

State of Delaware

**Delaware's Special Education Partnership  
for the Amicable Resolution of Conflict  
(SPARC) Mediation Program and  
Individualized Education Program (IEP)  
Meeting Facilitation**

2023–2024



February 14, 2025

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# Executive Summary

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The Conflict Resolution Program (CRP), part of the University of Delaware’s Institute for Public Administration, respectfully submits this report to the Delaware Department of Education’s (DDOE) Exceptional Children Resources Workgroup. The following report provides an overview of the work conducted from July 1, 2023, through June 30, 2024, by the Special Education Partnership for the Amicable Resolution of Conflict (SPARC) program. Funded by DDOE, SPARC is an essential statewide program supporting parents and school personnel to work collaboratively to meet the unique educational needs of students with disabilities. SPARC encompasses the provision of three distinct statewide, direct-service programs: (1) The management and implementation of special education mediation services for families and local education agencies (LEAs) who want to resolve differences regarding the education of students with disabilities; (2) The management and delivery of IEP meeting facilitation services to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of IEP meetings; and (3) A collaboration with DDOE and the Parent Information Center (PIC) of Delaware to ensure cultural and linguistic competence in the mediation system. SPARC mediation and IEP facilitation bring together parents and educators in conversation to promote outcomes that benefit students, parents, schools, and districts alike and encourage positive relationships between schools and families.

This report provides an overview of work conducted this year. It includes detailed case information to assist DDOE with federally mandated reporting and more general program data to evaluate the effectiveness of the SPARC program.

SPARC has served  
Delaware families, students  
and educators for over

**28**  
*years.*

SPARC staff are on-call to respond to calls and emails from parents and educators who need assistance with a special-education-related conflict. During the 2023–2024 reporting year, SPARC processed 52 cases, 8 of which went to mediation resulting in 15 mediation sessions. Parties were offered mediation after filing a state complaint, requesting a due process hearing, or making a direct request for mediation. A post-mediation questionnaire is provided to all mediation participants asking about their experiences before, during, and after the mediation to inform program development. Eleven out of 13 respondents said that they would utilize SPARC again.

In addition, there were 15 inquiries made about SPARC services. SPARC staff listened to the callers’ concerns and goals and provided the relevant information about SPARC services or made referrals to other organizations such as DDOE or PIC.

During this reporting year, SPARC received 6 requests to facilitate an IEP Team meeting. SPARC staff facilitated 4 IEP Team meetings. SPARC distributed an IEP Team Meeting Facilitation Feedback Form to all participants following the meeting to understand the team members’ experience with the facilitation process.

# SPARC Overview

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## Background

The Conflict Resolution Program and the Delaware Department of Education (DDOE) collaboratively partnered to create the Special Education Partnership for the Amicable Resolution of Conflict (SPARC) program in 1996. SPARC provides special education dispute resolution services to all Delaware schools and families so disputes can be addressed in a timely and cost-efficient manner. This program fulfills the federal mandates in Part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) that require states to provide mediation for special education disputes. SPARC services support families and schools to work collaboratively to address the educational needs of exceptional students and are ideal for managing disputes related to the IDEA, such as a student’s evaluation, educational classification, services, or placement. SPARC services are voluntary, confidential, and free of charge.

## Purpose

SPARC is a three-prong statewide special-education dispute resolution program serving special education students, their families, and the educators that serve them. The three services offered through SPARC are special education mediation, IEP Team meeting facilitation, and cultural and linguistic competency in the mediation system. Mediation and IEP Team meeting facilitation are ideal services for parents and educators who want to work together but do not always see each other’s perspectives. SPARC services are designed to foster positive working relationships between parents and school personnel by promoting open and honest communication and empowering them to find mutually agreeable solutions to their conflicts.

### *Special Education Mediation*

The goal of SPARC’s special education mediation is to provide families and schools in Delaware with an appropriate way to solve disputes regarding a student’s special education program. Mediation allows all parties to work together in a positive way by creating conditions for constructive dialogue and collaborative decision-making. Agreements reached in mediation are made by the parties in the room and are legally binding.

### *IEP Team Meeting Facilitation*

The purpose of providing an IEP Team meeting facilitator is to help the IEP Team address conflicts as they arise, as well as aid the Team in reaching consensus on the student’s educational program. IEP Team meeting facilitation can support an IEP Team in addressing conflicts early and at the lowest level.

### *Cultural and Linguistic Competence in the Mediation System*

SPARC, DDOE, and SPARC staff worked together to improve the cultural and linguistic competence of the mediation system. The impetus for this work was the publication of the Consortium for Appropriate Dispute Resolution in Education’s (CADRE) cultural and linguistic competence assessment for dispute

*Since 1996, SPARC has served over*

**1,000**

*Delaware families of special education students.*

resolution systems.

## Staff

SPARC is administered through CRP's team of experienced staff who specialize in special education dispute resolution. SPARC staff adhere to the highest standards of ethics, professional competence, and personal integrity. As neutral third parties, they support all sides to work together in the best interest of the student. They are committed to providing confidential and impartial dispute resolution services to those in need. SPARC staff are trained facilitators, mediators, and trainers who complete ongoing professional development annually.

### *Mediator Qualifications*

SPARC maintains a list of special education mediators and their qualifications. SPARC mediators are required to meet a set of minimal qualifications and participate in ongoing professional development that advances their knowledge and skills.

