


Connecticut State Department of Education

MEMORANDUM

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TO: Directors of Special Education and Pupil Services
Directors of Private Approved Special Education Facilities
RESC Executive Directors

FROM: Leslie M. Averna, Associate Commissioner 

DATE: June 30, 1997

SUBJECT: Update #7

It's hard to believe that the 1996-97 school year is drawing to a close and that we basically have completed the myriad of tasks we had set out for ourselves. I am most grateful to the staff in the Bureau for their work over the course of the year. Together, in concert with all of you, we have set the stage for new beginnings in the field of special education and are hopeful that we will provide better service to you and students with special needs in the future. The report outlining our recommendations will be presented to the State Board of Education at the August 8, 1997 meeting, and our redesigned agenda will commence implementation this September. This update will be the final communication of this year and, while it is rather lengthy, it contains important information for your consideration.

IDEA GRANT AWARDS

Attached is a copy of the preliminary grant award notification for your FY98 IDEA Part B, Section 619 and 611 grants. The original is being sent to the Superintendent as an attachment to this memo.

IDEA REAUTHORIZATION

On May 13, 1997, the House of Representatives passed H.R. 5 *The Individuals with Disabilities Act Amendments of 1997*; on May 14, 1997, the Senate passed S. 717, the companion bill to H.R. 5. Since the identical bill passed both the House and Senate, there was no need for a conference and President Clinton signed the bill on June 4, 1997. There are four parts to the amendments:

- Part A - **General Provisions** - is effective upon signing;
- Part B - **Assistance for Education of All Children with Disabilities**- is effective upon signing, with the following exceptions:
 - Section 617 - Administrative Procedures- is effective October 1, 1997;
 - IEP provisions, CSPD provisions, performance goals and indicators and data collection are effective July 1, 1998;
- Part C - **Infants and Toddlers**- is effective on July 1, 1998; and
- Part D - **National Activities to Improve Education of Children with Disabilities** - is effective on October 1, 1997 with the following exception:
 - Standing panel and peer review provisions are effective October 1, 1997.

Attached to this Update are copies of the following documents regarding the reauthorization for your review and information:

- Thomas Hehir, June 12, 1997 memo - Timeline for Implementation of IDEA 1997
- NASDSE Side-by-Side of Current Law and 1997 Amendments;
- NASDSE Comparison of Key Early Childhood Issues;
- NASDSE Comparison of Data Requirements; and
- NASDSE Professional Development.

I will be attending an OSEP training in early July and will pass on more information as it becomes available. We are designing a series of workshops to keep you informed, in light of the fact that some of these amendments may affect your procedures and operating practices.

OSEP MONITORING

During the week of February 3 - 7, 1997, OSEP conducted a follow-up monitoring visit to determine the extent to which the Connecticut Department of Education implemented the Corrective Action Plan requirements specified in the 1993 monitoring visit final report. On June 16, 1997, we received a copy of the findings of this visit. Although OSEP has now determined that most 1993 findings of noncompliance have been corrected by local school districts, there are a number of required corrective actions that still need to be addressed. They are as follows:

- All school-based staff must be provided training relative to extended school year requirements;
- LEAs must implement the revised identification procedures for determining eligibility of students as SED;
- An evaluation of each child with a disability must be conducted every three years or more frequently, if conditions warrant, or if the child's parent or teacher requests an evaluation;
- All districts must include a written report of the results of the evaluation that meets the requirements of section 300.543 for students identified as having a specific learning disability; and

- When the purpose of an IEP meeting is the discussion of transition services, all districts must indicate that: 1) the purpose of the meeting is to discuss transition services; 2) the agency will invite the student; 3) any other agency that will be invited to send a representative will be identified.

Bureau staff will continue to interact with OSEP and local districts, until these outstanding issues are resolved. Art Carey has assumed oversight for this responsibility. In addition to completing the 1993 monitoring review, a new cycle of OSEP monitoring will commence in the fall of 1997. The OSEP team will be on-site in Connecticut during the week of January 26, 1998 to conduct hearings and the week of March 23, 1998 to monitor districts.

NEW STAFF

I am pleased to inform you that we have hired three new staff in the Bureau. Art Carey, formerly the Assistant Superintendent of the DCF Unified School District #2, joined the Program Standards Unit on June 20, 1997. Art will be responsible for surrogate parent appointments, designated lawsuits and the OSEP monitoring visit. Ann Louise Singer, formerly coordinator of special education in Westport, will also join the Program Standards Unit on June 27, 1997. She will oversee and coordinate the program review process. Both Art and Ann Louise will participate in program reviews, mediations, private school approvals, approval of consolidated grants, professional development workshops and telephone technical assistance. The third addition to our staff is Gina Gromak, a secretary in the administration unit. Gina was formerly employed by the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services, and brings with her a wealth of experience. We are very pleased with the high caliber of new staff and look forward to working with them.

