



STATE OF CONNECTICUT  
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



**TO:** Directors of Special Education and Pupil Services  
Directors of Private Approved Special Education Facilities  
Directors of Charter Schools

**FROM:** George P. Dowaliby, Chief *SPK*  
Bureau of Special Education and Pupil Services

**DATE:** January 5, 2000

**SUBJECT:** *Update #19*

**PUBLIC SCHOOL CHOICE WEEK**

Governor John G. Rowland has designated the week of January 9 through January 16, 2000, as Public School Choice Week in Connecticut. Schools will be observing the week with activities designed to celebrate the increase in choices available to students and their families within the public school system. Enclosed is a folder outlining the various school choice programs in Connecticut. We hope that this information will assist you as you plan for students with disabilities enrolled in public school choice program.

**TRANSITION PLANNING**

Enclosed is an updated list of "Learning Disability and Disability Services Contact Persons for Students in Connecticut Colleges and Universities". Please disseminate this list to your high school guidance counselors, transition coordinators and relevant special education personnel. Please contact Karen Halliday at 860-807-2020 if you have any questions.

**PERMANENT FORMULA-CALCULATION OF FY 2000-2001 IDEA-PART B,  
SECTION 611 ENTITLEMENT GRANTS**

PL 105-17 (IDEA-97) contained a temporary and permanent formula for the calculation of IDEA-Part B, Section 611 entitlement grants to eligible districts/agencies.

The temporary formula utilized the traditional child count of students with disabilities as the basis for the calculation of individual district/agency IDEA-Part B, Section 611 entitlement grants. This year (FY 1999-2000) will be the last year in which the temporary (child count-based) formula will be utilized.

Beginning with the FY 2000-2001, the permanent formula will come into play. The permanent formula will include the consideration of three factors: (1) a base payment, (2) a consideration of the total K-12 (public and private) enrollment in each community plus, (3) a consideration of poverty indicators in each community.

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Recognizing that the permanent formula might be activated in the FY 2000-2001 school year, the Division of Grants Management was asked to run a simulation which assumed that current IDEA-Part B, Section 611 funding was distributed to eligible districts/agencies – based on the permanent formula. That simulation is enclosed for your information since we wished to have districts/agencies be aware of the effects of the new and permanent formula at a time when budget projections are being developed across Connecticut.

Additionally, we asked the Division of Grants Management to compare the gains or losses each district/agency would experience, assuming the application of the permanent formula. They have responded to that request by indicating the dollar difference (+/-) on a district-by-district basis.

When reviewing the enclosed chart, please be informed that the term “Actual Entitlement” means the entitlement your district/agency is currently receiving under the last year of the temporary formula. The term “Simulated Entitlement” is the estimate of what your district/agency would be receiving this year-if the permanent formula has been used to calculate individual district/agency entitlements. Please contact Patrick Shaughnessy at 860-807-2036 if you have any questions.

#### **SPEECH-LANGUAGE PATHOLOGY ASSISTANTS (SLPAs)**

Enclosed is a copy of guidelines for SLPAs that were developed collaboratively by CSHA, our state SLP training programs, the SDE and SERC. The document integrates material from guidelines disseminated by the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association and the Council for Exceptional Children. Please note that the supervision schedules for SLPAs described in the guidelines have been encoded in the state licensure statute governing SLPs. (See page 9 of the guidelines.)

Manchester Community-Technical College is continuing the process of developing and seeking approval for an Associate Degree program for SLPAs. The site visit from the Department of Higher Education (DHE) was successfully completed in December. The next step is for the DHE Board of Governors to review the report of the site visitors and give approval for the program. It is expected that this step will be completed in the spring of 2000. The college hopes to enroll the program's first students in September 2001. Questions about the program may be directed to Eleanor Weseloh at 860-647-6223.

#### **TRAINING ON THE SPEECH-LANGUAGE ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA**

Carolyn Isakson has completed four regional training sessions as well as sessions for most of the priority and transitional school districts and other districts that set up a common inservice day. If Speech and Language Pathologists in your District were unable to access the training, please complete the enclosed form so she can determine additional training needs. Many thanks to

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those of you who collaborated in setting up a common day of training for your personnel. Please call Carolyn Isakson at 860-807-2046 if you have any questions.

