

Increasing Collaboration at State Education Agencies: Providing Support for Students with Disabilities in Charter Schools

Slides 1, 2, 3, 4

NOTE: Some technical difficulties resulted in the loss of audio at the beginning of this webinar.

BETH: ...I am Beth Giovannetti, and I'm actually filling in for our good friend Eileen Ahearn from the National Association of State Directors of Special Education. Eileen apologizes that she can't be here today with all of you, and I'm going to apologize ahead of time because Eileen is one of the smartest, most deeply experienced person that I know in the area of special education and in particular in the area of special ed in charter schools and I have some big shoes to fill by filling in for her today, but I'm going to do the best I can do to fill her shoes and I'm certain that, with the help of Teri and Becky, this will be a very productive session.

Slide 5

Peggie was going to review the agenda for parts in a minute, but I'll quickly go through and just kind of lay out the groundwork for the next hour together. I'm going to do a little bit of an introduction and background on the webinar. We're going to lay the groundwork with a review of charter school legal identity. A lot of this may be information that is very familiar to the professionals and our colleagues that are on the phone with us today, but we think it's important to really take a look at the world in which charter schools are operating and to think a little bit about charter school legal identity from state to state before we jump into a couple of really wonderful models coming from Michigan and Idaho with some of our friends Teri and Becky. And then, finally, after we hear from Teri and Becky about the particular models that they are supporting at their state special education, office in Michigan and Idaho, we're going to wrap up by doing an overview of the role of the state education agencies and their interaction with charter schools and then we'll wrap up with a Q & A.

We realize that a number of you have submitted questions prior to today, and we have those questions here. We also want to remind you that in the bottom left-hand corner, there is a box where you may type questions as we go throughout this next hour, and I'll be looking at those questions and writing some questions down. We'll try to get to as many questions as we can, but I know that I'm happy to be available after today to answer questions and I know that you'll have Terri and Becky's contact information so that if we don't get to the questions over the next hour that you really want to post, please feel free to reach out to any of the three of



us with your questions. Does that sound good? Becky and Teri, are you with me on that?

BECKY,
TERI:

Sure.

Slide 6

Okay, great. So let me just start. I'm on slide 6, if you look at your screen. I just want to go through quickly the legal identity of a charter school for special education. As I said earlier, I know this is a review for most of you, but I think it's important to lay this groundwork before we talk about state-specific information. As all of you know, a charter school is either its own LEA, its own Local Education Agency, or part of another LEA for the purposes of special education. Oftentimes Eileen and my colleague and I like to talk about an LEA status or non-LEA for the purposes of special education. If it's non-LEA, that means it's a school of the district in which it resides, usually. LEA status and linkage shape the design and implementation of special education in a charter school. We really have found through the last ten years of our research on behalf of the charter school program at the U.S. Department of Education, which was founded at the National Association of State Directors of Special Education, that the most important determining factor of relationship and responsibility from the state-level office down to service delivery and individual kids in the classroom is to really figure out what is the LEA status of the charter school; what is their relationship to their authorizer, their district, and their state education agency; and rules and responsibilities that guide those relationships.

That takes us to our next area, which is the locus of responsibility for special education. The state education agency holds, as we know, the ultimate responsibility for special education for all schools of the state. That means whether they are independent local education agencies in the form of a charter school or whether they are more traditional LEAs as a regular public school district, the bottom line is that the SEA still holds ultimate responsibility for special education and ensuring it's safe for all students with disabilities in those LEAs. The level of responsibility delegated to a charter school in great part depends on its legal status, which we'll get into in a little bit.

Slide 7

The next slide: Implications of Legal Status: Charter schools that are an LEA and charter schools that are part of an LEA or non-LEA in their status. Charter schools that are independent local education agencies have full responsibility for implementing IDEA and special education laws and regulations. They may hire their own staff or contract with another

