



**Special Needs
Advocacy Network, Inc.**

Special Needs Advocacy Network, Inc.
Policy Manual

Updated: October 14, 2022

**SPaN POLICY MANUAL
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Section I: Name of the Organization

1001: Name and Acronym

As per the SPaN bylaws, the name of this organization shall be the Special Needs Advocacy Network, Inc. (SPaN), represented with the acronym “SPaN.”

Section II: Purpose of the Organization

2001: Purpose

The purpose of the organization is outlined in Section II of the Bylaws. Our mission is to enhance the professional growth and development of SPaN’s members and to act as a primary resource for advocates. (Language approved July 10, 2019)

2002: Diversity Policy

The Special Needs Advocacy Network (SPaN) is at the forefront of advocacy for students with disabilities and their families. SPaN works to increase the quality and quantity of representation available to students and their families and to ensure the rights of children with disabilities and their parents/guardians are protected. As an organization committed to civil rights, SPaN recognizes the relationship between discrimination and bias against people with disabilities and other forms or systems of oppression, domination, or discrimination based on race, national origin, ethnic and/or religious identity, sex/gender/gender identity/sexual orientation, and socioeconomic status.

SPaN is committed to the full inclusion of persons of diverse backgrounds and identities in SPaN’s leadership and membership and defines inclusivity as the valuing and promotion of the perspectives of those of different backgrounds and identities. SPaN defines cultural competency as a set of values, behaviors, attitudes, and practices within a system, organization, program, or among individuals, which enables them to work effectively, cross culturally. This includes, but is not limited to race, ethnicity, sex, gender, sexual orientation, class, age, ability, religion, and language.

SPaN is committed to the development of policies and activities to promote the participation of diverse stakeholders and constituents, and to encourage all members to demonstrate cultural competency and genuine sensitivity in representing and advocating for students and their families. In addition, SPaN is committed to considering fully, in all activities and programs, the intersectionality of race, national origin, ethnic, cultural and/or religious identity, sexual/gender identity/sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, in our efforts to protect and enforce the legal and civil rights of students with disabilities and their families.

In addition, SPaN seeks to address issues affecting access to advocacy for students of color and linguistically diverse children and their families in recognition that these students are disproportionately represented in special education. Our organization also seeks to address the

need for advocates, attorneys, and empowered self-advocates from diverse communities as leaders and members of SPaN to fully address the inherent inequities experienced by students of color and linguistically diverse students.

SPaN would like to thank COPAA for allowing us to use their “Diversity Statement” as the basis for SPaN’s inclusion policy.

2003: Gender-Neutral Language Policy

To reflect an advocacy community that recognizes and supports a wide range of gender identities, SPaN adopts the use of gender-neutral pronouns in SPaN text and official policies.

1. In SPaN text referring to unspecified community members, gender-neutral phrasing they/them/their shall be used, rather than him/her, he/she, his/hers, etc.
2. SPaN will over the next calendar year will work towards implementing gender- neutral policies inclusive of training of our board and membership, examining software, marketing materials, interactions with the public, and our role in workshops/trainings.

Ratified by Board vote on Feb 27, 2020

2004: Policy Manual

1. To supplement its purpose as outlined in Section II of the Bylaws, a Policy Manual shall be developed based on SPaN bylaws and resolutions enacted by the Board of Directors.
2. The Policy Manual will be reviewed annually. All committees shall review policies each year and submit an update, if applicable, to the Chair of the Legal, Bylaws and Policy Committee.
3. The Board of Directors must approve all changes in this Policy Manual including additions and deletions. The Recording Clerk shall keep a record of all changes. The Policy Manual will be reviewed and edited annually. A copy will be available to the membership upon request.

2005: Non-Discrimination Policy

SPaN does not and shall not discriminate on the basis of disability, race, color, religion (creed), gender, gender expression, age, national origin (ancestry), marital status, sexual orientation, or military status, in any of its activities or operations. These activities include, but are not limited to, hiring, and firing of staff/contractors, selection of volunteers and vendors, and provision of services. We are committed to providing an inclusive and welcoming environment for all our members, volunteers, subcontractors, and vendors.