### **ADVISORY OPINION PROCESS**

As you know, the State Department of Education has been working on an Advisory Opinion Process, which would be an alternative form of dispute resolution. The parties to a due process hearing have an opportunity to present limited evidence, both oral and documentary to a hearing officer for their consideration. The hearing officer would then render an oral opinion after consideration of the evidence presented. The Bureau is happy to announce that it is prepared to go forward with this option.

Enclosed is a description of the process and a form to request an Advisory Opinion. Please note that both parties must agree, in writing, to seek an Advisory Opinion. This information will also be shared with the attorneys who practice in this area of the law. Many of them have expressed an interest in having a procedure that is less onerous than a fully developed due process hearing. I hope that you will utilize this option. If you have any questions about the procedure, please contact either Tom Badway at 860-807-2017 or Terri DeFrancis at 860-807-2018.

### **ADMINISTRATOR'S CONFERENCE**

A conference for administrators in early intervention and preschool special education is scheduled for January 20, 2000. Entitled, **A National Perspective on IDEA: What does it Mean for Young Children in Connecticut**, the conference is sponsored by the Birth to Three System, the Bureau of Early Childhood Education and Social Services, and SERC. This year's conference features presenters from the Federal Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) and the National Association of State Directors of Special Education (NASDSE). It is designed to give administrators, who are involved with special services to infants, toddlers, and preschoolers, the opportunity to come together and focus on policies and practices. The enclosed brochure, which contains application form, is for your review and consideration. If you have any questions please contact SERC staff person Kim Gryga at 860-632-1485, ext. 269.

### **SERC CONDUCTING NEEDS ASSESSMENT**

SERC is disseminating a survey to Student Support Services Professionals to determine the professional development needs of seven disciplines (Occupational Therapy, Physical Therapy, School Counseling, School Nursing, School Psychology, School Social Work, and Speech-Language-Pathology). This information will be utilized to create Professional Development activities for academic year 2000-01. The survey has been sent to Special Education Directors for dissemination to your student support service professionals during the week of January 3, 2000. In addition, we ask your cooperation by completing the survey personally since your

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perception of training needs may differ from you staff's view. Please note that we are requesting a response to the survey by January 15, 2000. Thank you very much for your cooperation in obtaining this important information. If you have questions please contact Laura Harris at SERC, (860) 632-1485, ext. 337, or Ruth Kirsch at ext. 364.

**SPANISH TRANSLATIONS OF RECOMMENDED SPECIAL EDUCATION NOTICE AND CONSENT FORMS**

Enclosed are Spanish translations of the special education related forms recommended by the Department. These translations have been provided by the Bridgeport Public Schools for use by other districts.

Also enclosed is the Spanish translation of Page 2 of the Bureau's Recommended IEP Form.

**BLIND/VISUALLY IMPAIRED IEP REVISION**

It has been pointed out to us that Item 14 on Page 5 of the Department's recommended IEP form implies that a PPT must conduct an evaluation to determine whether or not instruction in Braille or the use of Braille is required for a student who is Blind/Visually Impaired. This item currently reads as follows:

14. For students who are Blind/Visually Impaired, the PPT has determined (after an evaluation of the student's reading and writing skills, needs, and appropriate reading and writing media, including an evaluation of the student's future needs for instruction in Braille or the use of Braille) that instruction in Braille or the use of Braille:     NA             Is required             Is not required

The Bureau wants to clarify the requirements regarding Braille instruction. It is not necessary for a PPT to conduct an evaluation to determine that instruction in Braille or the use of Braille is necessary in order for a Blind/Visually Impaired student to receive such instruction. According to Section 300.346(a)(2)(iii) of the final IDEA 97 Regulations, Blind/Visually Impaired students are to be provided with instruction in Braille or the use of Braille unless the Team determines, "after an evaluation of the student's reading and writing skills, needs, and appropriate reading and writing media (including an evaluation of the child's future needs for instruction in Braille or the use of Braille), that instruction in Braille or the use of Braille is not appropriate for the student." This section of the regulations reads as follows:

*Section 300.346(a)*

*(2) Consideration of special factors.  
The IEP team also shall –*

*(iii) In the case of a child who is blind or visually impaired, provide for instruction in Braille and the use of Braille unless the IEP team determines, after an evaluation of the child's reading and writing skills, needs, and appropriate reading and writing media (including an evaluation of the child's future needs for instruction in Braille or the use of Braille), that instruction in Braille or the use of Braille is not appropriate for the child.*

It is anticipated that the Department's Recommended IEP form will be revised during the current school year to reflect the availability, for the 2000-2001 school year, of an Alternate Assessment for special education students who cannot participate in the standard CMT/CAPT testing. At that time we will also revise Item 14 on Page 5 to more clearly reflect the intent of IDEA. We anticipate that Item 14 on Page 5 will be revised worded as follows:

**Planned Revision**

14. For Blind/Visually Impaired students:  Instruction in Braille or the use of Braille is being provided, as required  The PPT has determined, after an evaluation of the student's reading and writing skills, needs, and appropriate reading and writing media (including an evaluation of the student's future needs for instruction in Braille or the use of Braille) that instruction in Braille or the use of Braille is not appropriate for this student  NA Student is not Blind/Visually Impaired

Until this new wording is implemented, **the Bureau recommends that you share the above information with your staff** and asks that you **make certain your staff understands that no evaluation is required in order for a Blind/Visually Impaired student to receive instruction in Braille or the use of Braille.** An evaluation of the need for this instruction is required only if the PPT has questions about the need for instruction in Braille or the use of Braille and wishes to determine whether or not such instruction is appropriate for the student.

The Bureau hopes that this clarifies this important issue on the provision of Braille services to a Blind/Visually Impaired student. Please contact John Purdy at 860-807-2045 if you have any questions.

**GOALS AND OBJECTIVES AND CURRENT LEVEL OF PERFORMANCE  
INFORMATION FOR STUDENTS ENROLLED IN PRIVATE, RESC OR QUASI-  
PUBLIC PROGRAMS.**

In Update #18 we clarified that districts must utilize a standard approved IEP form for all special education students for whom the district is educationally responsible, including students participating in RESC, quasi-public or private programs. We continue to receive questions regarding whether or not goals and objectives and current level of performance information must be on the district's approved IEP form. Specifically, we continue to be asked if the present level of performance and goal and objective pages provided by the private, RESC or quasi-public school program, even if they are in a different format, can simply be inserted in a student's IEP.

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We want to again emphasize that all students from a district must have an IEP on the district's standard approved form. If a program with which the district contracts for services is unwilling to utilize the district's standard IEP form, then the district must transfer the information provided by the contract provider onto the district's standard form. While there are instances where contract providers have agreed to use the IEP forms from each sending district, it should be emphasized that this type of accommodation is voluntary and is a matter to be negotiated between the district and the service provider.

In instances where private, RESC or quasi public schools have asked for guidance, we have advised them that, at a minimum, they should provide contracting school district with completed copies of pages 3 (current level of performance) and 4 (goals and objectives) of the Department recommended IEP form. To the extent that a district is utilizing the recommended form, this will reduce the time district staff must spend writing an IEP. We have also emphasized that these completed copies of pages 3 and 4 should either include the district name at the top of the page or provide space for the district to type or write in the district name so that, if the district is utilizing the Department recommended form, these pages can simply be inserted in the IEP and it will not be necessary to transcribe the information provided. Please call Jerry Spears at 860-807-2034 if you have any questions.

**DEADLINE--AMENDMENTS TO 1998-2000 PROGRAMS/BUDGETS**

If you find it necessary to make amendments to programs/budgets that operate for the period July 1, 1998 through June 30, 2000, please submit those requests for amendment to the appropriate program manager(s) on/before **February 1, 2000**.

GPD:m  
Enclosures

cc: Theodore S. Sergi, Commissioner of Education  
George A. Coleman, Associate Commissioner  
Edward Preneta, Council on Developmental Disabilities  
Bonnie Moran, Special Education Advisory Council  
Nancy Prescott, CT Parent Advocacy Center  
Superintendents of Schools  
Special Education Hearing Officers  
SDE Staff