LEA or an organization for special education services. Oftentimes we also see a mix of full- and part-time staff that works for the LEA and a mix of staff and employees and then outsourcing particular functions in the area of special education, like related service, for instance, OT, PT, speech and language, or counseling services. Charter schools that are their own local education agency will be monitored by the state education agency in the same manner as any other LEA within that state. Charter schools that are part of an LEA or non-LEA in legal status must negotiate arrangements for service delivery in the charter school within their LEA. So, oftentimes charter schools that have non-LEA status will have a very strong relationship to their district and negotiate a relationship or contract with their districts for special education service delivery in their school. This agreement should detail all aspects of the relationship with the LEA in a contract or an MOU, which, as Eileen points out here, is a step that's often overlooked. We believe very strongly that this relationship, this contractual relationship, has to be defined pretty specifically in terms of how the charter school will work with the LEA or the district around special education service delivery; who will do what, how will it happen, how many times per year, for instance, will a child receive a related service for how much time during the week, et cetera. We think the more detailed that relationship can be, the better.

Slide 8

Moving to slide 8: The State Education Role for Special Education in Charter Schools: This is something that I know all of us struggle with. One of the things that Eileen Ahearn and other colleagues often talk about is that the federal law was written long before we had these new kinds of educational reform that we call charter schools. And so, what's happened is that all of us have had to figure out how to sort of retrofit this new kind of education reform to a federal law that is highly specific and highly prescriptive. In the charter school laws, all of us know that there are 41 states and DC that have charter school legislation and none of them are just like the other. They're all very, very different, but the one thing that they do, unfortunately, have in common is that charter schools rarely address the topic of special education and how charter schools specifically should deliver special education in their school or the rules and responsibilities and the legal status and how the state education agency, districts, authorizers, and charter school leaders can best work together. So, the state education agency special education office will relate very differently with charter schools based on their legal status, what we touched on earlier, whether they're a local education agency for the purpose of special education or whether they're non-LEA and a school of the district.

There will always be a policy tension between charter schools and special

education. There's an exchange, a higher level of accountability for a higher level of independence and autonomy. And that policy tension, sort of, is created because IDEA is a very highly prescriptive and specific piece of federal legislation. There is that policy tension or that pull and the other thing that I think we need to consider is that charter schools are schools of choice and oftentimes there is a policy tension between the IEP decision-making process in a charter school and the fact that the parents have made a choice to have that child in that school. Each state's SEA special education office needs to develop a specific plan for supporting and overseeing special education in the state's charter schools. So, to the extent that we, once again, can be as specific and detailed around the relationship between the state education agency and the charter schools within that state, whether they be LEA or non-LEA and part of a district for special education, we need to have a very specific plan to the extent that we can from the SEA for supporting and overseeing special education in the state's charter schools. The remainder of this webinar provides information about two models for state support for charter schools. And I'm seeing Teri coming up in the box on my left, that she is muted. Teri, are you with us?

TERI: I'm back.

BETH: Oh, you're back—okay, good.

TERI: They muted me, but it's, like, oh, but I'm supposed to talk now!

BETH: All right, I was a little worried. All right, she's back with us. So, Teri, I was just saying that the remainder of the webinar provides information about two models for state support for charter schools and I was just getting ready to introduce you and the Idaho model.

Slide 9

I want to jump to slide 9 and talk a little bit about Idaho and Michigan. Obviously, Teri will get into much greater detail about Idaho than I'm going to cover here, but I wanted to just give you some highlights of what things look like for special ed in charter schools in Idaho, and then Becky will talk a little bit more about Michigan later. So, in Idaho, the charter school law passed in 1998.

TERI: Becky is with Idaho, and Teri is with Michigan.

BETH: Did I flip you guys around?

TERI: Yes.

BETH: Okay, sorry about that, you guys. So, in Idaho, the charter school law passed in 1998, 40 charter schools operated during SY10–11. The Idaho charter school law allows for two types of charter school status, LEA and part of another LEA, so the non-LEA legal status. Authorizers are LEAs or the Idaho Public Charter School Commission, and charter school applications in Idaho are called petitions. In Michigan, the charter school law passed five years earlier, in 1993. Charter schools are called public school academies. There are 241 charter schools operating in SY10–11. All public school academies are their own LEAs, and the authorizers are local school districts, intermediate school districts, community college boards, and state public university boards. And I'm sure that we'll talk more about each of those entities a little bit later, and Teri will share more information.

END OF CHAPTER 1, START OF CHAPTER 2

Slide 10

BETH: I'd like to turn it over to Teri, and she can talk a little bit about the Michigan model for state education agency and special education support for charter schools.

