/cookie reception was held at Massey Station to celebrate the first, second and third place winners from each of the five categories. The students were accompanied by members of their families and staff from their respective schools. Delaware legislators and Dover Mayor Robin Christiansen attended the reception to show their support. Other legislators sent certificates and congratulatory notes to the winners from their districts. Internationally known poet, speaker and advocate LeDerick Horne shared his poetry and

Advisory Council for Exceptional Citizens



words of congratulations and encouragement with the attendees via Zoom. Mr. Horne, who was diagnosed with a learning disability as a child, used his spoken-word poetry to share his message of equal opportunity, pride, self-determination and hope for individuals with disabilities.

The GACEC also collaborated with the YMCA to host another resource fair during Disability History and Awareness Month. The purpose of the fair was to give Delawareans an opportunity to learn more about available disability resources, recognize the contributions of people with disabilities to our communities and learn how to actively participate in inclusion efforts throughout the State. Over 22 vendors took part in the event co-hosted by the Dover YMCA. Several Delaware Senators and Representatives attended the resource fair to show their support and learn more about resources available to the disability community. Area schools brought students to allow them the opportunity to learn about resources that they and their families need to be aware of.

The GACEC collaborated with Delaware's Congressional delegation and Delaware partner councils to develop educational and awareness materials informing the public about proposed federal changes affecting critical disability resources, services and supports.

On the Web

For more information, visit gacec.delaware.gov.

Performance Measures

IPU	Performance Measure Name	Fiscal Year 2025 Actual	Fiscal Year 2026 Budget	Fiscal Year 2027 Governor's Recommended
77-01-01	Advisory Council for Exceptional Citizens			
	# of letters on legislation and regulations written to elected officials and agencies	602	800	900
	# of boards, councils and committees with participation by GACEC staff and members	55	60	65
	# of individuals reached via GACEC presentations, co-sponsorship of conferences, press releases and workshops by members and staff	2700	2800	3000