



## DEC Position Statements

Position Statements are formal expressions of the Division for Early Childhood that have been developed with input from members, reviewed by members, and approved by the Executive Board. These statements address a specific topic or issue and represent the official position of the organization.

To ensure that a position statement issued by DEC truly reflects the mission and values of our organization and its members, careful consideration must be given to selecting relevant topics, engaging members, and creating opportunities for thoughtful engagement by individuals/organizations with expertise in the topic area. The DEC Executive Board provides guidance about the purpose of position statements and their importance within the organization; please see the current Executive Board Policies: [here](#).

### **About DEC Position Statements:**

- Position statements are current for five years. In developing position statements, the five-year lifetime should be considered. No time-limited content should be included (e.g., websites of projects ending within the five year cycle).
- Referenced and citations should be current and relevant at the time of development.
- Distribution of DEC Positions Statements is encouraged; permission to reprint is not necessary but a citation is required. Sample citations should developed by the position statement work group.
- There is no page limit on position statements. Workgroups are expected to be focused but thorough in developing DEC position statements.
- Workgroups should include a wide representation of DEC members including parents, service providers, faculty, and members who are underrepresented.
- Executive summaries of all DEC position statements will be prepared by the workgroup and disseminated by DEC staff. The purpose of the Executive Summary is to provide a brief synopsis to create awareness of the position



statement. Executive Summaries are reviewed by the field and also approved by the DEC Executive Board.

### **Selecting a Topic:**

DEC members generate ideas and topics for position statements. Often topics are proposed by groups of members participating in Special Interest Groups, authors of DEC monographs, past position statement workgroups and subdivisions. In addition, topics may be generated by members who recognize the need for DEC to take a position on a relevant topic in the field. Position statements may also be identified as part of other ongoing DEC initiatives. When DEC members have identified a specific topic they must send a written request (via email) to the DEC Executive Office at [dec@dec-sped.org](mailto:dec@dec-sped.org).

### **Position Statements topics are reviewed using the following criteria:**

- Does the topic support the current Ends policies created by the Executive Board? All position statements should advance organizational goals, support the mission of the organization, and meet the needs of DEC members.
- Does the proposed topic have broad relevance to DEC members? While a topic that is narrow in scope may be considered (e.g., relates to birth to three only), DEC cannot make a statement that directly excludes geographic areas or is specific to a particular state or region.
- Is the issue timely? Some position statements represent core concepts in early intervention/early childhood special education but others reflect cutting edge ideas in which guidance is needed/requested by DEC members. No topic will be considered if the focus is short term and the content cannot be reasonably expected to maintain viability for five years.
- The Executive Director will review each proposed position statement to determine if the topic meets the criteria set forth above. The Executive Director will report on any proposals through monitoring reports and keeping the Board informed of Executive Office initiatives.



## **Submitting a proposal on a DEC Position Statement**

The Executive Office will ask the DEC member(s) submitting the proposal for any additional information needed to make a decision. If the proposed position statement is not deemed appropriate for development, the DEC member submitting the suggestion will be notified within 2 weeks and will have an opportunity to seek additional input from the Executive Board, if desired. If the proposed position statement is accepted for development, the following below procedure will begin.

## **Identifying an individual to chair the development team**

One individual will be appointed by the Executive Director to be the chair of the development team alternatively the workgroup can designate an individual to serve in the role of Chair. The Chair of the development team may or may not be the DEC member proposing the position statement. All individuals involved in the workgroup must be DEC members.

## **Responsibilities of the Chair include:**

1. Serving as the primary liaison to the DEC staff throughout the development of the statement
2. Creating a work plan and timeline to be approved by the Executive Director
3. Assembling a workgroup development team
4. Ensuring the involvement of DEC members in developing and reviewing the draft position statement
5. Honoring, respecting, and inviting diverse opinions
6. Ensuring that each step of the development process is accomplished according to the work plan
7. Providing quarterly written updates to the Executive Director throughout the development phase.