TERI: Okay, hi, everyone. First, let me describe my role and my job description a little because I actually have two different positions. You noticed on an earlier slide that it said I worked for CS Partners and for the Michigan Department of Education. CS Partners is a charter school management company here in Michigan, and I serve several schools across the state as their special education director.

My second job, then, is to work with the Michigan Department of Education in the Office of Special Education and Early Intervention Services—we call it OSE-EIS for short. That job entails about ten to fifteen hours a week. I do a variety of different things for the state, depending on what the needs are at the time. So, I'm going to discuss with you just my four primary responsibilities under my contract with the Office of Special Education. This first responsibility, I provide technical assistance to the PSAs in Michigan. I tend to use PSAs and charter schools interchangeably, so just bear with me, it means the same thing. I serve as a liaison, and so I provide assistance primarily through phone and e-mail correspondence. I do attend meetings, as I'm asked to go to various meetings or present at conferences, but most of my job is assistance through the phone and e-mails. I might hear from parents, I might hear from folks at ESAs, ISDs, or our 240-plus charter schools, and that number is going up this next year.

The chartering authorizers that Beth spoke about a little bit ago, there are 27 of them total in the state of Michigan, 9 of those are universities and the remainder are all through intermediate school districts or educational service agencies. There are 27 different management companies in the state of Michigan, so it's just another layer of compliance our charter schools jump through. Our other stakeholders, of course, include parents and board members and various service agencies. In my role as a technical assistant, the average number of phone calls that I get per month runs around fifteen, that's the average, because of course I get nothing in the summer. When it's time to do any major reports, those numbers go up tremendously. E-mails tend to be more substantial; I get about 75 of those a month that I answer for a whole bunch of different stakeholders, just depending on whatever their issues or whatever their questions are.

The types of questions that I receive and that I answer through my time, the most frequent one would be on compliance and monitoring. A lot of folks just don't know what they're doing yet. They've read the special education law—they don't know how to translate that into what they're actually doing in their schools, so I do get a lot of compliance and monitoring questions. We also have a system in Michigan called the SIMS, and SIMS is our compliance and monitoring model. So there's a lot of data collection that goes onto that, so I get a lot of questions related to that data collection and the work they have to do in their online workbooks. I also get frequent questions about laws and policies, forms, procedures, what are best practices. A lot of folks are searching for resources. They don't even know where to go to find the right people to talk to. I get questions on assessment, usually around springtime, I get a lot more questions about mediation and then personnel issues, trying to find certified people or what do they have to be to actually qualify to be able to be a special education teacher. So I find a lot of the questions are pretty simple and basic and they just need some guidance in the right direction.

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I also distribute and write a monthly newsletter, it's called *eNews for Charter Schools*, and there are four primary areas that I feature in this e-news, and this has really gained in popularity over the years. I've been doing it for about six years now and I think now I have over 3,500 people that receive this e-mail every month from me. And within this e-mail I check with the state resources and federal resources and try to get as much information back to our locals as I can about what's happening around them and what can improve what they're doing in special education. So, there are four primary areas in my newsletter, the first one is "Did You Know," and that typically just describes a rule or regulation

that's found in IDEA or in the Michigan administrative rules for special education. The choice of what I put in there is usually a direct reflection of the questions that I received from the folks in the field throughout a month's time.

Then I also do a "Resource" section. I either feature a national or a state resource agency. So, for instance, NASDSE has been one of the groups that I have featured in the past, any group that's providing leadership or has information that they can share that will benefit folks in charter schools or in special education in general.

The third area that I do is a "You Need to Know" section because, of course, compliance is a part of special education, so there are always reports that need to be done or things that need to be filed, so I try to get folks connected with the memos and various things that may be of importance to them and may not be of importance to them, but they can just link directly to various topics by going right into that section of the newsletter. And then, I also always put in a professional development piece so they're aware of what's going on statewide or in their own communities, so professional development for special education that will specifically help them. And I also make sure that all the past issues are available online. There's a group in Michigan called MAASE, which is the Michigan Association of Administrators of Special Ed. MAASE has very graciously put all of my information, all the past issues of my newsletter online so people are actually able to go back and research topics that they want further information.

