



STATE OF CONNECTICUT
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



Connecticut State Advisory Council for Special Education

Full SAC Virtual Meeting

Wednesday, February 28, 2024

******* 9:00 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. *******

Zoom Virtual Meeting: Member Participation

YouTube Live Stream: Public Participant Viewing

<https://youtube.com/live/SAC Full Council 022824>

(Conference Call Information included below)

Minutes

Members Present: Susan Yankee (Chair), Bryan Klimkiewicz (SDE non-voting), Sean Cronin (SDE non-voting), Jennifer Lussier (Vice Chair) Tom Cosker, Kim Williamson, Joshua Martin, Catherine Summ, Jolie Medina (non-voting), Jake Shumbo, Missy Wrigley, Lori Fortuna, Jeffrey Spahr, Brian Smith, Nachi Bhatt, and Mary Beth Bruder.

Online Guest: Lisa Nee (Advocate) and Robert Boshka (Parent)

Members Absent: Mia Dianoto, Rep. Robin Comey, Matias Casanova, Louis Tallarita, Tommy Mellilo, Cassandra Reilly, Tammy Raccio, Denise Drummond, Michael Scanlon, Jon Metcalf, Lena Esposito, Nancy DeCrescenzo, John King, Allison Kopie, Tylar Young, Ana Wittig and Amy Messinger.

I. Call to Order and Welcome (9:00 a.m.)

Susan Yankee calls meeting to order at 9:03 am.

II. Introductions/Roles

Members Introduce themselves.

III. Public Comment (9:05 a.m.)

SAC meetings are public meetings; members of the public may participate by calling in:

- Call-In Number: 1-866-880-0098
- Participant Passcode: 89689633

Via Zoom Participants:

Lisa Nee talks about her experience with advocating for her child.

Robert Boshka: Thanks the SAC for their work and for allowing him to attend the meeting and provide comment. Says he will contact guess Lisa Nee. Speaks briefly on advocating for his son.

IV. Consent Agenda

- a. January 24, 2024, Full Council Minutes for Approval

Motion to move January 24, 2024, Full Council Minutes to January full Council Meeting.

Motion by Jeffry Spahr and seconded by Jake Shumbo. All in favor.

Old Business

I. Executive Committee Report (9:15 a.m.)

- a. Review of Legislative Meeting (Speed Dating with Education Committee)

Susan Y. speaks of the “speed dating” opportunity with Representative Currey. 15 minutes to provide information on low cost legislation.

Goviana M. provides an overview of what was proposed to the legislature.

Catherine S. spoke about teacher/staff shortage.

- b. Update on Special Education Task Force

Did not meet no report.

II. Membership Committee Report (9:30 a.m.)

Catherine S. provides an update on membership. She asks members to email if they plan on ending their terms on the Council.

Discusses current vacancies and thanks Tom Cosker for assisting with contacting legislators regarding membership.

III. Legislative Committee Report (9:35 a.m.)

Jeffry S. provides overview of what he has done to prepare for discussion – bills he is tracking and looking at. Mentions contacting Representative Currey and legislators for awareness. Talks about restraint and seclusion.

Tom Cosker reminds Council and emphasizes that SEEK and the SAC work may not be aligned and to be mindful of who members are representing.

New Business

I. Round Table (9:45 a.m.)

- a. Agency/Parent Updates

Jane Hampton Smith (CPAC) Updates on trends of the calls during round table. Unmet needs issues

- Student/families calling regarding programs being changed due to behavioral issues and lack of staff.

- Students with IEPs being registered in new district and waiting for placement and planning to begin.
- Staff talks transition being complicated and requires a lot of communication. Language and communication barriers for families – families not feeling they have a voice in the process.
- Currently working on chronic absenteeism. Parents report students want to be in school but no supports being provided. Need to work on getting supports.
- Briefly mentions restraint and seclusion continues to be an issue.

Susan Y. asks about students who are being dismissed early and the IEPs. Jane H. responds and Bryan K. responds to clarify the question in changing IEPs for a shortened day.