SPECIAL EDUCATION RESOURCE CENTER

The SERC contract has been awarded to Rensselaer at Hartford (formerly the Hartford Graduate Center) for a three-year period commencing on July 1, 1997. In addition to addressing the personnel development priorities identified by the CSPD, SERC has aligned its agenda with bureau goals and will be offering professional development activities in seven areas, as follows:

1. Targeted training and technical assistance:

- the **Inclusive Education/Resource /Support Teams** program, a project that focuses on inclusive education, will continue to be offered to eight established regional teams;
- the **Strategies Intervention Project**, which provides strategies that assist individual students to succeed in general education classrooms, will be offered to 12 urban and priority schools districts and 48 additional districts already participating in SIP;
- the **Training School Principals in Special Education Administration** project will be expanded to principals in Hartford and Bridgeport;
- the **Families as Partners** initiative will be expanded to address the specific needs of urban families, families of children with autism, and families of children with hearing impairments;

- recipients of **Primary Mental Health Program** grants will participate in training activities;
 - the **Early Intervention Program**, which focuses on instructional interventions, curriculum matching and curriculum-based assessment, will be offered to seven urban and priority school districts and thirty-six additional districts already participating in EIP;
 - the **Least Restrictive Environment** project, which provides professionals and families with coordinated training and technical assistance regarding issues of LRE, will be expanded to train fifty additional school-based facilitators in four urban and priority school districts and eleven additional districts; and
 - the federal grant designed to address **Integrated Related Services** (OT/PT/SLP) will continue in its fourth year with additional focus on skill-building workshops for practitioners in urban and priority school districts and other areas of high need.
2. **Statewide Training and Technical Assistance** - a series of workshops will be available to all stakeholders statewide:
 - Management of Students with Challenging Behaviors/Disorders/Emotional Disturbance
 - Literacy/Language Arts Curriculum
 - Autism
 - Assistive Technology
 - Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder
 - Paraprofessional Training
 - Health/Confidentiality
 - Transition
 - Pupil Services Orientation Series
 - Special Education Orientation Series
 - Beginning Teacher Orientation
 - Assessment
 - Gifted and Talented
 3. **Program Enhancement** - these activities will be targeted to districts participating in the Program Enhancement project. For 1997-98, Hartford and Bridgeport will participate.
 4. **Program Review** - these activities will be focused on districts participating in the program review for the 1997-98 year. The 1997-98 districts will be those in the CES region.
 5. **Technical Assistance** - these activities will be targeted to specific programs, including Medicaid, surrogate parents, PC ISSIS, and hearing officer/mediator training;
 6. **Bureau Training** - workshops will be offered to bureau consultants in order to enable them to remain current in their field;
 7. **CSPD Council Projects** - the Council has targeted several areas of concern for which they are planning activities at both the preservice and inservice level: cultural competence; promising practices; and areas of knowledge gap for practitioners.

SAVE THE DATES

The Bureau of Special Education and Pupil Services, in collaboration with state professional associations (CASP, CASSW), will again offer an orientation program for new school psychologists and school social workers. The dates are as follows:

School psychologists (1 full-day session):

Wednesday, October 22 ACES, Hamden

School social workers (3-part series, full-day sessions):

Friday, September 12 CREC, Hartford

Wednesday, September 24 ACES, Hamden

Thursday, October 16 ACES, Hamden

Attached is a copy of application materials. Contact Bob Lichtenstein at 860-638-4287 if you have any questions about this program.

ADVISORIES

Staff are in the process of preparing a three-ring binder, with categorical subsections, containing advisories that clarify procedures and policies on a number of special education issues. You should receive the binder in early September, with the first three advisories enclosed.

RETIREMENTS

While we are pleased for them, I am sad to inform you that Frank Limauro and Alan White are planning to take advantage of the Governor's early retirement incentive package. Each of them has made significant contributions to the bureau and will be missed. Lu Marvin, who has served in the capacity of secretary to the bureau chief, has also retired; Sonia Margnelli has assumed this role.

My colleagues join me in wishing you a safe, enriching summer and we look forward to starting a new school year with even greater commitment to improving the educational experience of Connecticut's students.

- cc: Theodore S. Sergi, Commissioner of Education
- Betty Sternberg, Associate Commissioner
- Edward Preneta, Developmental Disabilities Council
- Frank Yulo, CAPSS
- Patricia Luke, EMSPAC
- Bonnie Moran, State Advisory Council on Special Education
- Marianne Kirner, SERC
- Superintendents of Schools
- Mark Stapleton, Chief, Office of Legal Affairs