All SPARC mediators must:

1. Complete a basic mediation training from a qualified organization.
2. Successfully serve as an apprentice co-mediator in at least four special education mediations with another SPARC mediator.
3. Successfully serve as the lead mediator, with another SPARC mediator, in at least two special education mediations.
4. Demonstrate a basic understanding of special education terminology, practices, and procedures.
5. Demonstrate a basic understanding of state and federal laws related to special education.
6. Demonstrate effective facilitative mediation techniques, impartiality, and professionalism.
7. Adhere to the Model Standards of Conduct for Mediators (2005) adopted/approved by the American Arbitration Association, American Bar Association, and the Association for Conflict Resolution.
8. Participate in at least twelve hours of professional development related to special education and/or dispute resolution on an annual basis.
9. Not hold primary employment with a local or state education agency.

## Program Procedures

The SPARC program serves schools, districts, and families from across the state by responding to requests for information about SPARC services and by reaching out to parties who are in conflict. SPARC staff provide parties with information about mediation and facilitation services and answer questions about these services. SPARC staff do not give advice, suggestions, or recommendations for how to proceed. If a parent or educator wishes to pursue either service, then SPARC staff will ask them to complete a request form and follow the appropriate procedures.

## *Special Education Mediation*

Mediation cases originate from a due process complaint or a state complaint that is filed with DDOE or through a direct request for mediation that is not affiliated with either type of formal complaint. Once SPARC receives a mediation case, a mediator reaches out to the parties involved to discuss their concerns and explain the mediation process. If both parties wish to participate in mediation, the mediator coordinates the mediation date, time, location, attendee list, and issues to be discussed. During mediation, the mediator guides the participants through a process that promotes dialogue, understanding, and consensus. If the parties resolve their differences, the resolutions reached are documented in a legally binding agreement that must be implemented by all parties. If parties do not resolve their differences, nothing is documented by the mediator. The parties are free to seek other forms of resolution. Once mediation has concluded, participants are asked to complete a SPARC Mediation Participant Questionnaire, which allows participants to rate various aspects of the SPARC program from initial contact through the conclusion of the mediation.

## *IEP Team Meeting Facilitation*

Unlike mediation cases, facilitated IEP Team meetings are only initiated when a parent, school personnel, or district personnel contacts SPARC to request a facilitator. SPARC staff listen to the first party's concerns and explain the role of a facilitator in an IEP Team meeting. Then, staff reach out to the second party and do the same. If both parties agree to have a facilitator attend the meeting, staff create an agenda for the meeting that includes date, time, location, and issues or concerns to be discussed. During the IEP Team meeting, the facilitator guides the participants through the meeting agenda while promoting dialogue, understanding, and consensus. If the Team can work together and resolve their differences, the meeting may conclude with a signed IEP or action plan. If the Team does not resolve their differences, they are free to seek other forms of dispute resolution. Upon conclusion of the meeting, members are asked to complete an IEP Team Meeting Feedback form to rate various aspects of the program and their experience.

## **Report Summary**

The following report discusses the cases SPARC processed during the 2023–2024 reporting year. The data are reported by the type of case, the districts and charter schools involved, the number of mediations conducted, agreements reached, and IEP Team meetings facilitated. This report also outlines additional work completed to meet contract requirements, such as professional development, program development, outreach, and marketing.

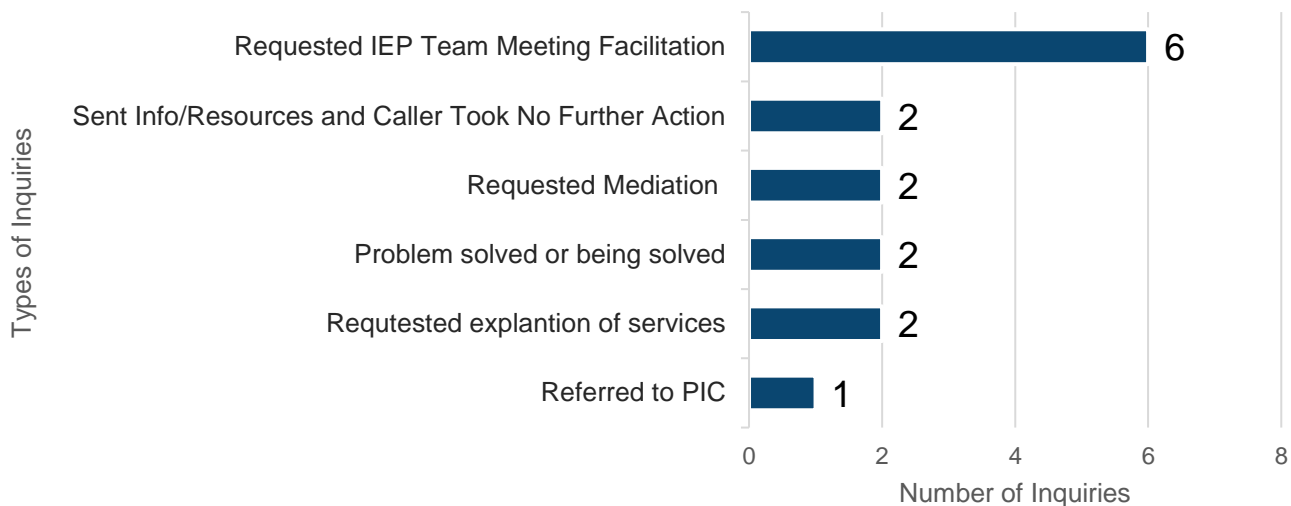
# SPARC Inquiries

SPARC staff are on call to respond to inquiries from families and educators about utilizing SPARC services. These inquiries may occur via telephone, video conference, or email. SPARC staff listen to the inquirer to understand the current conflict and concerns. Staff educate the inquirer about SPARC services and the role of a neutral facilitator or mediator and allow the inquirer to decide how they wish to proceed. SPARC is built on empowerment and self-determination, so it is crucial that participants make their own decisions about how they wish to move forward. SPARC staff do not give advice, suggestions, or recommendations.

