

State Task Force on the Right to Education

Ensuring Equitable Access, Quality, and Accountability

(DRAFT) Meeting Minutes

September 23, 2026

10 am - 12 pm

Attendance

State Task Force Representatives

- Carole Clancy, Bureau of Special Education
- Ken Oakes, The Arc of Pennsylvania
- TaWanda Jackson, Office of Developmental Programs
- Dr. Josie Badger, Governor's Advisory Commission on People with Disabilities

Call to Order

Chair Suzie St. Clair called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m. and reviewed public meeting procedures, recording notices, and participation guidelines.

Introductions and State Task Force Updates

Carole Clancy, Bureau Director for Special Education, introduced Suzie St. Clair as the Bureau advisor supporting the State Task Force, Diane Perry as the Advisory Group Facilitator supporting meeting operations and documentation, and Dr. Josie Badger as the Governor's Office representative to the State Task Force.

Approval of Previous Minutes

Draft minutes from the April 2026 meeting were reviewed and approved without revision.

PA Treasury Presentation: PA ABLE and Keystone Scholars

Diana Fishlock, Pennsylvania Treasury, provided an overview of the Keystone Scholars and PA ABLE programs.

- Keystone Scholars provides a \$100 scholarship for children born or adopted into Pennsylvania families beginning in 2019. Funds may be used for qualifying postsecondary education, trade school, or apprenticeship expenses.
- PA ABLE is a savings program for individuals with qualifying disabilities. The program offers tax advantages, protects eligibility for many public benefits, and permits funds to be used for a broad range of qualified expenses.
- For more information go to paable.gov or call 855-529-2253

Agency Updates

The Arc of Pennsylvania Policy Update

James Sawor provided updates on federal and state policy developments affecting individuals with disabilities.

- Federal policy changes related to community integration and Olmstead guidance.
- DOJ Policy Shift Raises Concerns About Disability Transition Planning
- The 2026 Interagency Autism Coordinating Committee strategic plan and concerns regarding stakeholder participation.
- A bipartisan group of members of Congress is seeking to prevent the transfer of key education programs and responsibilities from the U.S. Department of Education to other federal agencies.
- A significant development in federal special education policy occurred in September, when Kelly Rogers, the acting head of the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS), resigned from the U.S. Department of Education amid a broader federal reorganization. Her departure came less than a day before many OSERS employees were scheduled to be transferred to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) as part of the Administration's restructuring of education functions. The timing of the resignation has drawn attention from educators, families, disability advocates, and policymakers because of OSERS' central role in administering federal special education programs.
- A U.S. Supreme Court case with potential implications for disability accommodations.
- Potential effects of SNAP and Medicaid changes on individuals with disabilities, families, and service providers.
- Artificial Intelligence in Special Education
- A federal judge has invalidated a U.S. Department of Education directive that led to the cancellation of more than 100 federal grants supporting teacher preparation, professional development, recruitment, and retention efforts, particularly in high-need schools. The court concluded that the Department did not establish clear standards or provide adequate justification for terminating grants that it associated with diversity,

equity, and inclusion initiatives. As a result, the ruling may preserve or restore funding streams that support developing the educator workforce in schools across the country.

The Arc of Pennsylvania Program Updates

Ken Oakes reviewed outreach, advocacy, and educational resources available through The Arc of Pennsylvania and The Arc of the United States.

- The Arc of Pennsylvania Tapestry newsletter and Action Network. You can access the information at thearca.org
- Disability Acceptance Through Children's Literature programming.
- Development of the Orange Ribbon School Program.
- The Arc at School resources, including parent and student planning tools and online training.
- AI-supported special education information resources.

Bureau of Special Education Update

Carole Clancy presented statewide data, federal monitoring results, policy updates, and Bureau priorities.

- Students identified under IDEA represent 21.4% of public school enrollment.
- Graduation rates for students with disabilities have increased while dropout rates have declined over a four-year period.
- Pennsylvania received a Meets Requirements determination for FFY 2024.
- The final federal monitoring report required no corrective action after two findings were resolved.
- Updates were provided on the SPP/APR process, the National IDEA Funding Survey, developmental delay guidance, transportation safety, disability-inclusive curriculum, and the Local Task Force Resource Map.
- Carole is asking ALL groups to continue sharing PaTTAN and BSE resources

Office of Developmental Programs Update

TaWanda Jackson discussed Medicaid-related changes associated with H.R. 1, communication materials concerning redetermination requirements, and resources supporting use of the COMPASS system. Members emphasized the importance of sharing this information with families and service providers. Two documents have been shared by Ms. Jackson; "Changes are Coming to Medicaid in 2027" and "Why Use COMPASS?"

Governor's Advisory Commission on People with Disabilities

Dr. Josie Badger introduced the Commission's work and raised two areas for further consideration. The commission has 28 members. There are 3 committees; Physical and Mental Health, Community Integration, and Education/Transition for youth development.

1. Elopement Safety and Prevention

The State Task Force discussed possible best-practice resources to support schools, families, emergency responders, and community partners serving students who are prone to elopement. The topic will be coordinated with related SEAP crisis-prevention work and returned to the State Task Force as the work develops.

2. Student Transportation Safety

The State Task Force discussed transportation training, disability awareness, oversight, communication, and best practices. The Bureau of Special Education and Governor's Advisory Commission will gather information about existing training and requirements for review at a future meeting.

Old Business:

Members received an update regarding the Local Task Force Convening and Capacity Building Institute scheduled for October 20, 2026. The event will be held in Norristown with a hybrid participation option.

- State Task Force handbook, roles, procedures, and election process.
- Early Resolution Toolkit.
- Local Task Force Resource Map.
- Networking, stipend use, and sharing of local task force highlights.

New Business:

Keep Dr. Badgers two areas of concern under Old Business on future LTF agendas for updates.

Public Comment

Two public comments were received.

- Michelle Hecker from LTF 5 raised concerns about limited after-school, respite, weekend, summer, and school-break programming for children and students with significant support needs.
- Bonita McCabe of The Arc of Philadelphia requested information about how schools, intermediate units, students, and families will be supported as Medicaid and SNAP changes are implemented, including guidance on transition, employment services, benefits counseling, and eligibility requirements.

Closing Remarks

Members expressed appreciation for the organization, information-sharing, public participation, and collaborative progress of the State Task Force.

Adjournment

Ken Oakes moved to adjourn, and Carole Clancy seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned.

Next Meeting: November 17, 2026, Tuesday 6 – 8 pm