And then, the third part of my responsibility is to participate in the OSE-EIS activities that take place. For instance, I'm a member of the monitoring advisory team. We meet monthly to talk about all the different monitoring issues and how to best serve all schools, not just PSAs. I also serve on the data advisory committee for the state. I coordinate various activities with MAASE, I've worked with them and I also work very closely with Michigan Association of Public School Academies, also called MAPSA, which is like the umbrella organization here in Michigan for charter schools that provide a lot more than just special education services to charters.

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And then, lastly, I think there's a caveat in my contract that says "and other duties as assigned." So that's really where number four comes in here. I do a lot of different work, just depending on what time of year it is, what folks need with the SIMS workbook that I had mentioned earlier. Everybody in the state has to acknowledge that. If folks aren't acknowledging their workbooks, I'm calling the PSAs to say "Hey, what about your workbook? You know, you need to do this," and then guiding

them through it if they need help doing it. So, really, depending on the time of year and whatever the needs are, I will jump in as needed.

And so, in summary, I'm trying to give them appropriate guidance on IDEA, state regulations for special ed. I assist them in maintaining compliance with state and federal mandates, the newsletter, and then I'm also a voice in the Department of Ed. And what I've found over the years is a lot of folks have started coming to me. At first, I was the enemy maybe, but that's really changed over time, where now folks really come to me and if they have an issue it's something we can talk through now and work through and try to figure out how to best help the schools. The PSAs aren't any different anymore than all the other local agencies are. So we do everything we can to try to work together.

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This role was really designed initially because there was a such a need for getting special education services to our students in our charter schools in Michigan. And so there was a dissemination opportunity and the Michigan Department of Education actually hired me to help become that liaison and so I worked with MAPSA for a time, for about two years, really developing this role and then when that grant opportunity ran out, then the Michigan Department of Education hired me outright to assist in whatever way folks need.

And this last quote here was a quote from the chartering office at the Michigan Department of Education. It just says that my position is a vital asset for a PSA program and for OSE-EIS, and it needs to be expanded as choice in education grows throughout Michigan.

Just a couple other things I wanted to share quickly. I'm running over time here a little bit, but the challenge of collaborating that I've seen across the board has been the changing of faces. And for those of you that work in charter schools or with charter schools, I think that school personnel tends to be pretty liquid through some of these schools. Some maintain their people year to year, but there's a lot of change and a lot of fluidity. And so, that's something that I'm always very aware of and I try to mentor, as much as I can, those who reach out to me because there are so many new people that are being put into these positions and really learning the ropes as they go. And then, I've also found the other challenges are, just with all those varying levels of people, you also have varying levels of understanding about regulations, policies, what is best practice. And I also really am challenged always to make sure that our charter schools in Michigan are being offered the same opportunities as their counterparts with 57 different ISDs in Michigan, that means 57 different sets of rules and policies that are used within each community. So, and that translates

into something different for every charter school. So, trying to help all of those areas come together and understand each other, and eliminating any resistance, because what I've also found is sometimes people are resistant to change or resistant to the new person sitting at the table or the people that are the new people are resistant to even going and being a part of that table—so, trying to bring everyone together. The lessons that I've learned along the way is that it's really essential to have someone who is neutral and really understands both sides of that table to begin collaborating well.

And you also have to be well versed in a variety of different areas, not just simply special education—and “simply special ed,” I guess those two words don't go together—but special ed in and of itself, I get a lot of questions that are about assessment or various other topics that really would have nothing to do with special ed. I've also learned to respond very quickly to folks, and sometimes that answer is just simply saying “I'm going to look into that and get back with you.” But I found that people just appreciate some kind of verification that you've listened to them. And people are very good about giving me a little bit of time to find the answers. I never just shoot from the hip. I make sure that I know what I'm talking about, because I don't want people going back and saying “But Teri said...” I also never assume that folks just know what they need to know. I've found that's a very dangerous assumption.

And I think it's also important, not just for myself, but for anyone who's working with charter schools, to pop in to statewide and countywide meetings so people know that you're there. Because one of the difficulties I've had is making sure that people even in Michigan know that I even exist and I still have people that will call me and say “You've been doing this for how long? I didn't even know you were there.” So, I'm still trying to get that message out, because not only do people change at the charter school level, they change at the ISD level. So, when those changes happen, I'm not always aware of that and don't always know who I need to be contacting to say “Hey, by the way, I'm here to help.”

