

SUPPORTING INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES

President Obama is committed to fostering a society that values the contributions of all people, including individuals with disabilities. Although we have made significant advances in education, employment, and civil rights for individuals with disabilities, we must do more to fulfill the promise of equal access and equal opportunity. Educational, economic, and health outcomes for people with disabilities are still much lower than their peers without disabilities, and ensuring that individuals with disabilities are achieving to the highest levels possible is a national imperative.

The Administration's *Blueprint for the Reform of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)* ensures that the needs of students with disabilities are addressed throughout the ESEA. The Administration is also working to improve the participation of individuals with disabilities in our nation's public workforce system and increase the employment of individuals with disabilities through greater agency collaboration, promoting innovation, and streamlining service delivery.

The President's fiscal year 2012 budget request provides increased investments in education for children with disabilities as well as targeted investments that encourage innovation and advance the employment and independence of individuals with disabilities.

- **\$11.7 billion for IDEA Part B Grants to States**, an increase of \$200 million, to support States and districts in providing special education and related services to students with disabilities. These formula funds are critically important to help ensure that the more than 6.6 million students with disabilities ages 3 through 21 served by Part B receive a free appropriate public education (FAPE) that meets their unique needs. This increase will help to improve the quality of the education students with disabilities receive so they can participate in the general education curriculum to the maximum extent possible and are prepared for college and a career, or both.
- **\$489 million for IDEA Part C Grants for Infants and Families**, an increase of \$50 million, for formula grants to help States implement statewide systems of early intervention services to assist all eligible infants and toddlers with disabilities from birth through age 2 and their families. These funds would increase the average State allocation by almost \$1 million, help States serve an estimated 360,000 infants and toddlers, and encourage States to extend early intervention services to children through age 5. Additionally, this request would allow the Department to award up to \$4.4 million for State Incentive Grants (since the request is above \$460 million) to facilitate a seamless system of services for children with disabilities from birth until entry into kindergarten.
- **\$374 million for IDEA Part B Preschool Grants**, for formula grants to help States make FAPE in the least restrictive environment available to all children with disabilities ages 3 through 5. This request, supplemented by the funds requested for the Grants to States program, will help ensure that over 730,000 young children with disabilities are ready to succeed when they enter school.
- **\$250 million for National Activities under IDEA**, to improve services and supports for children with disabilities and advance the field through funding for technical assistance, personnel development and preparation, parent information centers, and technology and media services. The National Activities link States, school systems, and families to best practices to improve results for infants, toddlers, and children with disabilities.

- **Improving the achievement of students with disabilities.** The Administration believes strongly that all students, including students with disabilities, should enter school ready to learn and have access to high-quality interventions and effective teachers. The President's 2012 budget request includes support for programs that would support these goals such as:
 - **\$14.8 billion for the College- and Career-Ready Students program**, formerly Title I Grants to Local Educational Agencies, which would strengthen school, district, and State accountability by continuing to require disaggregated reporting of achievement data for students with disabilities, asking States to implement meaningful interventions in schools with the largest achievement gaps, and measuring student growth as well as achievement.
 - **\$350 million for the new Early Learning Challenge Fund**, President Obama's proposal to make competitive grants to challenge States to establish model systems of early learning for children, from birth to kindergarten entry, including children with disabilities, that promote high standards of quality and that focus on outcomes across all settings to ensure that more children enter school ready to succeed. This program will complement, leverage, and streamline the operations of other Federal and State investments, including IDEA Part C and IDEA Part B Preschool Grants.
 - **\$185 million for the Presidential Teaching Fellows program**, to support scholarships for talented teaching candidates to attend top-tier teacher preparation programs and teach in high-need schools and high-need subjects or fields, including special education. This new program would help ensure that students with disabilities, along with low-income students, minority students, and English Learners, have access to effective teachers.

- **New initiatives to encourage innovation and improve outcomes for individuals with disabilities.** The Administration believes that targeted investments are needed that would help spur new and innovative approaches to improving results for individuals with disabilities. As a result, the fiscal year 2012 budget includes the following new initiatives:
 - **\$30 million for PROMISE: Promoting Readiness of Minors in Supplemental Security Income (SSI)**, a joint pilot demonstration program with the Social Security Administration, the Department of Health and Human Services, and the Department of Labor to improve health, education, and post-school outcomes of children who receive SSI and their families. This program would fund pilots in select States to improve the provision and coordination of services for these individuals.
 - **\$10 million for Access through Cloud Computing**, a new initiative that would seek to improve Internet and technology access for individuals with disabilities through research and development activities to provide on-demand accommodations that are stored remotely. This new initiative would be administered by the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services' National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research (NIDRR) in consultation with the National Science Foundation, the Access Board, the Office of Science and Technology Policy, and other White House offices.
 - **\$30 million for a proposed interagency Workforce Innovation Fund** that would, in combination with funds from other Department of Education and Labor programs,

encourage innovation and support projects to identify and validate effective strategies for improving the delivery of services and outcomes for beneficiaries under the Rehabilitation Act and other programs authorized by the Workforce Investment Act.

- **Proposals to consolidate and increase the efficiency and effectiveness of resources** for improving employment and independent living outcomes for individuals with disabilities. The Administration's 2012 request includes proposals for consolidating several programs authorized under the Rehabilitation Act that would reduce duplication and would improve program management and the provision of rehabilitation and independent living services. The budget includes proposals that would consolidate vocational rehabilitation programs, independent living programs, and programs that support activities to improve program performance and the delivery of services.
 - **\$3.1 billion for a consolidated Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) State Grants program.** The request would consolidate the smaller VR-related programs under the Rehabilitation Act in order to reduce duplication of effort and administrative costs, streamline program administration at the Federal and local level, and improve accountability. A total of \$56.3 million would be made available to the VR State Grants program from the consolidation of employment-related programs.
 - **\$103.7 million for a consolidated Grants for Independent Living program** that would replace the Independent Living State Grants and Centers for Independent Living programs and would provide formula grants to States to support the provision of independent living services through centers for independent living. Under the proposed consolidation, each State would receive an amount that is equal to the combined amount received in fiscal year 2011 from the two programs.
 - **\$8 million for a new National Activities to Improve Rehabilitation Services program** that would consolidate technical assistance and program improvement resources and give the Department greater flexibility to strategically direct these resources to improve employment and independent living outcomes for individuals with disabilities. In conjunction with this consolidation, responsibility for conducting studies and evaluations of programs authorized under the Rehabilitation Act would be transferred to NIDRR to provide for a more coordinated and rigorous approach to research, development, and knowledge translation investments in vocational rehabilitation and independent living.