



Ohio Association of Pupil Services Administrators

Report of the Executive Director

May 1, 2020

The following is a brief summary of the activities I participated in between February 28, 2020 - May 1, 2020. Further details are available upon request.

During the time period of mid-March through the end of April, all of our lives turned topsy-turvy in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, with a national and a state emergency declared and a stay at home order issued in most states including Ohio. Even the most experienced special education administrators had never been in a situation like this before. Health and safety suddenly became the overriding priority and all of our OAPSA members quickly realized that IDEA and compliance rules were never written for a pandemic situation in which all students needed to receive education in their homes and not in the school buildings. We needed to work together to figure out solutions to problems we never expected to face and we realized we were all in this situation together. Zoom meetings and Zoom webinars popped up unexpectedly on a daily basis while every "in person meeting" which I would typically attend to represent OAPSA was cancelled due to our Stay at Home Order. Due to that situation, instead of multiple reports which I would typically have had for you at our conference on May 1, I have prepared one report for you today. Following are activities in which I participated to offer advice, seek answers and find best resources as we navigated these uncharted waters together connected to the pandemic.

March 10 - Sent questions to ODE's OEC office based on members' concerns and requested answers from OEC so we could prepare if our schools would be ordered to close

March 11 – I sent out update to members and indicated ODE wanted to know all of our questions because they are developing Q and A. OAPSA submitted additional questions to ODE and we got answers back from ODE very quickly by March 14.

March 12- I sent out information to members about a one-hour webinar sponsored by CASE on challenges we are facing due to Coronavirus beginning this Friday. Those webinars continued each Friday (with the exception of April 10) for a total of 6 webinars through the end of April. I attended each of those webinars live time. Each week, OAPSA sent information out to members on how to register for the webinars and then following the webinar, I summarized briefly the content of the webinar and provided a link to the webinar for those who weren't able to attend. CASE reached capacity on each webinar and kept increasing capacity up to

3000 after the first few webinars. I shared with members that CASE was suggesting that we focus on four priorities:

1. Focus on the safety, health, and welfare of students and staff members in your community.
2. Provide FAPE — Deliver services to as many students as you reasonably can in the best way you know how.
3. Document your efforts; make sure documentation is focused, consistent, detailed and demonstrates a good faith effort to provide good services.
4. Compliance during the pandemic — IDEA wasn't built for this.

March 18 - I reached out to Perry Zirkle, who had been our key note speaker at our February 27, 2020 conference. I asked for his advice because our OAPSA Executive Board was struggling with some of the questions our members had sent in and the mixed messages we seemed to be getting from OSEP, OCR and ODE. That resulted in Perry creating a document by the next day titled **COVID-19 and K-12 Students with Disabilities: Initial Guidance** and he asked me to review the draft. By March 20, Perry had that ready for us to release to OAPSA members, while he released to the rest of the country, and he advised special education directors to do the following during this pandemic: “apply common-sense proactive measures... being creative, constructive and collaborative with due consultation with local legal counsel where needed...”

March 20 – I sent message to ODE’s Office of Exceptional Children leaders regarding concerns and confusion regarding the information they had released on March 18, 2020. I requested clarification on that information to be clear that a records review can only be done for a reevaluation (not an initial as seems to be implied). I also indicated we needed clarification because there appears to be conflicting information in that same document about reviewing each IEP to determine the type and frequency of services each student will require during the ordered school building closure period... and revise IEP accordingly. That statement seemed to be in conflict with OCR’s March 16, 2020 Fact Sheet which indicated IEP teams are not required to meet in person while schools are closed.

March 26 – Sent message to explain to members that CEC was asking for one-time infusion of emergency funds for IDEA in a stimulus bill and explained to members how they could voice their support if desired

March 30 – I shared with OAPSA Executive Board a letter drafted by CASE and NASDE to send to OSEP and OSERS and requesting flexibilities with IDEA due to the pandemic. OAPSA Executive Board agreed OAPSA should sign the letter.