Section III: Membership

3001: Membership Application and Duration

An individual may apply for membership at any time during the fiscal year. Membership dues

and website listings fees cover a full year period from the membership start date. (On January 1, 2011, the SPaN Board voted to have membership fees extend for the full year.)

3002: New Member Start Date

A new member shall be added to the membership list at the end of the month in which the membership application and dues were received.

3003: Directory Listing

A member may choose to be in the SPaN Professional Directory at an additional cost which is established by the Board of Directors on an annual basis. The Professional Directory is updated monthly

3004: New Membership Dues and Fees

Membership dues and website listing fee shall be established by the Board of Directors on an annual basis and published on the website a month before implementation.

3005: Waiver of dues and fees

Requests for waiving of all or partial dues or fees shall be considered on a case-by-case basis by the Executive Committee based on budgetary allotments.

3006: Membership Renewal

Members shall be sent a membership renewal reminder at least three weeks before expiration of their membership.

3007: Due Dates and Pro-Rating

Membership dues and professional directory listing fees shall be paid or renewed annually. Listings will be removed if fee is not received by the due date. However, professional directory listing fees can be prorated if a member would like to upgrade from an individual membership to a listing membership in the middle of an active membership.

3008: Membership Prerequisites Verification

An audit of 10% of randomly selected advocates may be conducted to verify attendance workshops listed on the annual membership. Members may be asked to provide verification of attendance at non-SPaN workshops that are listed.

Section IV: Officers

4001: President: Contracts

At least two Board members, including an Executive Committee member, shall review all contracts. The SPaN President or designee shall sign all contracts generated by any SPaN committee.

4002: Loss of Family Member of a SPAN Member

The President of SPaN shall acknowledge the illness or loss of a close family member of a SPaN member by sending a note of condolence/concern and support on behalf of SPaN.

4003: Administrative Coordinator

1. The President shall supervise the Administrative Coordinator.
2. The Administrative Coordinator shall write a self-evaluation and the President shall write an evaluation of performance based on the Job Description. The President and Administrative Coordinator shall then meet and use the evaluations as a basis of the review.
3. The membership list shall be maintained by the Administrative Coordinator and updated at least monthly
4. The Administrative Coordinator shall verify and update current membership status and member contact information not more than 3 days before an Election.
5. The Administrative Coordinator shall be responsible for updating the SPaN website with approved content and for distributing approved electronic communications to members and those on SPaN's mailing list.

4004: Representing SPaN

When the SPaN President, with the approval of the Board, appoints a SPaN member to represent the organization at an official meeting of another organization (e.g., DESE, FCSN, SEAP, etc.) only that SPaN member shall attend as the official SPaN representative. (Policy 2014)

Section V: Board of Directors

5001: Nominations and Elections to the Board

Nominations and Elections to the Board shall take place annually and be managed by the Membership and Nominations Committee. (See Section VII: Standing Committees)

5002: New Board Member Orientation

All new Board Members shall receive an orientation packet which shall include:

- Current Policy Manual
- SPaN Bylaws
- Previous years' Board Meeting Minutes

5003: Working Board

The SPaN Board shall be defined as a “working” Board and all Board Members shall participate on committees and organization activities.

5004: Removal of Board Members

The policies expand on the bylaws as follows:

1. Any proceeding to remove shall be kept confidential
2. Any board member can be removed
3. In the case of the president or other executive committee member, one executive committee member and two other board members must call for a removal for the process with be triggered
4. Robert's Rules shall be consulted for further guidance on when and how removal is appropriate

5005: Confidentiality Policy for Board Members

1. **APPLICABILITY** – This policy applies to all SPaN personnel, Board of Directors and anyone who has information about SPaN business and membership issues.
2. **FINANCIAL INFORMATION** – All SPaN membership financial data shall be considered confidential and shall be marked accordingly.
3. **MEMBERSHIP LISTS** –. Release of the membership lists to organizations or individuals shall require the Board of Directors approval.
4. **DUES** – Dues information for individual members shall only be available to the elected members of the Board of Directors and Administrative Coordinator.
5. **EXECUTIVE SESSIONS:** (See Policy 6003): Executive Sessions of the Board shall be confidential.

