



## NASP Advocacy Resources for the Development of State and Local IDEA Regulations and Policies

### Introduction:

September 6, 2005 marked the end of the public comment period for the development of the federal IDEA regulations. While states are awaiting the release of the final federal regulations, it is important to participate in state and local IDEA regulation development. This document is designed to assist you in these efforts.

### Suggestions for State Leaders:

- Begin your advocacy efforts by understanding how policy is developed in your state. What is the governance philosophy of your state? Is your state a “local control” state that believes that LEA’s should generally have the primary say in how IDEA is put into practice? Or is your state a “central control” state where your state’s Department of Education (DOE) will have the primary say in how IDEA is put into practice? If you don’t know which way your state leans, you can likely find out more about the philosophy of your state by reviewing your general assembly’s website.
  - All states are required to draft state regulations for implementing the federal IDEA regulations. How prescriptive these regulations are at the State Educational Agency (SEA) level vs. the Local Educational Agency (LEA) level will likely depend heavily on the governance philosophy of your state. If you live in a “local control” state, you will want to make sure that your LEA advocacy efforts are just as prominent and effective as your SEA advocacy efforts.
- Convene the state leaders in school psychology and develop an advocacy plan. Detail “who, what, and when” for both state and local advocacy efforts. Identify the areas where advocacy is needed and decide what specific advocacy points will be addressed. Review the NASP recommendations for the proposed IDEA Regulations to assist in identifying key areas of the regulations that you plan to address.
- Contact the school psychological services consultant at your state DOE. Ask “who” (name and contact information) is on the committee responsible for drafting the state’s IDEA regulations.
  - If no school psychologist is on the committee, ask if your state school psychology professional organization can have a leader member participate. Emphasize the need for the regulations to support the broad-based role of school psychologist and how a practitioner could assist the committee in understanding this role.
  - If an unfamiliar school psychologist is on the committee, get the contact information for this person and forward it to your state association’s president. Request that your state association’s board of directors make contact with this practitioner to support them in making recommendations consistent with the best practices for school psychologists.
- Organize a workgroup of interested school psychologists that will carefully review the proposed federal regulations as compared to the existing state regulations. Displaying

- these in a “side-by-side” comparison can help in understanding how the new regulations will directly impact practice. For many states, this “side-by-side” comparison may already be available through the SEA. Discuss any significant discrepancies and how to respond as a professional organization. Create draft language for the state regulations that address your leadership’s concerns. Provide language to the state-level committee responsible for drafting the regulations. Garner support for your language by connecting with other school-based mental health providers and ask them to support your efforts.
- ❑ Faithfully attend all workgroup meetings. When necessary, appoint a substitute to attend in order to ensure that a school psychological perspective is present at every meeting. Always comment when an invitation to give input is extended—even if it is to say that you accept the document as is. The failure to comment implies that you are not interested in participating in the leadership effort. Additionally, if you don’t respond, policy makers won’t ask. This allows people outside of our profession to make policy and law about our profession without input.
  - ❑ Communicate the discussions and actions of the workgroup to your professional association’s leaders and members. Discuss controversial topics via the NASP State e-Communities, or through existing state Listservs. When faced with significant issues that appear divisive but really do need leadership from the profession, leaders should try and come to a consensus on a position. It is better to take a position in the middle or one that reflects some compromise, than to take no position at all. Taking no position allows policy makers to craft difficult issues to meet their own needs and agendas—these positions may potentially be in direct opposition to the best interests of our profession.
  - ❑ Educate yourself and your colleagues on the past and emerging research supporting the practices outlined in the new IDEA. Whenever possible, make decisions based on existing data and scholarly research. Disseminate research to all workgroup participants. Do not assume that all workgroup participants are equally knowledgeable about best practices. The NASP website has a plethora of resources available to support your advocacy work.
  - ❑ Actively advocate for school psychologists as integral members of the IEP team and for school psychological services to be available to all students.
  - ❑ When necessary, request that members participate in a call-in or email campaign to demonstrate the breadth of support for various issues. Target emails or phone calls to the chair of the workgroup or the Commissioner of Special Education for the SEA. Provide “scripts” or “talking points” for advocates so that a consistent message can be sent pertaining to an issue of concern.
  - ❑ After the IDEA state regulations are complete, identify professional development training needs for school psychologists. Encourage practitioner participation in professional development and promote professional practices that result in improved outcomes for students.

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