While addressing inquiries, SPARC staff may also provide inquirers with resources and referrals to other services. For example, staff may refer a parent to a school-level contact, such as a classroom teacher, school administrator, or district special education director, to address the conflict at the lowest level possible. SPARC staff may also refer a parent to a different organization such as the DDOE's Exceptional Children Resources Workgroup, the Center for Appropriate Dispute Resolution in Special Education (CADRE), the Parent Information Center of Delaware, Inc. (PIC), or another advocacy group.

Between July 1, 2023, and June 30, 2024, SPARC received 15 calls or emails from parents and educators inquiring about SPARC services. SPARC staff listened to the inquirers' concerns and goals and provided the relevant information. SPARC records the outcome of an inquiry in one of the following categories: inquirer requests IEP Team meeting facilitation services (6); inquirer requests mediation services (2); inquirer was provided information/resources and took no further action (2); inquirer said problem was solved or being solved (2); inquirer requested an explanation of SPARC services (2); inquirer referred to PIC (1). The results of the 15 inquiries are listed in Figure 1.

Figure 1. 2023–2024 Inquiry Outcomes by Type



# SPARC Mediation Cases

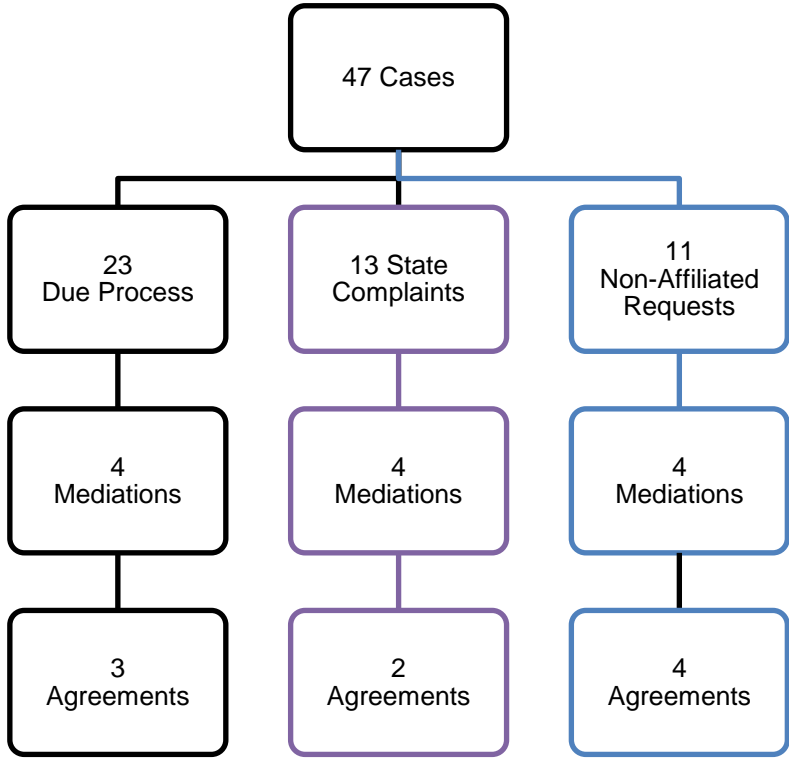
## Overview of Mediation Cases

During the reporting year, July 1, 2023, to June 30, 2024, SPARC staff processed 52 cases. Each SPARC case is assigned a case number and is categorized by both reporting year and case type for federal and state reporting purposes. The case type differentiates the origin of each case and is categorized as either due process (DP), state complaint (SC), or non-affiliated request (NAR).

Due process cases refer to cases initiated after the DDOE receives a due process complaint, and state complaint cases refer to cases initiated after the DDOE receives a state complaint. Non-affiliated request cases are a result of a direct request for mediation not affiliated with either type of formal complaint.

During the 2023–2024 reporting year, 12 of the 47 SPARC processed cases participated in mediation. Of the 12 cases that went to mediation, SPARC staff conducted 15 mediation sessions. The following chart displays the overall distribution of SPARC cases by type, mediations performed, and agreements reached. SPARC processed five Adult and Prison Education Resources (APER) Workgroup cases. These cases are not included in the figures and tables throughout this report, which focuses on cases affiliated with LEAs.

Figure 2. 2023–2024 Mediation Cases\* by Type



\* Note: Figure 2 counts a due process case, and a due process amended as one case.



## Local Education Agencies

SPARC received 52 cases this year. Thirty-nine involved school districts, eight involved charter schools, and five involved the REDACTED. The districts with the most cases were REDACTED (11) and REDACTED (10). Table A provides a list of the school districts and charter schools associated with this year’s cases, the number of mediations performed, and the number of agreements reached.

*Table A. 2023–2024 SPARC Cases by Local Education Agency\**

<b>Local Education Agency</b>	<b>Cases</b>	<b>Mediations</b>	<b>Agreements</b>
<b>School District</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>8</b>
REDACTED	11	4	4
REDACTED	3	0	0
REDACTED	3	1	1
REDACTED	10	1	1
REDACTED	3	0	0
REDACTED	1	0	0
REDACTED	1	0	0
REDACTED	2	2	0
REDACTED	4	3	2
REDACTED	1	0	0
<b>Charter School</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>
REDACTED	2	0	0
REDACTED	2	0	0
REDACTED	1	0	0
REDACTED	1	1	1
REDACTED	1	0	0
REDACTED	1		
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>9</b>

*\*Note: Table A does not include the five REDACTED (REDACTED) cases because they are not a LEA.*

## Reported Issues

The main concern expressed within each case is classified into one of nine possible categories to identify trends. While most cases include multiple issues, SPARC recorded one primary issue. During this reporting year, the most frequently cited issue was “student education program as set forth in the IEP” (16). Table B illustrates the primary issues reported.