March 31 – Signed that letter to OSEP and OSERS on behalf of OAPSA

March 31- Sent out warning to members about Zoom Bombing (after I was in Zoom sessions that were attacked by uninvited participant during presentation) and sent out preventative strategies to members same day

April 1- Sent copy of the letter from CASE and NASDE addressed to OSEP and OSERS signed by OAPSA (and other state CASE Chapters) to members

April 3 – Sent notice to members that OAPSA Executive Board made decision that our May 1 OAPSA Conference must be cancelled due to our current reality with this pandemic along with the fact that the health, safety and well being of our conference attendees is of paramount importance and the fact that Quest is closed (temporarily) due to order by the Governor

April 14- Assisted Ohio Coalition with plans to cancel Horn/Walter/Burley Awards Banquet due to the Pandemic but we will take nominations from SST's and send out awards and post winners' photos on website

April 21 – On request of CASE, I sent a total of 19 email messages to Ohio's Congressional Staffers at Capitol Hill and 2 Ohio Senators requesting that they attend the Briefing by CASE on April 22.

April 22 – I attended live time via Zoom the CASE Briefing on Capitol Hill requesting temporary and targeted flexibilities in IDEA during this time period of the Pandemic.

April 24 – Notified members that Deidre Parsons and I attended the CASE Briefing and provided a link so members could view

April 27 – Notified OAPSA Executive Board Members (late in day) that Secretary DeVos had released her report to Congress that day and didn't include all flexibilities which CASE (and OAPSA) had requested

April 28 – Participated in virtual meeting with CASE Leaders and State Chapter Presidents and Executive Directors regarding CASE's response and press release in response to the Devos Report

April 29 - Sent news alert to OAPSA members about Secretary Devos Report and CASE response to that report

In addition, over this same time period I participated in 6 CASE webinars which were designed to help Special Education Directors navigate through this pandemic, with remote instruction and plan for various scenarios for the unknown future. I updated membership after those webinars and provided link so they could view those.

Note that I also consulted with leaders of OSPA, OESCA, OASPA (HR Group), NAPSA, CASE and ASAE at various times and on various issues connected to pandemic. Most of my scheduled meetings including two for the Ohio Coalition for the Education of Children with Disabilities, one for SAPEC, one for Cupp/Patterson work group on equity were cancelled due to our Governor's Stay at Home Order. However, I did attend the following meetings:

- National Coalition on Personnel Shortages in Special Education and Related Service met on March 5, 2020 and we discussed the video tapes we want to develop and the group

asked me to see if OCALI could do those new video tapes as a part of OCALICON. We also discussed perhaps reexamining teletherapy as a solution to the shortage problems and carefully planned a session with guests from teletherapy programs to discuss that for our upcoming May meeting.

- Related Service Personnel Network Community of Practice got together on March 20. That was quickly switched from in person session to Zoom thanks to Brenda George.
- Improving Educational Opportunities to Advance Equity (Cupp/Patterson Workgroup) met through Zoom on April 23, 2020. We discussed situations in teacher preparatory programs with university leaders. I learned that there had been no response from ODE about request (sent in over a year ago) for several universities in southeast Ohio to collaborate and open a new program for School Psychologists. Several members are following up on that concern. We reached consensus as a group that because the equity issue was so apparent right now due to the pandemic that we needed to move our recommended solutions along a bit faster so our state can benefit from those recommendations now.
- I met virtually with Joe Petrarca, Bernadette Laughlin and reps from OCALI to fix the problems with the video clips on Related Services that had been posted on ODE's website and discussed the possibility of OCALI doing the video tapes for the National Coalition on Personnel Shortages in Special Education and Related Services
- I had several phone conference meetings with Rob Radway, who was the independent consultant for ODE's Related Service Workgroup on Shortage of Personnel, to discuss with him plans for continuous improvement planning for OAPSA
- I participated in 4 meetings with Phyllis Wolfram, Executive Director of CASE and other CASE Chapter Presidents and Executive Directors (1 Monthly and 3 Special Meetings)
- I participated in an additional meeting with Phyllis Wolfram to discuss continuous improvement plans for CASE chapters in other states and advice on how to make decisions on conferences in the future