Thomas Cosker: Talks about the most relevant work to the SAC. Working on outplacements and least restrictive environment and has a joint report with Office of Early Childhood being released next week. Continues work and restraint and seclusion. Support in decision making and working with the SDE on the law regarding transition. Will be rolling out resources, there is a coalition designed for this work. Also, speaks on the Disability Rights Clinic resource – offers a one-hour meeting with staff, attorneys and/or advocates for a more personalized experience. Finds this helps connect with students and families versus them calling into a for assistance.

Nachi Bhatt (DCF): Urgent Crisis Centers are now available to families of children who are experiencing a behavioral health crisis but do not require emergency department level of care.

Licensed and funded by DCF, the centers function as walk-in clinics, providing youths and their families with immediate access to resources while they are experiencing a behavioral health crisis, such as thoughts of suicide or self-injury, feelings of depression or anxiety, out-of-control behaviors; substance misuse, etc.

Again, the centers are aimed at diverting youths and their families from making visits to emergency rooms to address behavioral health crises. Current capacity for the four centers is 72 daily slots. They are strategically located across Connecticut and are operated by:

- [The Village for Families and Children](#) in Hartford;
- [Yale New Haven Hospital](#) in New Haven;
- [The Child and Family Agency of Southeastern Connecticut](#) in New London; and
- [Wellmore Behavioral Health](#) in Waterbury.

The link to the DCF site:

[Urgent Crisis Centers for Children \(ct.gov\)](#)

Lori Fortuna (Parent): Speaks about placements at new schools and ongoing impact on families and students. Promises being made and not being followed through. Susan Y. asks for clarification on comment. Lisa responds that student needs not being met. Jennifer L. refers CPAC as a resource for these matters.

Jennifer Lussier (Parent): Wants to continue discussion on Jane Hampton Smith regarding shortened days. Brings up prior written notice and parents. Comments on non-documented PPT decisions. Briefly discusses communication devices and best practices. Agrees with Jane H. on language and communication barriers.

Catherine Summ (ADS-BESBE): Increase in referrals. Two school districts have visually impaired teachers and are asking BESBE for assistance. Started the recruitment process for new teachers - they are ready to start for the fall. Has a couple of professional development opportunities coming up.

Brian Smith (DDS): Positions being filled in each of the three regions going from 3 to 6 in all three regions. Enhances the collaboration with school districts and other agencies such as BRS. Hopefully new hires on board by April. Currently looking to recruit advisors as well. The Central Office created a Children’s Division - looking to hire a psychologist and education specialist. A lot of new positions stemming from legislation.

Susan Yankee (Parent): Technology. Phones being kept in locked pouches and states that there is a new policy banning the phones in the school. Would like to look into this as phones are an important tool for students in special education. Talks emergency plans and Bryan K. responds.

II. BSE Update (10:15 a.m.)

Bryan Klimkiewicz (Division Director) reviews general supervision, 8 components and the general supervision system, vision statements, state performance plan/annual performance plan, IEP, CT determination history and new legislation slides with Council, and also thanks the members for their continuous work.

III. Adjourn (10:30 a.m.)

Meeting adjourned at 10:33 am.

Motion made by Jane H. and seconded by Missy W. All in favor.

State Advisory Council Meeting Dates/Locations:

Meeting	Date	Time	Location
1.	September 13, 2023	9:00-10:30 pm	Virtual Meeting
2.	October 25, 2023	9:00-1:00 pm	In-Person Meeting Location: CREC, Charter Oak Avenue, Hartford, CT
3.	November 29, 2023	9:00-10:30 pm	Virtual Meeting
	January 17, 2024		Cancelled
4.	January 24, 2024	10:00-1:00 pm	In-Person Meeting Location: Legislative Office Building, Hartford, CT 06103
5.	February 28, 2024	9:00-10:30 am	Virtual Meeting
6.	March 27, 2024	9:00-10:30 am	Virtual Meeting
7.	April 24, 2024	9:00-1:00 pm	In-Person Meeting Location: TBD
8.	May 22, 2024	9:00-10:30 am	Virtual Meeting (Tentative)