

Texas Special Education Continuing Advisory Committee Membership

You are welcome to contact any of the Texas Special Education Continuing Advisory Committee members regarding issues concerning students with disabilities in the State.

If you have specific questions or concerns about parent's or student's rights and regulatory requirements as they relate to special education [complaint investigations, mediations, and due process hearings](#), you may leave a message with the TEA Division of IDEA Coordination's Toll Free Parent Information Line at 1- 800-252-9668. Calls are returned by trained professionals during normal business hours.

- **Lene' Al-Rashid (Austin)**
Stakeholder: Parent
Term expires: February 1, 2011

Lene' Al-Rashid of Austin is a former special education instructor. She has volunteered as an advocate for the ARC of Austin and job coach for the Texas Department of Health and Human Services Volunteer Mailroom. She attended the University of Texas at Austin.

- [Mel Capelo](#) (Pasadena)
Stakeholder: School administrator
Term expires: February 1, 2013

Ismael "Mel" Capelo of Pasadena is an elementary school principal. He is a member of the Texas Council for Exceptional Children, Texas Elementary Principals and Supervisors Association, Texas Association of Gifted and Talented, and Texas Council for Administrators for Special Education. He is also a trustee of the Pasadena Knights of Columbus. Capelo received a bachelor's degree from the University of Texas Pan-American and a master's degree in educational administration from Texas Southern University. He is currently pursuing a doctorate degree from the University of Houston-Clear Lake.

- [Rose Marie Cruz](#) (Laredo)
Stakeholder: Parent
Term expires: February 1, 2013

Rose Marie Cruz of Laredo volunteers as a special education advocate, helping to educate parents on their children's educational rights. Since 1984, Cruz has volunteered her services at schools in Germany, Hawaii, Georgia and Texas. She is a former member of the District Education Improvement Committee for the United Independent School District and former member on the Textbook Review Committee for Texas in 2004. Cruz received a bachelor's degree in accounting from the University of Texas at San Antonio. She is a parent of a child with Dyslexia, ADD and Dysgraphia.

- **Debra B. Emerson (Austin)**
Stakeholder: Representative from child welfare agency responsible for foster care
Term expires: February 1, 2013

Debra Emerson is the child protective services state director for the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services. She is a member of the National Association of State Adoption Programs, National Association of State Foster Care Managers and Interagency Foster Care Committee. In Harris County, she formerly served on the Children's Assessment Center Partner Council and the Child Abuse Task Force. Emerson earned a bachelor's degree from Oregon State University and a master's degree from the University of Washington.

- **Julia Erwin (Montgomery)**
Stakeholder: Parent
Term expires: February 1, 2013

Julia W. Erwin of Montgomery is a former sales representative for West Publishing Inc. She is a member of the State Bar of Texas and a past member of the Texas Young Lawyers Association. She is also an officer of the Stewart Creek Elementary Parent Teacher Organization and Autism Speaks, and a volunteer for Montgomery Little League. Erwin received a bachelor's degree from Texas Tech University and a law degree from the University of Houston.

- **Kathy L. Grant** (Houston)
Stakeholder: Parent
Term expires: February 1, 2011

Kathy Grant of Houston is the judicial assistant for the U.S. District Judge Lynn N. Hughes. Grant has been an advocate for special needs children of Texas for 14 years.

- [Sherri Hammack](#) (Austin)
Stakeholder: Other State Agency representative
(Texas Health and Human Services Commission - Community Resource Coordination Group)
Term expires: February 1, 2011

Sherri Adair Hammack of Austin is the manager of the statewide interagency program known as the Community Resource Coordination Groups of Texas and a children's mental health initiative known as the Texas Integrated Funding Initiative. She works at the Texas Health and Human Services Commission within the Office of Program Coordination for Children and Youth. She received a bachelor's degree in psychology from Texas Woman's University and a secondary education teaching certificate from Texas State University in San Marcos.

- [Marjie Haynes](#) (Huntsville)
Stakeholder: Representative from the state juvenile/adult correction agency (Windham ISD)
Term expires: February 1, 2011

Marjie Haynes of Huntsville is the division director for instruction for the Windham School District. Haynes has worked in the field of special education for more than 30 years. She is a member of the Correctional Education Association. Haynes has served on the Texas Education Agency's Special Education Steering Committee and Juvenile / Adult Special Education Services Committee. A graduate of Stephen F. Austin University, Haynes received a master's degree in educational psychology from Texas A&M University.

- **Teresa Hernandez** (San Marcos)
Stakeholder: Other State Agency representative
(Texas Department of Aging and Disability Services)
Term expires: February 1, 2011

Teresa Hernandez of San Marcos is a program specialist with the Department of Aging and Disability Services, which implements policies to aid long term care services affecting the elderly and people with cognitive or physical disabilities. She has over 20 years experience in the field of long-term services for persons with developmental disabilities. She earned a bachelor of science degree in Communication Disorders from Texas State University.

- [Drusilla Knight-Villarreal](#) (Corpus Christi)
Stakeholder: Teacher
Term expires: February 1, 2011

Drusilla Knight –Villarreal of Corpus Christi has been a special education teacher for 31 years, teaching middle school resource and homebound/hospital students. For 19 years Knight-Villarreal has served as the special education teachers' representative on the Corpus Christi ISD's planning and decision-making team. She has served the Corpus Christi American Federation of Teachers in various positions, including vice president, consultation team member, handbook committee chair, public relations committee member and legislative liaison. For over a decade, she reported on educational issues for both the Flour Bluff Sun and the Coastal Bend Sun newspapers and in a column presenting her views on current issues. She also has been a CASA of Coastal Bend board member for 13 years. Knight-Villarreal received her bachelor's degree in secondary education and a master's degree in special education from A&I University in Kingsville.

- **Diane Taylor** (Stephenville)
Stakeholder: Higher Education Representative
Term expires: February 1, 2013

Diane Taylor of Stephenville is an associate professor of special education and coordinator of the special education program at Tarleton State University. She is a member of the International Association of Special Education and Council for Exceptional Children. She is a past member of the Academy for Educator Development and Texas A&M University System Regents' Initiative for Excellence in Education. Taylor received a bachelor's degree from Tarleton State University, and a master's degree and doctorate degree in special education from the University of North Texas.

- **Jennifer Taylor** (Houston)
Stakeholder: Student
Term expires: February 1, 2013

Jennifer L. Taylor of Houston is a student at the University of Texas at Austin (UT). She played UT Women's Club Volleyball and was a member of the Texas Exes Student Chapter. She also volunteered at the Dell's Children's Medical Center and Habitat for Humanity.

- **Paul Watson** (Flower Mound)
Stakeholder: Parent
Term expires: February 1, 2013

Paul Watson of Flower Mound is a captain and safety analyst with Southwest Airlines. He is a founding board member, committee chair, and campus liaison for the Greater Lewisville Special Education Parent Teacher Student Association. He is also past committee chair and den leader for the Forest Vista Elementary School Cub Scouts. Watson served in the U.S. Air Force and received a bachelor's degree from the U.S. Air Force Academy, and a master's degree in international relations from Troy State University.

- [Shewanda Williams](#) (Houston)
Stakeholder: Parent
Term expires: February 1, 2011

Shewanda Williams of Houston is a charge nurse in long term nursing. Williams makes patient assessments, distributes medications and attends to all patients needs. She is a graduate of Partners in Policymaking, a leadership training program for adults with disabilities and parents of young children with developmental disabilities. Williams received a nursing degree from San Jacinto College. She is a married mother of two boys. Her younger son has cerebral palsy. She is attending school to receive an ASA in nursing.