I think opportunities for next steps; when I look at other states, if I had a recommendation to make to the other states, it would really be to look at your own systems and figure out, find ways that you can plug in information for your charter schools. We have a lot of different things in Michigan, requirements that we have to do, and so any time that we can bring a person that understands charter schools into that to talk to the charter schools has been very helpful. Probably the most beneficial thing I've done has been the *eNews for Charter Schools*. That is now being used statewide, not just by charter schools, it's being used by a lot of folks, and I think it provides good information, relevant information, so, finding some kind of a voice where you can get to the most people

possible in the least expensive way possible, is really what I would recommend to the state.

END OF CHAPTER 2, START OF CHAPTER 3

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PEGGIE: Great, thank you, Teri. I think we're going over to Becky right now, but we did have a question come in about the Web address for your e-newsletter. Do you have that Web address handy?

TERI: Actually, what people need to do, if you look over in the box on the left there, it says Michigan example, I've given two examples of the newsletter in there and my e-mail address is on both of those newsletters and all you need to do is just e-mail me and say you'd like to be a part of that and I will add you to the Listserv.

PEGGIE: Great, thank you so much, Teri. So, my apologies. This is Peggie Garcia; we had some technical issues at the beginning. So, thank you, Beth, for jumping right in. We're going to transition over to Becky Martin, who is the student achievement and school improvement School Coordinator at the Idaho State Department of Education. Welcome, Becky.

BECKY: Thank you. [SILENCE]

BETH: Becky, this is Beth. I apologize for interrupting. I'm having a hard time hearing you.

BECKY: Let me adjust. Hang on. Is that better?

BETH: Yes. That better, okay, great. Thanks, Becky.

BECKY: You bet. I'm glad you let me know. As far as my job or my role here at the state department of education, I was originally hired, as it's indicated, last year to support charters in the area of special education. I think because they too saw the need of charter support in the area of special education, there was very little knowledge out there and they were struggling. Throughout this last year, we saw the direction that OSEP was taking with their efforts of alignment between the ESEA and IDEA with the hopes of ensuring that all children have the services and supports they need to excel. And so, we determined that we needed to mirror OSEP's efforts to support Idaho's charters. In our charters, we see many administrators wearing more than one hat, and so this model allows us to build those relationships with the administrators that are wearing several hats, and

I've seen that already it's made a big difference in our relationships.

As you know, RTI can be a precursor to special education, and the strategies within the RTI model can support students with disabilities, so having that extra support within a charter is very important. So, although my primary role is special education, it's extended to support charters with at-risk students. As far as the main aspects of my position, it's a collaboration model. I collaborate with the special ed department for the most part, but I also extend that collaboration with the federal program coordinators, and this can be something as simple as seeing a need within a charter and aligning that need to a specific coordinator. Or it could be something as far as supporting a scheduled monitoring process within a charter. So, that can look differently based on a situation. And I also collaborate with Idaho school choice coordinator Michelle Clement Taylor, and so, as you can see, a lot of my job is spent collaborating and helping teams be aware of all that is going on.

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As far as the special education component of my job, it's basically to ensure that students with disabilities that attend charters receive what they need and are entitled to by the law. Through the collaboration with Michelle Clement Taylor, our school choice coordinator, I'm involved from the petition portion of the charter process, concerning just the special education portion, and along with this is a sheet that I've created to help during that process. We call it the sufficiency review checklist or list, and that's developed just to provide more clarification for petitioners so they understand all the aspects of special education and the continuum of services that they must consider when they open a charter. After the charter petition has been approved and becomes a charter, then we provide a special education verification process throughout that first year that they're open. And this allows us to verify that a charter is prepared to provide students with special education on the continuum and from the first day that they open. Then, during that first year, we follow up with more visits to verify that they are able to provide those services—and it's great to have that verification because throughout that process, I'm able to provide technical assistance as they need it throughout that first year. And all through that process, from the sufficiency through the verification, we're building rapport. That's the endeavor, to build that rapport so they know they have someone they can go to with questions and for support. And from the state perspective, it also allows us to see charter strengths, or maybe their areas of need where we need to provide more technical assistance. Then, from that point of view, it assures us that a charter is providing IDEA in faith. So that's a big part of what I do that I think has really helped provide those relationships that are needed.

