


FEDERATION FOR CHILDREN
WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

Q. What is a SEPAC?



A. Special Education Parent Advisory Council

INFORMING, EDUCATING, EMPOWERING FAMILIES
617-236-7210 | www.fcsn.org | info@fcsn.org



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What does a SEPAC do?

A Special Education Parent Advisory Council is a family-volunteer-driven group that advises the local school district on issues relating to programs and policies that affect students receiving special education and related services.

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How is a SEPAC different from a PTO?

- A SEPAC works district-wide to advise the administration and School Committee on programs and services which support students with disabilities.
- SEPACs can work with other district parent groups on issues common to all students and to improve the school community.
- SEPACs can strengthen the bridge between the district and families – through communication, the sharing of resources and information.

Participation in a SEPAC offers the opportunity to **raise questions, voice concerns and provide direct input** to district leadership and **influence policy and program decisions.**

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Who can be a part of a SEPAC?



Under Massachusetts law, SEPAC membership is open to all parents of children with disabilities, and other interested parties.

- “Parent” represents biological, adoptive, and foster parents, guardians, grandparents, and extended family caregivers.
- No special training or background knowledge is required to be a member of the SEPAC.

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What is the role of a SEPAC?

A SEPAC is an advisory council. They gather information from families and make recommendations that can be used by decision-makers and local leaders. A SEPAC’s purpose is to advise, advocate, and offer guidance, not to decide policy.

An effective SEPAC can:

- Help improve educational outcomes and well-being for all students, including those with disabilities;
- Help identify unmet needs; and
- Help shape the development of programs, services and policies, as well as improve district culture.



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SEPAC duties under MA law

“The parent advisory council duties shall include but not be limited to:

- advising the school committee on matters that pertain to the education and safety of students with disabilities;
- meeting regularly with school officials; and
- participating in the planning, development, and evaluation of the school committee’s special education programs.”

SEPACs should be parent-driven and are empowered to establish their own by-laws under the law.

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School district collaboration

- Support SEPAC's requirement to advise the school committee.
- Facilitate regular meetings with SEPAC at various levels of district administration.
- Invite SEPACs to participate in the planning, development, and evaluation of special education programs and policies.



and

- Provide assistance to SEPAC operations and activities, without charge, based on availability of staff and resources.

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How do families find their local SEPAC?

- Many school districts post SEPAC contact information on their website on the Special Education or Student Services homepage.
- Many SEPACs also have a Facebook page and share lots of great resources and information on public workshops and events.
- Anyone can contact MassPAC at the Federation – we have a SEPAC database and will share contact information so you can connect with local leaders. masspac@fcsn.org.

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Resources



National
U.S. Department of Education

Advocacy in Action
sepacguide.parentcenterhub.org



Massachusetts
Federation for Children with Special Needs

MassPAC
www.fcsn.org/masspac




Massachusetts
Department of Elementary & Secondary Education

Guidance on SEPACs
www.doe.mass.edu/sped/pac

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THANK YOU

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