5006: Complaints by Consumers

SPaN lacks the authority to review or investigate complaints made against SPaN members. A recipient of such a complaint shall:

- Acknowledge the upset;
- Share that SPaN has no authority to discipline advocates;
- Refer the caller back to the advocate or suggest they access SPaN's professional directory for a listing of other advocates.

Section VI: Meetings

6001: Robert's Rules for the Board of Director Meetings

SPaN Board Meetings shall be run by the President and be guided by the Roberts Rules of Order.

6002: Non-Board Member and Non-Member Attendance and Participation at Board Meetings

1. Board meetings shall be open to any SPaN member in good standing (all dues and fee payments are current)
2. Non-member guests may be invited to attend Board meetings with the approval of the President.
3. SPaN members in good standing shall be allowed to speak on all issues with the following priority structure with (1) having the highest priority: (1) Board Members (2) SPaN Members (3) Others.
4. Non-Board Members or guests present during Board meetings shall not be allowed to request a vote on an issue or to vote on an issue raised.

6003: Executive Session

An Executive Session of the Board can be called at the discretion of the President or a Board Member. Only Board members can participate in the Executive Session. Executive Sessions are confidential.

6004: Reporting at Board Meetings

Each Board Member may report to the Board on activities since the last Board Meeting, on the committee or committees assigned to him/her.

6005: Board Meeting Agenda

Prior to the Board Meetings the President shall generate an agenda and distribute it to all Board Members.

6006: Frequency of Meetings

Board meetings shall be scheduled at least 5 times per year. The exact dates of the meeting are set annually by the Board of Directors. The purpose of the summer Board Meeting is at the discretion of the Board President in collaboration with the Board.

Additional Board meetings shall be scheduled as determined to be necessary by the President and with the approval of the Board.

6007: Meeting Reminder and Notification of Non-Attendance

Prior to scheduled Board Meetings the President shall send a reminder by email; Board Members who are unable to attend the meeting are expected to notify the President. If a quorum is not achieved the Board will discuss issues relative to the organization but no binding votes can be taken.

6008: Distribution of Minutes

The minutes of the previous Board Meeting shall be sent to all Board Members at least two weeks before the next Board Meeting.

6009: Annual Meeting

The Annual Meeting shall be scheduled as per SPaN's programming schedule.

6010 Voting by alternative means

The President may request the Board vote without engaging in a discussion by using electronic platforms in between meetings. The voting will be assigned a deadline for response no sooner than 2 business days. The President will send such votes to the Board via electronic means with a description and relevant details. No discussion will occur on such votes. The vote shall prevail when a majority of the quorum is achieved. Any vote that fails to achieve a majority of a quorum vote *may* be added to a future agenda for reconsideration when appropriate.

Section VII: Standing Committees

7001(a): Programming: Annual Professional Development Calendar

A Board of Directors' meeting shall be scheduled in winter to establish the next year's calendar of professional development programs. All Board members and other interested members shall be encouraged to attend.

7001(b) Programming: Fall Program

Whenever possible, at least one Fall program shall provide introductory-level guidance to support new advocates and shall be offered at a lower fee than other programming.

7001(c): Programming: Program Attendance

Both members and non-members are welcome to attend SPaN programs. The non-member rate shall be higher than the rate for pre-registered members. However, a non-member attending a workshop can receive a discount in the amount of the non-members surcharge if he/she completes the membership application and pays for membership that day.

7001(d): Programming: Discretionary Donation of Available Seats

As space is available and at the discretion of the President or their designee, donated and/or reduced fee program seats will be provided with preference given to employees of nonprofit organizations with a mission consistent with SPaN.

7001(e): Programming: Registration and Fee Waiver for Required Attendees

1. On January 7, 2011, the SPaN Board voted to waive the programming fees for Board Members and others required to attend a program: President, 1st Vice- President, Vice-President of Programming, Program Coordinator(s), Administrative Coordinator and Presenter(s).
2. Pre-registration will be required to receive full reduced member rates. The rates and pre-registration schedule will be determined annually by the Board of Directors.