Now, the Idaho Training Clearinghouse is a website that is just fabulous when it comes to supporting all special education within the whole state of Idaho, whether it's charters or parents or districts, schools, and I'll show you a slide of that here in just a minute, but let me tell you quickly, it is funded by the Idaho State Department of Special Education and it's designed to link teachers, parents, to resources and training opportunities across the state. So, when you get on that site, you're able to see a training calendar. You can register online for trainings or webinars. And they also have webinars that are archived. It's just a huge area of support, especially in the area of special education.

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Let me show you quickly what that looks like. This is the website, and you'll see this is just the charter website, but on this website you'll see learning communities, that's one of the buttons. As you click on that, then you'd find charters, but also you'd find our monitoring program with webinars on how to go through that process. It has alternate assessments, RTI, just a variety of things that can help those schools, and you'll see on the left, they even have frequently asked questions in every area within the learning community. You'll have those kinds of questions that someone can go to first if they have a question. If they don't, they know who to contact, the specialist in that area, who they can contact for their question. So it's a great resource.

And a little bit later I'm going to talk to you about, we too have done a newsletter in the past, but we've decided—or I shouldn't say "we"—my special ed director, Rich Henderson—and I think it's a great idea—instead of doing the newsletter, we're going to be providing webinars. I'll get into that a little bit later.

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Now, this slide indicates, of course, that I participate in trainings and conferences, and through this process, we provide materials and training, we create those or I cocreate those with my colleagues here at the state department of ed. We also coordinate with our new teachers, we have a new teacher program and a state mentoring program that we coordinate and, just as Teri said, as far as phone and e-mail, depending on the time of year: It can be anything from monitoring to laws, policies, best practice; it can be parents; it can be staff at a charter—it just depends on the time of year. I do probably close to twenty e-mails a day that come in with questions and it can be a variety of people. Like I said, it can be anything from parents to staff or colleagues. That's a lot of my time that goes towards that piece of technical assistance.

Now, the quarterly newspaper, as I said, in order to provide a more efficient way to get those current issues out, we will no longer do a newsletter, we'll do a webinar, and this webinar will be a series for Idaho directors, and it will be provided in lieu of the newsletter. Now, it'll be provided live and then it can be archived, again, on that website that I showed you earlier. And this will provide them with any documents they may need to support any current issues, plus they can access it at any time, and this year is the pilot for this webinar versus the newsletter. And so, when we're done with this year, we'll have our LEA special ed directors give us an effectiveness measure on which they prefer, whether it's the newsletters or the webinars. And we hope it's something that will provide them with the current issues right away and something they can review and go back to.

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Now, as far as the collaboration with the title I programs in the school improvement: This portion again is new, and our Title I team is strong, and they're an amazing group of people with a wealth of knowledge. And as we approach this extension of my job to look at all students that are at risk, we know that any student that is at risk could potentially become a special ed student, therefore to support charters in this area of RTI, whether it's with special education director or lead teacher, that is oftentimes wearing that title I hat and the RTI hat as well, and so this way it allows us to provide them with all the resources and information they need, whether it's about title I funds, trainings, RTI webinars, AIMSweb, anything in that area.

All right. As far as the school choice coordinator, as I mentioned, it's Michelle Clement Taylor, she is a wealth of knowledge, and I know that Idaho charters have come to trust her support of them in their endeavors. She works to provide assistance to groups that are interested in starting charters and manages the federal charter grants. She supports charter founders through their planning and implementation as well as the dissemination efforts. And she's available to be a resource to our Idaho Public Charter School Commission, which we mentioned earlier was created in 2004 to serve as an alternative statewide authorizer for our public charter schools. The commission consists of seven governor-appointed members and they too are amazing educational leaders. They work very hard to be that leader for charters that helps them prepare to be successful, so when they open, they're successful.

Now, the second two bullets are a little misleading, so let me clarify. I am available to provide information to the commission as invited and Michele and I are working on our authorizer manual and are working to coordinate

our efforts to educating charter authorizers, along with providing more technical assistance.

