



STATE OF NEW JERSEY

# DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

A Memo from the New Jersey Department of Education

Date: March 5, 2025  
To: Local Educational Agency Leads  
Route To: Directors of Special Education  
From: Kathy Ehling, Assistant Commissioner  
Division of Educational Services

## Opportunity for Partnership to Effectively Resolve Disputes at the Local Level

The purpose of this Broadcast Memorandum is to invite Local Education Agencies (LEAs) to collaborate with the New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) Office of Special Education (OSE) and the Statewide Parent Advocacy Network (SPAN) to strengthen local capacity for evaluating, assessing, and improving systems that help prevent the need for formal dispute resolution. OSE, in partnership with SPAN, has been selected to participate in a two-year cross-state collaborative workgroup with the Center for Appropriate Dispute Resolution in Special Education (CADRE), a national technical assistance center. This initiative emphasizes the importance of working with State Education Agencies (SEAs) to review local dispute resolution practices and implement capacity-building activities aimed at reducing formal mediation and due process requests received by the OSE. The primary goal of this workgroup is to promote proactive, local dispute resolution by implementing a range of early intervention strategies that address concerns early and may avoid adversarial situations.

This local-level partnership will focus on building the capacity of LEAs to resolve disputes early and apply a range of early dispute resolution options, such as problem-solving meetings, facilitated IEP meetings, and local mediation. LEAs participating in this initiative will gain access to valuable resources and information from other states selected for the workgroup. While dispute resolution capacity-building efforts may vary across states, the workgroup aims to facilitate the sharing of best practices and mutual learning among participants.

The OSE will be collaborating with 3-5 LEAs for this project. The LEAs will be expected to attend monthly meetings with OSE and SPAN staff, where designated staff members from each LEA will engage in discussions, provide feedback, and receive updates on the project's progress. LEAs will also be responsible for submitting data relevant to the goal of the project and play an active role in developing local capacity for improving effective dispute resolution practices. If are interested in partnering with the OSE and SPAN on this initiative or would like more information, please contact the Office of Special Education at [OSEinfo@doe.nj.gov](mailto:OSEinfo@doe.nj.gov).

c: Members, State Board of Education  
NJDOE Staff  
Statewide Parent Advocacy Network  
Garden State Coalition of Schools  
NJ LEE Group