## **Creating a work plan and timeline**



Before work can begin, a work plan must be developed and approved by the Executive Director. This plan should include assurances that the position statement will adhere to DEC's established procedures and include timelines designed to ensure completion of the paper within a one-year timeframe unless otherwise approved by the Executive Director. The work plan must include the process and timeline for field review by DEC members. [See sample work plan here.](#)

### **Identifying the development team**

The Chair is responsible for assembling a development team of approximately 5-8 individuals. Each team must include individuals with key expertise in the topic area and represent diverse DEC members (e.g., higher education, service providers, parents, students, members with varying philosophies or frameworks, geographical diversity). Team members must be DEC members in good standing. The Chair may elect to involve individuals with specialized expertise who are not DEC members as ad hoc members of the team. It is expected that all team members will commit to working on this statement until it is completed. Appointment letters will be generated by the DEC staff upon receipt of the final list of team members.

### **Involving members, experts, and other stakeholders**

To ensure that the position statement is developed with high levels of expertise, the team is encouraged to solicit input from individuals or outside organization during the development of the statement. For example, DEC members may be invited to participate in a webinar or focus group to generate key ideas for the statement or to react to a preliminary draft. Individuals with specific expertise may be asked to review and comment on the paper or may be interviewed by a member of the team to elicit input. Outside organizations may be asked to provide ideas or input, and perhaps review a draft of the position statement.

Organizational partners often provide diverse perspectives related to the topic area; collaborating on position statements is a valued DEC activity. The team may



wish to contact organizations or agencies to request an endorsement of the position statement. The chair may make the initial contact with organizations to inform them of the position statement being developed and inform the DEC office which organizations were contacted. Toward the final stages of statement development, the DEC office follows up by sending the document to those organizations requesting endorsement. Any review sent to the DEC office should be forwarded to the committee chair for revisions prior to final submission to the board.

### **Creating the initial draft**

Members of the development team will create a draft position statement, which includes all key elements and references. This draft will be disseminated to the membership and should reflect the scope and content expected to be included in the final paper. Once the draft is completed, it will be need to be edited by the development team. The development team is responsible for copyediting the position statement. The position statement will be formatted by the Executive Office. Formatting can take up to two weeks for completion.

### **Engaging members**

The draft position statement is sent to DEC members for a period of field review not less than three weeks. Procedures for field review are to be determined by the development team and may include distribution of the paper via the DEC E-Communicator, scheduled webinars or focus groups to gather input, electronic survey, web-based polling, electronic communities, or any other means to allow all DEC members to provide input. Specific procedures for field review must be included in the work plan submitted by the Chair and can be revised before implementing field review based on the specific needs of the position statement. It is required that the draft position statement be distributed to DEC membership by the DEC Executive Office.

### **Synthesizing member and other stakeholders input**

At the conclusion of the field review period, all comments received from



members as well as partners in the field (if collected via survey monkey) are sent to the chair by the DEC Executive Office. The development team reviews the comments and carefully considers edits and changes before the final draft is created. While it is not necessary to incorporate all changes suggested, it is important that all comments be considered. **A report which describes how comments were addressed and reflected in the final position statement must be prepared and submitted to the Executive Office with the final draft.**

### **Approving the final draft**

The DEC Executive Board has provided guidance through established policies and has given the responsibility for development of all position statements to the DEC Executive Office whose job it is to ensure that all DEC position statements are created in compliance with Board policies. It is the responsibility of the Executive Director to create the process for developing position statements and to assure the Board that all policies have been followed. Once completed, a position statement will be provided to the Executive Board at the next scheduled Board meeting as an item on the Required Approvals Agenda. Board meetings are scheduled approximately six times during the year; the Chair should consult the Annual Board Calendar to determine the most appropriate meeting to submit the final paper for approval.

### **Production and distribution of the position statement**

Upon approval of the final document, the document may undergo an additional technical edit (if necessary) and formatted using the Position Statement/Concept Paper template. The names of Workgroup members will be added as an acknowledgement at the end of the document along with any endorsements. The position statement will be posted on the DEC website, included in the next issue of the DEC E-Communicator.

Executive Summaries and the position statement are published in DEC's Journal of Young Exceptional Children. The workgroup leader must submit a word document of the position statement to the YEC Editor within one week of the Executive



Board approving of the workgroup's position statement and executive summary.

### **Review of current position statements**

All DEC position statements are scheduled to be reviewed on a five year schedule. Within one year of the five year expiration, Executive Office staff will send the position statement to the Chair and to at least five additional DEC members to determine if the paper is (1) still current and should be reauthorized for another five years; (2) needs updating; or (3) is no longer relevant and should be retired. The feedback will be synthesized and reviewed by the Executive Director who will take the necessary steps to reauthorize, update, or retire the statement.