

# Parent Groups in New Jersey

A Guide to Developing & Conducting an Effective Group

## QUICK FACTS

### What does the “A” in SEPAG Mean?

Parents play a vital role in a Special Education Parent Advisory Group (SEPAG). Their firsthand experiences and insights help school administrators understand the real needs and concerns of families with children in special education. By sharing feedback, reviewing policies, and suggesting improvements, parents ensure that programs and services are responsive and effective. Their involvement helps shape school practices, fosters collaboration, and empowers families to engage in their child's success.



### Special Education Parent ADVISORY Group

**Purpose:** A Special Education Parent Advisory Group (SEPAG) provides input to school administrators about the needs, concerns, and priorities of families with children in special education.

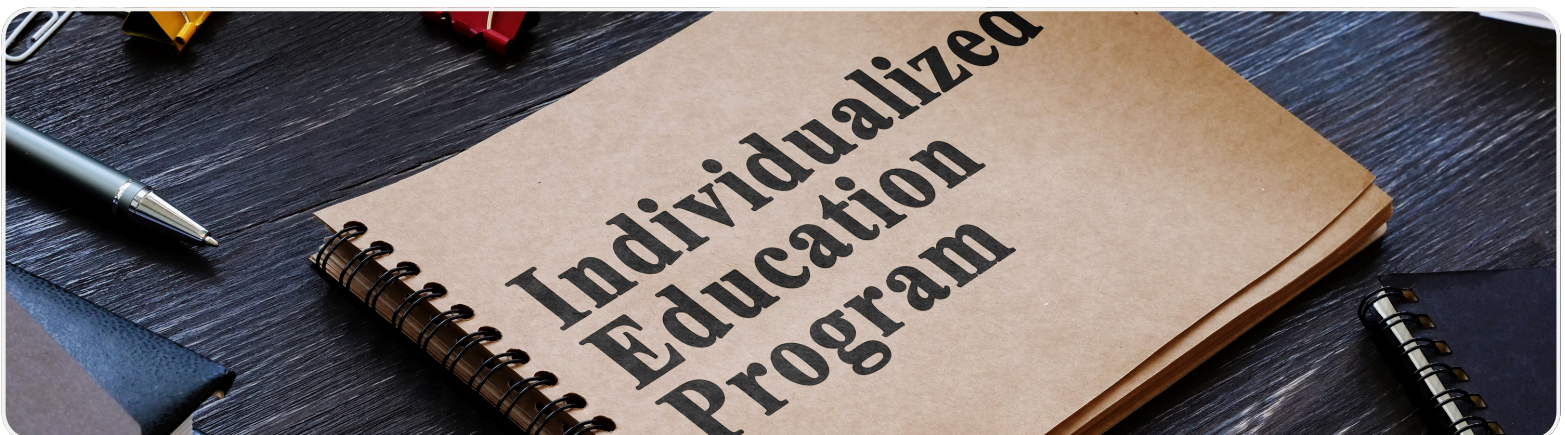
**Role:** Members may review policies, suggest improvements to programs, and share feedback on services provided to students with disabilities.

**Activities:** SEPAGs often meet regularly with school officials, participate in surveys, and recommend topics for informational workshops for parents.

**Impact:** While SEPAGs do not make decisions, their recommendations can shape school policies and practices.

### Example Scenario

A SEPAG meets quarterly with the district's Director of Special Services to discuss concerns and input from parents. There has been recent feedback from parents that they do not understand certain acronyms and terminologies that come up in IEP meetings, thus making them feel unprepared and unable to be an equal member of the IEP team. The SEPAG has identified this as a systemic issue and are requesting they work with the district on creating an acronym sheet that is parent-friendly. They also suggest a training for parents on the components of the IEP and their role on the IEP team. They request that staff attend the training as well so that everyone is clear on roles.



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## How Can the District Support the Parents as Advisors?

The school district can support the Special Education Parent Advisory Group (SEPAG) in several important ways:

- Provide clear communication channels between SEPAG members and school administrators.
- Offer logistical support, such as meeting space, scheduling assistance, and access to relevant data or reports.
- Encourage participation by inviting a diverse group of parents and ensuring meetings are accessible to all.
- Respond to SEPAG recommendations and feedback, demonstrating that parent input is valued and considered in decision-making.
- Provide training or informational resources to help parents understand special education policies, procedures, and their rights.
- Publicize SEPAG activities and successes to the broader school community, encouraging more families to get involved.

These actions help foster a collaborative environment where parents feel empowered and the district benefits from valuable family perspectives.



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For a complete guide to starting and supporting a  
SEPAG in your school, district, or community, visit  
the **START at the New Jersey Family Engagement  
Hub** (<https://njfehub.org/start/>)

Access the SPAN SEPAG Guide