During March, I also secured members for our Award Committee and on April 22, 2020 Angela Macwhinney, Director of Special Education at Delaware City Schools was awarded OAPSA's Dr. John Opperman Outstanding Achievement Award for 2020 during a virtual meeting of administrators from her district. Dr. Benjamin R. Jenkins, Director of Special Education at West Clermont Schools, had nominated Angela and, upon his request and the wonderful assistance of Angela's district leaders, we managed to keep the nomination and her selection a complete secret from Angela. So, Ben along with Paul Kidd, Deidre Parsons, Dr. Valerie Riedthaler and I, along with Angela's husband, surprised her by joining their district Zoom meeting and making the announcement. It was so wonderful to see so many smiling faces during a Zoom meeting – something most of us hadn't witnessed in recent weeks! OAPSA will recognize Angela again as soon as we can all assemble together at an OAPSA conference.

I also finalized plans for OAPSA to participate in OCALICON in November 2020. We will have a great location again for our exhibit with a booth across from ODE's area and close to key

speaker entrance with CEC on one side of us and the Ohio Coalition on the other side. I worked with reps from CEC and Ohio Coalition as well as OCALI to work out those details. OAPSA submitted to do a presentation at OCALICON for new Special Education/Student Services Directors plus an additional joint presentation with the Ohio Coalition. I will also be part of a presentation ODE is presenting on the Related Service Work Group and the shortages. While planning continues for that event, OCALICON does have on their web site a special statement about COVID-19 pandemic and that is where they will post any changes or updates to OCALICON 2020 should that become necessary.

I continue to serve as the adjunct professor for Ashland University for those who attended OAPSA Conferences to earn graduate credit. A short paper had to be submitted in May 2020 about what each participant learned from our OAPSA conferences during the 2019-2020 school year to earn that credit. When it became apparent that we would have to cancel our OAPSA May 1 Conference, I worked with those individuals who needed to make up missed hours by giving them the option of attending CASE's one-hour webinars being offered each Friday and then, in turn, including a reflection about those webinar in their written papers. I also issued grades early to those who had completed requirements and needed the grade in April in order to get their license renewed because they were worried about their LPDC's meetings potentially being cancelled.

I recently analyzed where the areas are that we still need OAPSA Ambassadors and started recruiting more OAPSA Ambassadors in areas of Ohio that don't currently have OAPSA Ambassadors.

On a continuous basis, I have also maintained day-to-day email and/or phone contact with the OAPSA Executive Board members providing input or taking on and completing assignments as directed, and responding to members' and others' requests including those from the Ohio Coalition, SAPEC, NCPSSERS, Related Service Workgroup, Cupp/Patterson Workgroup, OEC, CASE, NAPSA and CEC. I also posted information on OAPSA's Linked In 7 times.

I do want to remind all of us, that Phyllis Wolfram became our new CASE Executive Director on March 1, 2020. Phyllis and her new administrative assistant spent the first week moving into her new CASE office and immediately after that is when she formed a team to provide us with weekly webinars to help thousands of us through uncharted waters due to the pandemic. She continues to be a valued leader for thousands of special education administrators at this time and we all need to thank her and CASE any way we can.

As we approach the end of this school year, it's important to note that OAPSA has made a lot of advances during these past 12 months including:

- Developed OAPSA Twitter Account
- Developed OAPSA Linked In Page (91 followers as of May 1)
- Started an online registration process for membership

- OAPSA became the newest CASE Chapter receiving our Charter in October 2019 at the Board of Directors Meeting in Louisville, Kentucky
- Reached our highest number of members ever --over 500 members
- Started the OAPSA Ambassadors Program in some regions of Ohio
- Started first formal mentoring group as a pilot project in central Ohio
- Developed a document with Paul Kidd's help, called OAPSA Presidents Through the Years to Post on our OAPSA Website

When we all eventually emerge from our stay at home order, some things will remain the same and some things will be different. But we want you to rest assured that OAPSA will continue to connect and inform you as we grow and change with you. Thank you to all of you for your continued membership and support of OAPSA!

Please continue to take care of yourself and each other!

Respectfully Submitted,

Donna Stelzer

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OAPSA Executive Director