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Now let's talk about some of the benefits that I've seen in this position. I can tell you that it's a savings in many areas. As you said, it just makes sense when we share our efforts we're able to see and serve with a broader scope. So, there are savings automatically just with this collaboration model in serving charters. It provides administrative support for special education that is seldom available to those charter staff. So, charters have told me, they know that when I call or stop by, I'm there to help, and I am. And they know that we want them to succeed while serving all students. We're monitoring our efforts so that we're making it this time, basically we're monitoring our monitoring, and we believe this support will help charter schools avoid the errors that involve them in the consequences of noncompliance and complaints and due process. So, we truly believe that our efforts will help charters and consequently help students. Our effort keeps charter schools connected to the rest of the public education. That's really our goal in Idaho, is to include charters in the information loop of professional development, in trainings, and anything that happens for all of our LEAs, we want charters to be aware of that and participate alongside their colleagues in the traditional public schools.

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Lessons Learned: Well, I think that educating authorizers is the first critical step, and if I were to give any state any kind of information as far as what would help you, I've found these first two bullets are probably the best information you could receive as far as first making sure that your authorizers understand what it takes to authorize a charter and what that means. And then the second piece is educating founders of a charter before they develop their petition or during the development of their petition. That way they're aware of all of those pieces of special education that so often if you're not involved in special education, you just have no idea the depth of it. And therefore, educating the authorizers and the founders is the most important and most valuable step. The third point is they need—our founders need—to view the state department of education as help. I think I've been able to win that over with our new charters. It's a little more difficult to break down the walls with charters that are already in place, but I'm working on it, and I think that's just part of what charters have found in their process, they want us to help them and sometimes it doesn't come off that way. So we're working really hard on that.

Technical assistance helps applicants and authorizers avoid those errors

that are often passed on from poorly informed colleagues and oftentimes in the charter world they'll talk with one another, and they may be provided misinformation, and so that's a big portion of what I do, is to provide that accurate information. And I do that by exactly what we talked about: by being at those meetings, making those personal contacts with those charter administrators, building those relationships—that's how we're able to do that.

Lastly, as you know, charters are very unique, and that's what I love about charters, is that uniqueness that they have, but serving them from the state department of education point of view, you have to be creative. And it's—I too find that in order to help them I have to be right on top of things when they e-mail me, when they call, I do my best to return those calls as fast as I can so they have those answers that they're needing.

I think that does it for my portion. I will just sign off telling you that again, if I've not answered some of your questions, my information is there, I'll be happy to provide more information or if I need to clarify any information. Thank you very much.

Slide 20

BETH: We so appreciate all of this great information, and I think, Teri and Becky, you guys have provided us with a ton of information, really good information, important information for state education agencies in a very short period of time. Before I summarize the responsibilities of the SEA offices, we had a really good question for you, Becky, from a participant. He wanted to know what funding sources support the position and the work, and I'm assuming that this question really would apply to both Michigan and Idaho. So, Teri and Becky, if you could very quickly just answer that question.

BECKY: So, repeat the question for me, please.

BETH: So, what funding sources support each of your positions and the work that you're doing?

BECKY: Mine is supported through federal funds.

TERI: So is mine.

BETH: I'm sorry, Teri, can you say that again?

TERI: Mine is as well, I'm supported through federal funds.

BETH: Okay, and what pot of federal money specifically? Are we talking about like IDEA part B funds or ...

BECKY: Yes, mine is part B funds.

TERI: Mine as well.

BETH: Okay, great. Great. I know folks at the state education agencies that are with us are always trying to think creatively about how they can bring more resources to the table, but funding, as we all know, is oftentimes an issue, so I think it's good to share that information with our folks on the phone. Both Teri and Becky, I think, hit on really important themes. In each of their discussions, they talked about the challenges of working in the field with charter schools and charter school leaders in the sense that there's lots of changing faces, there are varying levels of understanding from school to school, but each of them touched on a couple of big things that I think are important to highlight:

There must be a neutrality in this role that they serve so that folks know they genuinely would like to support special education in charter schools and they're willing to work together collaboratively with other agencies to plan joint professional development and technical assistance. They also talked about the importance of the intersection between special ed and charter schools and really understanding both and in providing support, the need to get back to folks quickly. Let charter school leaders understand that we are listening to them and that, even if we don't know the answer, we will find out the answer and we will get back to them as quickly as possible. Both of our colleagues, it sounds like, are constantly available via phone and e-mail, and they're collaborating with special education, they're collaborating with federal programs, and they're also collaborating with the school choice programs within their states. Another overriding theme that I heard is the importance of building rapport with schools, so that not only will there be that trust in that relationship there through which the work can happen, but it also gives the state education agency a view and some insight into the areas of strengths that each school has and maybe some of the areas that need additional technical assistance.

So those are the themes that I heard from our colleagues, and my colleague Eileen Ahearn on slides 21 and 22 really just has summarized for us the responsibilities of state education offices, state education agencies, and the special education office within each SEA should really communicate regularly with the state charter school director, participate in review of charter applications for LEA charters, and monitor them in the same way as it does other LEAs. The special education office suggests that they check on special education in charter schools that are part of an

LEA when that LEA is monitored. So we want to be sure that folks understand that a monitoring is coming up, the protocols by which they will be monitored, and if they have any questions or concerns around that monitoring process. Special education offices should add charter schools in the state to the special education mailing list. I think this is very important.

I think both Teri and Becky each touched upon folks that they've come across in the field that didn't know they were out there as a resource and support. We want to get that word out to everybody in the field in every way we can, via newsletters, e-mails, websites, and print that there are these resources at the state so that they can utilize them. Consider charter school needs when planning technical assistance and professional development. This is actually a very, very important theme. Oftentimes we may think at the state education agency level that we understand what the needs are and oftentimes they may or may not match with the needs and the challenges that we're seeing play out on the front lines in charter schools. So, I think it's really important to talk to charter school leaders and see what their most recent areas of struggle are and ask them what would they like in terms of technical assistance and professional development. Appoint a lead person on charter schools in the area of special education and notify all charter schools of this resource. Again, Eileen is underscoring here the importance of getting the word out, making folks aware that the special education office is there to support charter schools.

Slide 22

So, the charter schools office within the SEA has a little bit different role, to communicate regularly with the state director of special education, collaborate on oversight responsibilities related to special ed. I think this is a really important point that Eileen makes, because oftentimes folks within the charter school office don't have a great level of education knowledge experience about special education, because their area of work is really specific to charter schools. So we need to share information across the special education office and the charter school office and really help one another understand where the intersection happens, the roles and responsibilities of each office in supporting charter schools in what they're supposed to be doing for all students.

Prepare resources on special ed for charter school authorizers. Becky touched upon this point. We really need to empower authorizers to the greatest extent we can, to understand the roles and responsibilities of a charter school in serving all students, including students with disabilities and struggling students, so that they know how to best prepare them in preauthorization, authorization, and reauthorization stages of

development. Charter schools offices need to become or appoint a lead contact person on special education in the office and notify all charter schools of the available resources for support and assistance on special education. So, again, sharing information between the charter schools office within each state and the special education office within the state, collaborating around technical assistance and the sharing of information. I think at this point I know we're running a little bit over time. Peggie, I'm going to ask you for a little guidance here regarding additional questions that we can take or if we want to go ahead and show folks the resources and then they can follow up with questions with any of us at a later date.

PEGGIE: Right. I think that we don't want to monopolize people's time too much and we did promise to keep this webinar to an hour. So it does look like there's a great deal of interest in the field and Teri and Becky certainly shared some important resources with us. We will definitely consider a follow-up webinar or some kind of follow-up opportunity. So, please do share your questions with us via e-mail and we can try to get those answered as promptly as possible. I would like to thank Eileen for participating via the hospital, Beth for agreeing to facilitate at the last minute, and Teri and Becky for providing really informative, helpful resources that will really inform all of our work. So we'd like to thank you all, all the participants, for your participation and let you know again the webinar will be archived at the following website,

Slides 23, 24, 25

the website that appears on your screen, if you'd like to check out the archive. We're going to send you to a short evaluation so that you can share your feedback with us and help us to improve the quality of future webinars. Thank you again, and have a good afternoon.