

SEA Technical Assistance Models

There are several state models used to provide technical assistance to school districts. Some are listed here for consideration:

1. **Virginia's TTAC Model.** The VA Department of Education has [Training and Technical Assistance Centers](#) (TTAC) that “provide professional development and support designed to assist schools in addressing accountability and improvement goals for students with disabilities.” Online resources are also offered to professionals and families through the [TTAC Online](#) site, including disability information, events, and training. These Centers are spread across eight regions in the state, each sponsored and led by various VA universities, such as Virginia Commonwealth University (regions 1 and 8), James Madison University (region 5), and Radford (regions 6 and 7), to name a few. Districts think favorably of TTACs but alignment with SEA priorities can be loose.

Key attributes include: Regional so support can be in person, limited travel, university led, state funded, special education only.

2. **Massachusetts' DSAC Model.** The MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education offers a District and School Assistance Center (DSAC) model that covers the state [regionally](#). What makes the DSAC model successful is that it recruits and handpicks “highly qualified support facilitators” (some of them retired superintendents, special education leaders, reading specialists, human resource experts, and principals, for example) who have high levels of professional credibility and whose job is to ensure the implementation of “Department tools and resources in the manner intended.” Based on post-implementation surveys, 94% of school and district leaders reported overall satisfaction with DSAC, including 70% who said they were “very satisfied.”

Key attributes include: Regional so support can be in person, limited travel, led by trusted advisers, state funded, not special education only.

3. **The Priority Partner Model.** Some states, like the Louisiana Department of Education, hire outside vendors, or “priority partners” with the Department. Oftentimes, these partnerships are long term (3-5 years or more) and are tightly connected to internal staff to help guide and support key technical assistance initiatives across the state, such as training and implementation of best practices. These partnerships are advantageous for states that prefer a level of expertise and flexibility that may not be as present with other models. This should not be confused with SEAs hiring outside companies to provide professional development. Priority partners instead work closely with SEA staff on a weekly or monthly basis and act as an extension of the SEA.

Key attributes include: High levels of expertise and alignment with SEA, state funded, not special education only. Partners change as needs and area of focus changes.

4. **The SEA Blanket Model.** Several SEAs, like the Colorado Department of Education, blanket the state with a “[small army](#)” of SEA employees who serve as field experts in various special education disciplines. These employees have highly specialized knowledge, skills, and expertise in areas such as school-based mental health, assistive technology, services for students with intellectual disabilities, school-to-career initiatives, special education director training and mentorship, and so on. Their roles are highly coordinated with the SEA and help support the departmental messaging—remotely or in-person—based on the tiered needs of the school from statewide accountability measures. That is, whereas some districts may need a touchpoint once per quarter, districts with higher support needs get support several times per month or week. This model is dependent on the ability of the SEA to attract and retain high quality staff.

Key attributes include: Mixed levels of expertise and alignment with SEA as silos within the SEA can lead to disconnected messaging, state funded, not special education only.