*Table B. 2023–2024 SPARC Cases by Primary Issue*

<b>Primary Issue Reported</b>	<b>Cases</b>
Educational Placement	5
Student Educational Program (e.g., academic, functional, and life skills) as Set Forth in the IEP	28
Eligibility for Special Education Services	2
Evaluation for Special Education Services	3
Discipline (including suspension or expulsion)	6
Tuition Reimbursement (e.g., private school)	3
Other:	5
Discrimination Based on Disabilities (1) Not Providing Student’s Educational Records (1) IDEA being Violated (1) Administrators Behavior Escalates Student’s Behavior (1) Unsupervised contact with student. Advocated should be present (1)	
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>49</b>

## Mediations

This year, SPARC mediated 12 cases: 1 with a charter district and 11 with school districts. Five school districts participated in mediations. The most common issues mediated were “student education program as set forth in the IEP” and “discipline (including suspension or expulsion).”

Mediation is a quick and efficient method for addressing differences. On average, mediators scheduled the mediations within 30 days of the request. The average length of a mediation was one hour and forty-five minutes, with individual sessions ranging from twenty-five minutes to three hours. The goal of mediation is to help parties discuss their differences in a safe, respectful environment. *Although this report highlights the number of agreements reached through mediation, it is important to note that it is not the only measure of success. Some cases may not require a written agreement to document the progress made and some cases may require an IEP Team meeting to make changes agreed to in the mediation.* In addition to reporting agreement rates, SPARC asks mediation participants to provide feedback on the experience. Those results are provided at the end of this report.

## Due Process Cases

During this reporting year, SPARC managed 26 due process cases, 2 of which were REDACTED cases. The most frequently cited issues in due process cases were “student education program as set forth in the IEP” (6). Four due process complaint cases participated in mediation, and two reached agreements.

This year there were 18 cases associated with a school district, and 4 associated with a charter school. The distribution of these cases is illustrated in Table C below.

*Table C. 2023–2024 Due Process Cases by Local Education Agency\**

<b>Local Education Agency</b>	<b>Cases</b>	<b>Mediations</b>	<b>Agreements</b>
<b>School District</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>
REDACTED	5	1	1
REDACTED	1	0	0
REDACTED	2	0	0
REDACTED (REDACTED)	6	0	0
REDACTED	1	0	0
REDACTED	1	0	0
REDACTED	2	1	0
REDACTED	1	1	1
<b>Charter School</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>
REDACTED	1	0	0
REDACTED	1	0	0
REDACTED	1	1	1
REDACTED	1	0	0
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>

*\*Note: Table C does not include the two REDACTED cases because it is not an LEA.*

# State Complaint Cases

During this reporting year, SPARC processed 16 state complaint cases: 11 state complaint cases were associated with a school district, 2 were associated with a charter school, and 3 were REDACTED related. The most frequently cited issue in state complaint cases was “student educational program as set forth in IEP” (13). Four state complaint cases went to mediation and two reached an agreement. The distribution of these cases is illustrated in Table D below.

*Table D. 2023–2024 State Complaint Cases by Local Education Agency*

<b>Local Education Agency</b>	<b>Cases</b>	<b>Mediations</b>	<b>Agreements</b>
<b>School District</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>2</b>
REDACTED	3	1	1
REDACTED	1	0	0
REDACTED	1	1	1
REDACTED	3	1	0
REDACTED	1	0	0
REDACTED	1	0	0
REDACTED	1	1	0
<b>Charter School</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
REDACTED	1	0	0
REDACTED	1	0	0
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>2</b>

*\*Note: Table D does not include the three REDACTED cases because it is not an LEA.*

## Non-Affiliated Mediation Request Cases

During this reporting year, SPARC processed eleven non-affiliated request (NAR) cases. Nine were associated with school districts and two with charter schools. The most frequently cited issue in NAR cases was “student educational program as set forth in IEP” (6). Four cases participated in mediation, and all reached an agreement. The distribution of these cases is illustrated in Table E below.

*Table E. 2023–2024 Non-Affiliated Requests Cases by Local Education Agency*

<b>Local Education Agency</b>	<b>Cases</b>	<b>Mediations</b>	<b>Agreements</b>
<b>School District</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>
REDACTED (REDACTED)	3	2	2
REDACTED	2	1	1
REDACTED (REDACTED)	1	0	0
REDACTED	1	0	0
REDACTED	2	1	1
<b>Charter School</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
REDACTED	1	0	0
REDACTED	1	0	0
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>

# IDEA Part B Dispute Resolution

Table F is presented for DDOE in accordance with the U.S. Department of Education’s Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) reporting requirements for Table 7 reporting. This table only includes cases filed between July 1, 2023, and June 30, 2024.

