

WV Advisory Council for the Education of Exceptional Children

2025-2026

Annual Report

UNMET NEEDS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on Council Takeaways obtained through district presentations, public comments, and JotForm submissions, the WVACEEC has identified the unmet needs and makes the following recommendations to the WVDE/WVSBOE:

UNMET NEED 1

Families of students with disabilities often report challenges navigating special education processes, understanding their rights, accessing community resources, supporting learning at home, and participating meaningfully in educational decision-making.

A local, district-based resource center would provide a consistent point of contact and support for families from Kindergarten through grade 12.

Research consistently demonstrates that meaningful family engagement contributes to:

- Improved student achievement
- Better attendance and school participation
- Increased graduation rates
- Stronger home-school partnerships
- Improved IEP participation and implementation
- Reduced conflict and dispute resolution needs

To strengthen family engagement, improve educational outcomes for students with disabilities, and ensure families have equitable access to information, resources, and support, the WVACEEC makes the following recommendation:

Recommendation:

The WVDE should develop and support a statewide network of Parent Education Resource Centers (PERCs) in every county school district.

Incentivize each district to designate a Parent Education Resource Center that serves families of students with disabilities.

The center should:

- *Be accessible both in-person and virtually*
- *Provide resources at no cost to families*
- *Offer services throughout the school year and summer*
- *Coordinate with existing family engagement initiatives*

Provide Dedicated Funding to support personnel, training materials, technology, parent workshops, and lending libraries by exploring:

- IDEA Part B set-aside funds
- State special education improvement funds
- Federal Family Engagement grants
- Competitive innovation grants

Encourage collaboration with:

- West Virginia Parent Training and Information (WVPTI)
- Disability Rights of West Virginia
- Higher education institutions
- Community mental health providers
- Vocational rehabilitation agencies
- Family support organizations

Monitor effectiveness and establish measures to evaluate:

- Family participation rates
- Parent satisfaction
- IEP meeting attendance
- Training participation
- Family knowledge of special education rights
- Student outcomes
- Reduction in complaints and disputes

UNMET NEED 2

Students who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing (DHH) require specialized support to ensure equitable access to instruction, communication, social interactions and educational opportunities.

While WV has dedicated professionals serving these students, there are still significant challenges in the areas of awareness, and personnel preparation.

Many educators, administrators, service providers, and families have limited understanding of:

- The educational impact of hearing loss
- Appropriate classroom accommodations
- The role of Teachers of the Deaf (TOD)
- The difference between hearing loss and other disabilities

As a result, students often experience barriers to academic achievement, communication, and social participation.

To improve outcomes for students with hearing loss in both general and special education settings, the following recommendation is

made to the WVDE:

Recommendation:

Increase Statewide Awareness and Capacity to Support Students with Hearing Loss

- Develop a Statewide DHH Awareness Initiative for general education teachers, special education teachers, principals and administrators, related service providers, and families

Topics should include:

- Understanding hearing loss
- Educational impacts on hearing loss
- Communication options
- Classroom accommodations
- Assistive listening technology
- Social-Emotional considerations
- Family engagement

UNMET NEED 3

WV faces a significant shortage of qualified educational interpreters. Currently, there is no comprehensive pipeline to recruit, prepare, certify, and retain interpreters serving students who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing.

Without qualified interpreters, students are experiencing reduced access to instruction and communication.

To address this urgent need, the WVDE should address the shortage of qualified interpreters by creating a sustainable pathway for certified educational interpreters by partnering with community and technical colleges, universities, and The WV School of the Deaf and Blind.

Recommendation:

Increase awareness of the Profession

- Promote careers in high schools
- Create career pathway materials
- Highlight interpreter success stories
- Introduce ASL career pathways through Career Technical Education (CTE)

Build a High School Career Pathway by Creating a CTE pathway focused on:

- American Sign Language
- Deaf Culture
- Educational Interpreting
- Observation experiences
- Dual-credit college coursework

Implementation of the recommendations would:

- Increase educator understanding of hearing loss
- Improve access to qualified Teachers of the Deaf and educational interpreters

- Strengthen language and literacy outcomes
- Improve family engagement and support
- Enhance educational access and inclusion for students who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing
- Build a sustainable workforce capable of meeting the needs of DHH students statewide