



FEDERATION FOR CHILDREN  
WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

## SEPAC Summer School Session 4 – Running a SEPAC Meeting



INFORMING, EDUCATING, EMPOWERING FAMILIES

617-236-7210 | [www.fcsn.org](http://www.fcsn.org) | [fcsninfo@fcsn.org](mailto:fcsninfo@fcsn.org)

### *Workshop Objectives*

Participants will be able to:

- Run an accessible public meeting/Make room for the District
- Organize and set an agenda for the meeting
- Keep a SEPAC meeting on track and on time
- Record minutes for the meeting and make available
- Take Action/Decision Making – Voting or Consensus?
- Deal with Conflict and Disagreement/Ground Rules



© Federation for Children with Special Needs 2010

### ***Hosting a Meeting - Checklist***

- Review meeting date with SEPAC/Invite District
- Reserve an accessible space/ Preview space
- Advertise meeting/Develop and Post agenda
- Arrange for technology/food/drink/childcare
- Arrive early/set-up-signage/welcome attendees
- Start meeting on time
- Have someone keep minutes
- End on time/Clean-up/Organize Notes



© Federation for Children with Special Needs 2010

### ***Importance of an Agenda***

Every meeting needs an agenda.

- Ongoing work
- New initiatives

The OML requires an agenda be posted at least 48 hours in advance of the meeting.

Allow adequate time on the agenda for parent questions and input.

Keep a list of topics to be addressed at a future meeting.



© Federation for Children with Special Needs 2010

## *On Track and on Time?*

Post in the chat box, a BRIEF sentence or phrase about issues/problems you have seen at a SEPAC meeting in the past ...



© Department for Children with Special Needs 2010

## *Meeting Minutes*

Secretary should keep record minutes.

SEPAC should approve minutes at next meeting.

Good Minutes should:

- Present summaries
- Inform readers on topics discussed
- Focus on outcomes/decisions
- Include information to be discussed later.

Retain minutes and make available upon request.

Public Body Checklist for Creating and Approving Meeting Minutes  
<https://www.mass.gov/files/documents/2017/09/25/Public%20Body%20Checklist%20-%20Minutes.pdf>



© Department for Children with Special Needs 2010

## ***How SEPACS Decide to Take Action***

Often decision making takes place over several meetings, so meeting minutes are important records of discussions.

Two formats for reaching a decision:

### **VOTING – Formal/Robert’s Rules**

Decisions are finalized by a majority vote.

<https://robertsrules.org/>



### **CONSENSUS – More creative and dynamic**

Requires discussion to continue until all members of the group agree.



© Federation for Children with Special Needs 2010

## ***Dealing with Conflict/Disagreement***

Conflict is natural and should be expected.

Disagreement can increase perspectives, build group cohesion, and/or expand viewpoints.

Recognize and manage conflict. Focus on Now/Agenda.

Don't let it get personal. Winning the argument is not the goal.

Try to Resolve in a positive way – “agree to disagree”...

\*Keep the interests of the children at the center of discussion.



© Federation for Children with Special Needs 2010

## ***Ground Rules for a SEPAC Meeting***

Best to ask the group in your first meeting to establish ground rules and share at future meetings.

Cell phones, confidentiality...

Start and end on time.

Pace agenda to make time for discussion.

Be clear that SEPAC is not a parent support group.



© Federation for Children with Special Needs 2010

## ***Help New Parents Feel Welcome***

Invite new people to meetings/Introduce them to others

Have a “Welcome Committee”

Provide the By-laws and Meeting Ground Rules to

Newcomers

Establish a new member orientation process or mentor



© Federation for Children with Special Needs 2010

Session 5 – Family Engagement  
August 4 at 7PM

Special Guest:

Cambria Russell, Project Director  
Statewide Family Engagement Center



INFORMING, EDUCATING, EMPOWERING FAMILIES  
617-236-7210 | [www.fcsn.org](http://www.fcsn.org) | [fcsninfo@fcsn.org](mailto:fcsninfo@fcsn.org)