*Table F. 2023–2024 IDEA Part B Data Collections*

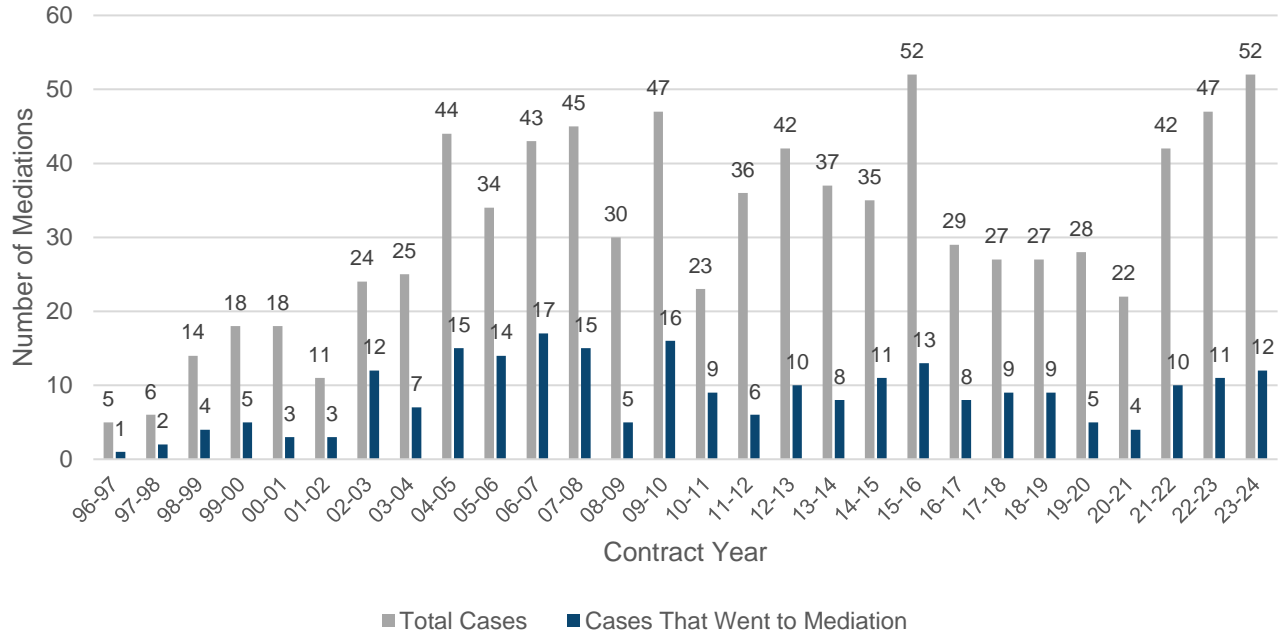
<b>SECTION A: Written, Signed Complaints</b>	
(1) Total number of written, signed complaints filed	16
<b>SECTION B: Mediation Requests</b>	
(2) Total number of mediation requests received through all dispute resolution processes	26
(2.1) Mediations held	12
(a) Mediations held related to due process complaints	4
(i) Mediation agreements related to due process complaints	3
(b) Mediations held not related to due process complaints	8
(i) Mediation agreements not related to due process complaints	6
(2.2) Mediations pending	3
(2.3) Mediations withdrawn or not held	11
<b>SECTION C: Due Process Complaints</b>	
(3) Total number of due process complaints filed*	23

*\*Number contains an Amended Case*

# SPARC Mediation Caseload Over Time

Between 1996 and 2024, SPARC processed over 800 cases and performed 244 mediations. Over the past ten reporting years, SPARC has processed an average of 36 cases per year ranging from 22 to 52 cases per year. The total number of NAR, SC, and DP cases processed each year since 1996 is illustrated in Figure 3 below.

Figure 3. Mediation Cases and Mediations Conducted Since 1996



## LEA Involvement Over Time

Historically, SPARC has processed the most cases in New Castle County school districts compared to the other two counties. This is likely due to the large number of schools in New Castle County. SPARC has processed the most cases from Christina School District (142) and has performed the most mediations with Christina School District (47). A full list of districts and case information is provided in Table G below.

*Table G. 1996–2024 SPARC Cases by County, School District, and Charter*

<b>County and Districts</b>	<b>Cases</b>	<b>Mediations</b>	<b>Mediation Rate</b>
<b>New Castle</b>	<b>511</b>	<b>143</b>	<b>28%</b>
Appoquinimink	84	17	20%
Brandywine	84	22	26%
Christina	162	48	30%
Colonial	62	11	18%
NCC Vo-Tech	11	2	18%
Red Clay Consolidated	108	43	40%
<b>Sussex</b>	<b>124</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>30%</b>
Cape Henlopen	43	16	37%
Delmar	8	2	25%
Indian River	28	8	29%
Laurel	23	6	26%
Seaford	16	3	19%
Sussex County Vo-Tech	6	2	33%
<b>Kent</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>23%</b>
Caesar Rodney	42	17	40%
Capital	31	1	3%
Lake Forest	22	5	23%
Polytech	3	0	0%
<b>Bridge Counties</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>33%</b>
Milford	9	3	33%
Smyrna	26	8	31%
Woodbridge	5	1	20%
<b>Charter Schools<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>97</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>18%</b>
<b>Total<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>870</b>	<b>232</b>	<b>27%</b>

1. Charter School collection began in 2002.

2. This table only includes cases that involve a district or charter school. Therefore, this table does not match the cumulative data, which includes APER Workgroup cases and the Department of Services for Children, Youth & Their Families (DSCYF).



# SPARC Mediation Evaluation

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SPARC solicits feedback from all mediation participants to maintain the highest program standards and understand the experiences of those utilizing SPARC services. Participants can provide feedback by completing a SPARC Mediation Feedback form. Mediation participants are asked to rate their satisfaction with the pre-mediation intake process, the mediators, the mediation process, and the outcome of the mediation. The evaluation also offers a space for respondents to provide more detailed comments associated with their ratings or comments on topics not directly addressed. Participants can complete a feedback form on paper or online.