7001(f): Programming: VP of Programming and Program Coordinator Responsibilities

The Vice President of Programming:

- a) Will serve as the Co-Chair of the Professional Development Committee, and will oversee the monthly Program Coordinators in carrying out their responsibilities;
- b) The Vice President of Programming will ensure the provision of needed space, accommodations, equipment, materials, and administrative support for each program.
- c) The Vice President of Programming will oversee the work of the Conference and School Fair Committee Chair(s), who will direct the preparation of SPaN's Special Education Conference.

7002(a): PIA Group: Public Information Approval Group

The PIA Group shall consist of the President, the VP for Programming, and the Chair of Publicity, and have the following responsibilities:

1. The PIA Group shall approve all mailings/information that goes out from SPaN with the exception of the annual Program Calendar.
2. The PIA Group shall approve all SPaN website postings and emails to members.

7002(b): PIA Group: Sensitive Information

Any information or material the PIA Group Committee deems to be of a "sensitive" nature that has the potential for legal or public relations ramifications shall be brought to the Executive Committee for discussion about next steps.

7002(c): PIA Group: Memberships and Collaborations with Other Groups

The PIA Group shall review and bring to the Board for approval memberships with other groups, credits, or logos.

7002(d): PIA Group: Emergency Issues

In the event of an emergency issue that requires immediate notification of the members, the information shall be referred to the PIA Group.

7003(a): Membership Committee – Nominating: Vice-President of Membership

The Vice-President of Membership shall send a letter to the membership seeking nominations to the Board by mid-March. Ballots will be distributed electronically, and electronic voting will occur during a 14-day period in May. The announcements of the new Board shall be made no later than July 1.

7003(b): Membership Committee – Nominating: Eligibility Determination

The nominating committee will determine a nominee's eligibility for the ballot. Any search activities identified below will annually be appropriated for by the board. To be eligible to be on the ballot, a nominated member must:

Be a member in good standing as demonstrated by an audit of their membership standing. Good standing means the member has paid their dues in full and if a listing member, has completed 12 hours of training).

1. Have been a SPaN member in good standing for at least one previous year (not necessarily the current or prior immediately previous year).
2. Self-identify the following:
 - a. They have no prior criminal conviction in nationwide.
 - b. They have no record of sexual offender conviction or are not on any sex offender registry in MA or elsewhere in the nation.
 - c. They have no record of being on an abuse registry in MA or elsewhere in the nation.

7003(c) Membership Committee – Nominating: Election Process

1. The nomination committee will set the timeline for the election process each year. The ballot should close at least 10 business days prior to the end of the current business year. (June 30)
2. To be eligible to run for a Board of Director position you must be a current member in good standing.
3. To be eligible to vote in the election you must be a current member in good standing at the time the ballot is distributed (example 1 - if the ballot goes out on June 1, and a membership expires on May 29 that person is not considered a member and would not be eligible to vote; example 2 if the ballot goes out on June 1 and a membership expires on June 3rd, this member is eligible to vote as they were a member in good standing at the time the ballot was sent)
4. Membership notices for renewal and lapse must be distributed at least 2 weeks prior to the ballot distribution
5. The membership list used to send the ballot shall be produced as close as possible to the opening of the ballot and not more than 3 days prior to the ballot's distribution.

6. Voting will only be open for the two-week period determined by the nomination committee. The ballot will be closed on the day indicated by the committee, any votes received in error after the deadline will not be counted.
7. Votes should be counted within 2 days.
8. A system determined by the nomination committee that allows ballots to be as confidential/anonymous (especially in times when there is a contested seat) as possible. AND allow for a verifiable process. (i.e., a system that allows a check in by name that is not connected to the vote casted)
9. If you have only two candidates for any one position and the vote is a tie, repeat the balloting until one candidate receives a majority.
10. In the event of a tie or results that would require review, a special meeting of the Board shall be called as soon as possible no more than 2 days after the votes are counted. This meeting shall not include any candidate that is directly affected by the tie or result that is being questioned. Any vote or action taken by the BOD will be at a simple majority of those that are present for this special meeting.
11. A special election that might result from a tie may require a time period less than 14 days as the election should be completed prior to the start of the new business year. The time frame for such an election should be determined by the Nomination committee in conjunction with the Board that met during the special meeting see (6 above)
12. A review of votes will be conducted by the nomination committee if requested by a candidate.

