

## 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 advances in education, employment, and civil rights for individuals with disabilities, we must do more to fulfill the promise of equal access and 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 has proposed changes to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) to ensure that the needs of students with disabilities are addressed throughout ESEA, and has continued to include students with disabilities in all of its education reform efforts. 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, including by providing grants to States and other entities to create innovative models for service delivery that are likely to improve their employment outcomes.

The President's fiscal year 2015 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.

- **IDEA Part B Grants to States (\$11.6 billion).** These formula grants support States and districts in providing special education and related services to students with disabilities. The grants are critical to the efforts of states and districts to provide the more than 6.5 million students with disabilities ages 3 through 21 served by Part B a free appropriate public education (FAPE) that meets their unique needs. By maintaining significant support for Part B, the Administration is helping to ensure that students with disabilities receive the special education and related services necessary to participate in the general education curriculum to the maximum extent possible and are prepared for college and careers.
- **Results Driven Accountability (RDA) Incentive grants (\$100 million):** Within the IDEA Grants to States program, this request includes \$100 million for RDA grants to improve special education services for children with disabilities served under Parts B and C of IDEA while also building State and local capacity to continue to improve outcomes for those children in the long-term. States receiving incentive grants would have a demonstrated commitment to using results data in their IDEA-required LEA determinations, consistent with the Department's RDA system, to support their efforts to implement evidence-based practices that have a demonstrated positive impact on results for children with disabilities.
- **IDEA Part C Grants for Infants and Families (\$442 million).** These formula grants help States implement statewide systems of early intervention services to assist all eligible infants and toddlers with disabilities from birth through age two and their families. The request would increase the average State allocation by over \$60,000 to help States serve an estimated 340,000 infants and toddlers.
- **IDEA Part B Preschool Grants (\$353 million).** These formula grants help States provide FAPE in the least restrictive environment to all children with disabilities ages 3 through 5. This request, supplemented by the funds requested for the IDEA Part B Grants to States program,

would help ensure that 750,000 young children with disabilities will be ready to succeed when they enter school.

- **National Activities under IDEA (\$225 million).** These funds would be used 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 educational technology, media, and materials. The National Activities programs 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 2015 budget request includes funds for programs that would support these goals, such as:
  - **College- and Career-Ready Students program (\$14.4 billion).** This program 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.
  - **Preschool for All (\$1.3 billion).** This new initiative would provide universal access to high-quality preschool for four-year-old children from low and moderate income families, including children with disabilities. The program would give more children with disabilities and developmental delays the opportunity to participate in inclusive, high-quality preschool programs to prepare them for success in school and in life.
  - **Preschool Development Grants (\$500 million).** This program would pave the way for the successful implementation of Preschool for All by providing competitive grants to States and localities to build or enhance high-quality preschool program infrastructure or to scale up high-quality programs in targeted communities that could serve as models for the Preschool for All initiative.
- **Race to the Top Equity and Opportunity (\$300 million).** This new initiative is designed to drive comprehensive change in how States and Local Educational Agencies identify and close educational opportunity and achievement gaps, including for students with disabilities. Building on previous Race to the Top competitions, RIT-Equity and Opportunity (RIT-Opportunity) aims to support, spotlight, and drive systemic changes at the state and local level. Grantees would enhance their data systems to place sharp focus on the districts, schools, and student groups with the greatest disparities in opportunity and academic performance, while also being able to identify the most effective interventions. They would develop thoughtful, comprehensive strategies for addressing these gaps, and use the data to continuously improve. Grantees would invest in strong teaching and school leadership, using funds to develop, attract, and retain more effective teachers and leaders in high-need schools through strategies such as individualized professional learning and career ladder opportunities. States would collect data on school level expenditures, make that data transparent and accessible, and use it to improve the effectiveness of resources and support continuous program improvement. Participating districts would be required to ensure that their state and local funds are distributed fairly by implementing a more meaningful comparability standard based on this school level expenditure

data. Grant funds could also be used, for example, to provide rigorous coursework; improve school climate and safety; strengthen students' non-cognitive skills; develop and implement fair and appropriate school discipline policies; expand learning time; provide mental, physical, and social emotional supports; expand college and career counseling; and identify and carry out strategies that help break up and mitigate the effects of concentrated poverty. The program also will help states and districts to improve the use and effectiveness of resources from other federal programs.

- **Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) State Grants program (\$3.3 billion).** These grants help States and tribal governments increase the participation of individuals with disabilities in the workforce. The \$33 million increase over the fiscal year 2014 mandatory level would offset the reduction in funds resulting from the Administration's proposal to eliminate separate funding authorities for smaller VR-related programs that can be carried out by the VR State Grants program. Eliminating these separate funding authorities would reduce duplication of effort and administrative costs and streamline program administration at the Federal and local levels. The Department recognizes the need to improve employment outcomes for individuals with disabilities, particularly individuals with significant disabilities and transition-age youth with disabilities. In order to improve the effectiveness of the VR program, we are moving forward on a number of fronts, including revising our accountability framework to strengthen the focus of monitoring and technical assistance efforts on improving employment and transition outcomes and on how State VR agencies use their funds to improve performance and results of the VR program.
- **Disability Innovation Fund.** The FY 2015 request includes language that would allow the Secretary to use funds that remain available after the reallocation of funds to States under the VR State Grants program to support innovative activities aimed at improving services and employment outcomes for individuals with disabilities, including activities under the Promoting Readiness of Minors in Supplemental Security Income (PROMISE) program. After paying continuation costs of the PROMISE program, the Administration proposes to use funds that remain available at the end of fiscal year 2015 for a new Transition Model System initiative that would support the development and testing of a coordinated model system of transition planning, services, and supports in order to improve postsecondary results for youth with disabilities.
- **National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research (NIDRR).** The Administration's request includes an increase of \$4.0 million over the 2014 level for NIDRR research activities, including support for research in the employment domain under a new regulatory framework that NIDRR intends to have in place for its research activities in fiscal year 2015. Based on NIDRR's revised Long-Range Plan, published in final in an April 2013 Federal Register notice, NIDRR established three domains—employment, health and function, and community living and participation. In light of the need to learn more about employment practices that improve outcomes for people with disabilities, the Administration will expand NIDRR's employment portfolio.