During the 2023–2024 reporting year, SPARC received 13 evaluations. Based on the evaluation responses, SPARC received high ratings for their communication with parties before and during the mediation, the mediation process, and the outcomes of the mediation. The majority of mediation participants were satisfied or very satisfied with nearly all aspects of their experience with the SPARC program including the time, attention, and communication they received from the SPARC staff. An overwhelming majority felt that the mediator was fair and unbiased throughout the mediation. Ninety-two percent of the respondents said the mediator promoted listening and understanding among participants. The same percentage would utilize SPARC again.



Full details of the 2023–2024 Summary of Mediation Evaluation Results can be found in Appendix A.

# SPARC Facilitated IEP Team Meetings

## Facilitated IEP Team Meetings

This year, there were 6 requests for SPARC IEP Team meeting facilitation. Four of these requests resulted in facilitated IEP Team meetings. The average amount of time spent on an IEP Team meeting per case was 1 hour and 20 minutes, with a range of 60 minutes to 90 minutes. Table H below displays the facilitated IEP Team meetings by local education agency.

*Table H. 2023–2024 Facilitated IEP Team Meetings by Local Education Agency*

Local Education Agency	Meetings
<b>School District</b>	<b>3</b>
REDACTED	1
REDACTED	2
<b>Charter School</b>	<b>3</b>
REDACTED	1
REDACTED	1
REDACTED	1
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>6</b>

## Reported Issues

The primary issue(s) for each inquiry were categorized to identify trends. The most cited issues for facilitated IEP Team meetings were concerns about “student education program as set forth in the IEP” and “educational placement.” Table I summarizes the primary issues reported for this year.

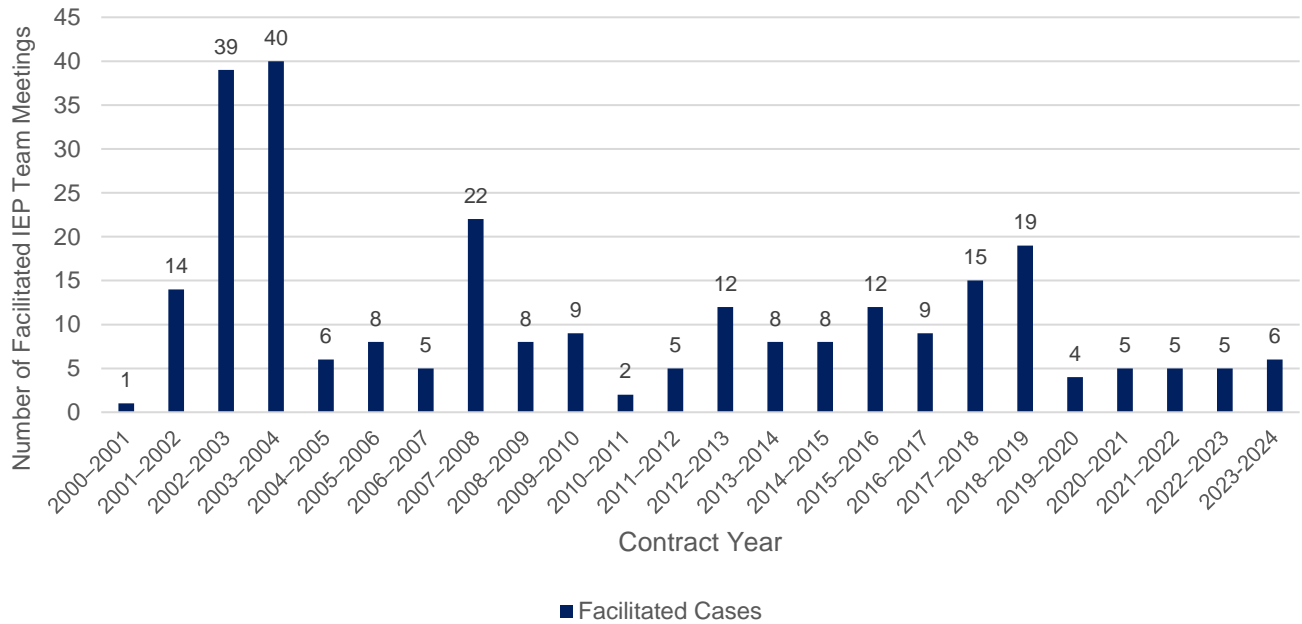
*Table I. 2023–2024 Facilitated IEP Team Meetings by Primary Issue*

Primary Issue Reported	Cases
Student Educational Program (e.g., academic, functional, and life skills) as Set Forth in the IEP	2
Educational Placement	2
Other	2
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>6</b>

## Facilitated IEP Team Meetings Over Time

Between 2000 and 2024, SPARC has facilitated 267 IEP Team meetings. Over the past ten reporting years, SPARC has facilitated an average of nine IEP Team meetings per year ranging from four to nineteen meetings per year. The number of meetings each year since 2000 is illustrated in Figure 4 below.

Figure 4. Facilitated IEP Team Meetings Since 2000



Historically, SPARC has facilitated the most IEP Team meetings in New Castle County school districts, likely due to the large number of schools in this county. SPARC has facilitated the most IEP Team meetings with Christina School District (46). A full list of districts and charter schools, and the number of facilitated IEP-Team-meeting cases in each district is provided in Table J below.