7004: Finance Committee

Supplementary responsibilities besides those noted in the Bylaws include:

1. To review financial information (i.e., profit and loss statements, balance sheets, budget).
2. To monitor activities (account receivable and accounts payable) and the financial health of the organization.
3. To report most recently available financial statements for the board to review.
4. To report on the amount of cash on hand at every Board meeting.

7005: Development Committee

1. Certain types of gifts must be reviewed prior to acceptance due to the special liabilities they may pose for the Special Needs Advocacy Network. Examples of gifts that will be subject to review include gifts of real property, gifts of private property, and gifts of securities. The reviewing body for this purpose is the Executive Committee.
2. The Development Committee will document and communicate to the Treasurer the amounts and types of revenue it receives. It will also document and track any restrictions placed upon the revenue it receives.
3. Wherever possible the Development Committee will use automated methods to track the administration of the restrictions.
4. The operations manual will reflect the roles and responsibilities associated with the administration of the restricted revenue the Development Committee receives.

Section VIII: Fiscal

8001: Submission of Invoices

The fiscal year ends June 30th. Bills for the fiscal year must be submitted by the end of July to be reimbursed.

8002: Financial Authorization

Upon the election of a new President and/or Treasurer and at prior to the first Board of Directors meeting after the election the Recording Clerk will generate a financial authorization form (attached at the end of Section 4) to formally authorize the President and/or Treasurer to act on behalf of SPaN in financial matters* as outlined on the form. This authorization will be reflected in the Board Meeting minutes by a vote from the Board.

**All financial matters will be reviewed for approval or recommendations by the Finance Committee*

8003: Policy 2016 Workshop Refund Policy (updated 12/2016)

The SPaN Board approved the following refund policy for workshops on December 5, 2008:

1. No cash refunds will be offered for pre-registration if a workshop is held
2. If a pre-registrant provides a written request at least four (4) business days prior to the scheduled workshop (Wednesday by 5:00 pm prior to a Tuesday workshop or Monday by 5:00 pm prior to a Friday workshop); the registration fee can be applied to an upcoming workshop in the same programming year (September-May)
3. If a workshop is cancelled, registrants can either have a refund or apply payment to an upcoming workshop
4. SPaN reserves the right to modify the refund policy for Special Programs

Section IX Legal, Bylaws and Policy (LBP)

9001: Bylaw and Policy Amendments Process

1. Committee chairs may submit proposed amendments to SPaN Bylaws and the SPaN Policy Manual at any time during the year
2. Proposals submitted by committee chairs after June 30th will be considered for a vote during the following programming year.
3. Proposed amendments should be submitted to the chair of the LBP committee
4. Following review by the Legal, Bylaws and Policy committee, the proposed amendments

will be shared with the Board at least 14 days before the Board meeting at which the vote on the proposal will take place.

9002: Adoption of Bylaws, Policies and Amendments

The Board-approved By-Laws and Policy Manual are presented to the membership and the Board of Directors and adopted by SPaN



Special Needs
Advocacy Network, Inc.

Special Needs Advocacy Network, Inc.

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www.spanmass.org
info@spanmass.org

FINANCIAL AUTHORIZATION FORM

Date: _____

SPaN account # _____

To Whom It May Concern:

The Special Needs Advocacy Network (SPaN) recently held its annual election. A new President and/or Treasurer was elected and is authorized to sign checks on behalf of the organization. This became effective as of _____.

Please adjust your records to remove and/or add the parties listed below as authorized to sign on behalf of SPaN. Signature cards which will remove those who will cease to be authorized signers can be sent to them directly. The elected members being added as authorized signers will go to one of your branches to present the proper identification and sign any required documentation. All necessary signatures and contact information are included with this request.

Feel free to contact us with any questions regarding this request. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Authorizing Signature Title Date

ADD:

REMOVE:

Signature: _____	Signature: _____
Name: _____	Name: _____
Title: _____	Title: _____
Address: _____	Address: _____
City: _____	City: _____
Phone: _____	Phone: _____
Signature: _____	Signature: _____
Name: _____	Name: _____
Title: _____	Title: _____
Address: _____	Address: _____
City: _____	City: _____
Phone: _____	Phone: _____