**MEMORANDUM**

TO: Dr. Russell Johnston

 Senior Associate Commissioner, Direct Support for Elementary and Secondary Education

FROM: Autism Commission’s Subcommittee for Birth to Fourteen Year Olds (“Subcommittee”)

RE: DESE’s New Individualized Education Plan (IEP)

 This memorandum sets forth recommendations of the Subcommittee for consideration by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) in connection with its development of a new IEP form for Local Education Agencies (LEAs). The use of the term parent herein includes legal guardians, and foster parents.

 At the beginning of each IEP meeting, the Team members should be informed about the type of meeting that will occur (annual or reevaluation), and other specific issues that need to be addressed; i.e., 1) goals and objectives not achieved; 2) new areas of need; 3) student requires a transition plan; etc.

1. Interpretation and Translation Services. The IEP process should require that the IEP Team verify that parents have been offered interpretation and translation services in the primary language spoken at home, and check off whether or not such services were requested, and if so, were provided.
2. The IEP form itself should be written in “plain language” to ensure that families understand the document.
3. The IEP should reflect both the primary and secondary diagnoses. For student’s with Autism the Team needs to confirm that each of the seven areas of need identified under the law have been addressed and if they have not been addressed in terms of services or goals what is the justification for that (not an area of need for this individual student).
4. If the IEP meeting is for a three-year reevaluation, have assessments been completed in all areas of suspected disability?
5. For students with Autism, the Team needs to document how the issue of bullying will be addressed, what services and goals relate to this issue.
6. For students 14-22 years of age, has the Team completed a transition assessment? Has the student been invited to the IEP meeting? Has the student’s need for health education, including sexual education been addressed? Have post- secondary goals been included in the IEP. (travel training, community experiences, pre-employment skills, daily living skills)
7. Goal areas and objectives. Goals and objectives should be specific and measurable, and they should lead to greater independence. Do the goals and objectives set forth the underlying conditions under which the student is expected to achieve a specific task? Do the objectives/ benchmarks demonstrate that they are targeted to achieve greater independence (Fading of prompts or other direct support over time)? If the goals and objectives are repeated from the previous IEP, the Team should be promoted address whether they require additional support to enable the student to make progress or to more accurately reflect what the student has achieved over the last IEP period.
8. MCAS Alt. If the Team decides that the student will not participate in MCAS, has the issue of the MCAS Alt. and its impact on a high school diploma been discussed with the parents.
9. Service Delivery Grid.
10. Consultation and Training to School Personnel and Parents.
11. AAC. For students who are non-verbal or have limited verbal skills the Team should be required to demonstrate that the use of an AAC has been considered, that an assessment in this area has been completed, and where an AAC device will be used that there is training for all staff, the student and parents to effectively implement its use across people and settings is being addressed. Has the Team identified how the AAC needs of the student will be addressed in the event there is a problem with the selected device.(aided language supports, PECs)
12. Behavior Intervention plan. For student’s with behavioral impacts resulting from their disability the Team needs to address the need for a functional behavior assessment, the development of a behavior intervention plan and training for all staff and parents on the effective implementation of the behavior plan, including data collection.
13. Staff to student ratio should be specified in the service delivery grid. If the student receives 1:1 support from paraprofessional or if they receive instruction or related services in a smaller group all of that should be identified in the IEP (i.e., 1:3).
14. Extended Year and Extended Day. In addition to whether or not the Team agrees that the students requires ESY or extended day to receive FAPE, what options of these services were offered?
15. Placement. Did the Team consider the least restrictive environment for the student? For students in partial inclusion or substantially separate settings did the Team examine additional opportunities to include student with their non-disabled peers across their day? (i.e., art or music, lunch, recess, school activities).
16. Parent Response. A secure electronic response system will assist with timely parent responses to the IEP and placement forms.