*Table J. 2000–2024 Facilitated IEP Team Meetings by County, School District, and Charter*

<b>County and Districts</b>	<b>Facilitated IEP Team Meetings</b>
<b>New Castle</b>	<b>129</b>
Appoquinimink	21
Brandywine	15
Christina	46
Colonial	23
Red Clay Consolidated	24
<b>Sussex</b>	<b>59</b>
Cape Henlopen	27
Delmar	3
Indian River	20
Laurel	2
Seaford	3
Sussex County Vo-Tech	4
<b>Kent</b>	<b>36</b>
Caesar Rodney	18
Capital	6
Lake Forest	10
Polytech	2
<b>Bridge Counties</b>	<b>22</b>
Milford	15
Smyrna	7
<b>Charter Schools</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>278</b>

### Facilitated IEP Team Meeting Feedback

An IEP Team Meeting Facilitation Feedback Form is distributed to all participants at the end of the meeting to understand the Team members’ experiences with the facilitation process. SPARC asks Team members to complete the form in-person or online. The Feedback Form queries participants about their experience before, during, and after the IEP Team meeting facilitation. The IEP Team Meeting Feedback Facilitation Form can be found in Appendix B.

# Professional Development for Mediators

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SPARC mediators are required to participate in twelve hours of professional development, annually, in mediation and/or special education law. Below is a list of professional development activities for the 2023-24 project year.

## *Association for Conflict Resolution Conference (ACR)*

On October 4–6, 2023, SPARC staff members (Kathy Murphy, Joy Jordan, Sarah Marshall, and Valdese West) attended the 2023 ACR Conference, held at the Jimmy and Rosalyn Carter School for Peace and Conflict Resolution at George Mason University in Arlington, Virginia. SPARC staff participated in mediation, facilitation and restorative justice workshops including one workshop devoted entirely to special education dispute resolution.

## *Mediate.com Mediation and Mental Health Webinar*

Joy Jordan, Sarah Marshall, and Valdese West attended a four-hour webinar entitled Demystifying Distress on May 14, 2024, which was offered through Mediate.com. The webinar examined how to shift our normal to understand ways distress manifests differently for different people and how to take a trauma-informed approach to working with those differences while also setting appropriate and transparent boundaries to challenging behaviors.

## *Special Education Legal Update*

All SPARC staff members participated in Perry Zirkel, Esquire's three-hour Special Education Legal Update webinar on November 9, 2023. The DDOE offered this webinar to Delaware due process panel members, investigators, and SPARC mediators and facilitators.

## *Cleveland Center for Mediation*

On August 18, 2023, Joy Jordan, Sarah Marshall, and Valdese West attended a day-long virtual training workshop entitled Intro and Advanced Facilitation Skills.

# Program Development, Outreach, and Marketing

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Each year, SPARC staff reach out to stakeholders across the state to increase awareness of the program and ensure the program is meeting the needs of districts, charter schools, and families of special education students. Staff promote SPARC services by distributing printed materials, sharing website links, and having discussions with parents, educators, and relevant advocates. They also meet with members of the Exceptional Children Resources Workgroup to assess the SPARC project and discuss concerns and new ideas.

## SPARC/DDOE Meetings

SPARC staff met with key members of the Exceptional Children Resources Workgroup to assess the efficiency and effectiveness of the SPARC program. These meetings promote an exchange of ideas and information around special education trends, best practices, policies, and laws. They also provide a forum for the continuous improvement of SPARC services and practices.

SPARC and DDOE staff met periodically throughout the year to discuss data collection for SPARC, Table 7, and the new Trends Report.

SPARC staff attended a DDOE Leadership meeting on September 13, 2023, to share information and handouts on the SPARC program.

SPARC staff met with DDOE personnel and a representative from PIC every month to discuss cultural and linguistic competencies for the mediation program. The result of these meetings was several presentations to parents, advocacy groups and schools to get feedback about SPARC and the mediation program. We also created a cultural and linguistic competency rubric that we will use going forward.

## Marketing

SPARC staff continue to maintain and update the SPARC webpages housed on the University of Delaware's website. We also reprinted the SPARC brochure in English and Spanish. SPARC distributed these brochures to parents and educators during in-person mediation sessions and facilitated IEP meetings. We also distributed the brochures at the DDOE Leadership meeting.

## Video Training Series

SPARC staff created six asynchronous workshops for educators designed to strengthen relationships with parents. The video workshop series teaches IEP Team meeting best practices that include interpersonal communication skills, collaborative problem-solving, culture competence, and the importance of diversity. The goal of these workshops was to provide educators with strategies, skills, and tools to communicate effectively, manage conflict, and work collaboratively with parents prior to and during IEP Team meetings. Each workshop contained a narrated video, handouts that encouraged reflection and action planning, and pre- and post-tests. The six workshops were upload to Schoology where educators can register and participate in the courses. DDOE and SPARC collaborated on a flyer to market the workshops to educators in Delaware. The courses and participation data are displayed in Table K.

Table K. Video Participation Data

Course	Registered for Course	Completed Course	Completed Pre-Test	Pre-Test Average Score	Completed Post-Test	Post-Test Average Score
<b>1. Effective Conflict Management Strategies (PDMS# 31708)</b>	319	271	295	2.42/5 48.47%	271	3.23/5 64.5%
<b>2. Communication Skills for Managing Conflict (PDMS# 31709)</b>	193	163	170	2.48/5 49.53%	163	2.89/5 57.79%
<b>3. Planning and Leading Effective IEP Team Meetings (PDMS# 31710)</b>	144	112	120	2.83/5 56.5%	112	3.17/5 63.39%
<b>4. The Role of an IEP Team Meeting Facilitator (PDMS# 31711)</b>	125	92	99	2.57/5 51.31%	92	3.38/5 67.61%
<b>5. Cultural Competency and Diversity (PDMS# 31712)</b>	176	138	140	3.62/5 72.43%	138	4.2/5 84.06%
<b>6. Building Consensus in IEP Team Meetings (PDMS# 31713)</b>	142	114	117	3.68/5 73.5%	114	4.03/5 80.53%

# Appendix A: 2023–2024 Mediation Evaluation Results

Responses = 13

*\*Note: Some respondents did not answer all the questions on the evaluation.*

### Pre-Mediation Communication with SPARC Staff

1. Prior to mediation, the SPARC staff member listened to your concerns and answered your questions about the mediation process.

<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>10</b>
<i>Not at all</i>	<i>A Little</i>	<i>Somewhat</i>	<i>True</i>	<i>Very True</i>

2. The mediator thoroughly explained the role and responsibilities of both the mediator and the participants relative to the mediation process.

<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>10</b>
<i>Not at all</i>	<i>A Little</i>	<i>Somewhat</i>	<i>True</i>	<i>Very True</i>

3. The mediator worked with all participants to schedule a mediation date, time, and location that satisfied all parties.

<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>11</b>
<i>Not at all</i>	<i>A Little</i>	<i>Somewhat</i>	<i>True</i>	<i>Very True</i>

### The Mediator and Mediation Process

4. The mediator promoted listening and understanding among the participants.

<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>10</b>
<i>Not at all</i>	<i>A Little</i>	<i>Somewhat</i>	<i>True</i>	<i>Very True</i>

5. The mediator helped clarify and prioritize all concerns.

<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>10</b>
<i>Not at all</i>	<i>A Little</i>	<i>Somewhat</i>	<i>True</i>	<i>Very True</i>

6. The mediator encouraged participants to offer their own solutions and to determine the outcome of the mediation.

<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>9</b>
<i>Not at all</i>	<i>A Little</i>	<i>Somewhat</i>	<i>True</i>	<i>Very True</i>

7. The mediator was fair and unbiased throughout the mediation.

<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>11</b>
<i>Not at all</i>	<i>A Little</i>	<i>Somewhat</i>	<i>True</i>	<i>Very True</i>



8. The mediator drafted an agreement that was written in the participants' own words.

<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>9</b>
<i>Not at all</i>	<i>A Little</i>	<i>Somewhat</i>	<i>True</i>	<i>Very True</i>

9. The mediator facilitated an inclusive environment where all parties felt welcome.

<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>10</b>
<i>Not at all</i>	<i>A Little</i>	<i>Somewhat</i>	<i>True</i>	<i>Very True</i>

### Mediation Outcomes

10. Mediation had a positive influence on my relationship and communication with the other party.

<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>9</b>
<i>Not at all</i>	<i>A Little</i>	<i>Somewhat</i>	<i>True</i>	<i>Very True</i>	<i>N/A</i>

11. Based on this experience, would you utilize SPARC again?

<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>11</b>
<i>Maybe</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Yes</i>

12. How did you learn about SPARC mediation services?

<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>
<i>Other</i>	<i>SPARC Website</i>	<i>DOE Website</i>	<i>School</i>	<i>Brochure</i>	<i>Word of Mouth</i>

### Additional comments or suggestions.

We had a great experience today! The mediator was wonderful in prepping me for how the process would go, as this was my first experience. I really appreciated the level of communication!

It was a very good experience from beginning to end. Everyone was polite and knowledgeable. I appreciate the process.

We did not reach a resolution, that was the only reason one (an agreement) was not drafted.

We thoroughly enjoyed working with the mediator and the SPARC appointed interpreter. Please be sure to provide these surveys in alternative languages.

# Appendix B: 2023–2024 Facilitated IEP Meeting Feedback Form

Responses = 0

## Pre-Meeting Communication with SPARC Staff

**How satisfied were you with the staff’s willingness to listen to your concerns and answer your questions about a facilitated IEP meeting?**

*Not at all                      A Little                      Somewhat                      Satisfied                      Very Satisfied*

**How satisfied were you with the time, attention, and information you received from staff prior to the facilitated IEP meeting?**

*Not at all                      A Little                      Somewhat                      Satisfied                      Very Satisfied*

**Did you feel the creation of a meeting agenda assisted in outlining your concern(s) and helped the team be prepared to discuss the concerns you wanted to address?**

*Not at all                      A Little                      Somewhat                      True                      Very True*

<b>The Facilitator...</b>	<b>Not True 1</b>	<b>A Little 2</b>	<b>Some-What 3</b>	<b>True 4</b>	<b>Very True 5</b>
Was helpful in the meeting.	0	0	0	0	0
Promoted listening and understanding among team members.	0	0	0	0	0
Was fair and unbiased throughout the meeting.	0	0	0	0	0
Heard and understood my concerns.	0	0	0	0	0
Helped clarify and prioritize all concerns.	0	0	0	0	0
Kept the group focused and kept the meeting moving forward.	0	0	0	0	0

Please circle the response that best represents your experience.

**IEP Meeting Facilitation Outcome**

**Having a facilitator in the meeting had a positive influence on my relationship and communication with the other team members.**

*Not at all      A Little      Somewhat      True      Very True*

**The facilitator helped the team overcome challenges and won't be needed for future meetings.**

*Not at all      A Little      Somewhat      True      Very True*

**Overall, participating in a facilitated IEP meeting was a positive experience.**

*Not at all      A Little      Somewhat      True      Very True*

**Based on this experience, I would utilize SPARC again and/or recommend mediation to others.**

*No      Maybe      Yes*

Additional comments or suggestions:

(None)

**I participated in this meeting as a representative of:**

Parent/Student Concerns       District/School Concerns