



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
OFFICE OF SPECIAL EDUCATION AND REHABILITATIVE SERVICES

FEB - 8 2011

Honorable Rita Sablan  
Commissioner of Education  
Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands Public School System  
P.O. Box 501370 CK  
Saipan, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands 96950

Dear Commissioner Sablan:

This letter is to inform you of the results of the Office of Special Education Programs' (OSEP's) verification visit with the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI) Public School System (PSS) in San Francisco, California, during the week of November 8, 2010. As indicated in our letter to you dated July 22, 2010, OSEP is conducting verification visits to a number of States and territories as part of our Continuous Improvement and Focused Monitoring System (CIFMS) for ensuring compliance with, and improving performance under Part B and Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Section 616 and 642 of the IDEA requires the Department to monitor States and territories with a focus on: (1) improving early intervention and educational results and functional outcomes for infants, toddlers, children, and youth with disabilities; and (2) ensuring that States and territories meet the program requirements, particularly those most closely related to improving early intervention and educational results for infants, toddlers, children and youth with disabilities.

The purpose of the verification visit is to review CNMI's systems for general supervision, the collection of CNMI reported data, and fiscal management, as well as CNMI's systems for improving child and family outcomes and protecting child and family rights. OSEP developed critical elements that were used to guide its evaluation of CNMI's general supervision, data, and fiscal systems. The Enclosures to this letter describe the scope of OSEP's review of CNMI's systems and briefly outline relevant statutory and regulatory requirements for each critical element. Generally, the Enclosures to this letter do not include descriptions of CNMI's systems because this information is available on CNMI's Web site in the State's State Performance Plan (SPP). OSEP's analysis of each critical element and any required actions, if noncompliance was identified during the verification visit, are provided in the enclosures to this letter. OSEP found noncompliance and has required corrective action in the following areas: (1) CNMI has not made findings of noncompliance using all components of its monitoring system; (2) CNMI has not ensured the timely correction of noncompliance when a written finding of noncompliance was not issued following the discovery of noncompliance; (3) CNMI has not developed procedures for ensuring that juveniles with disabilities who are detained in juvenile correctional facilities receive special education and related services in accordance with their individualized education programs; and (4) CNMI does not have procedures to calculate State-level of financial support for the Part B program in CNMI.

OSEP would like to recognize several improvement initiatives being implemented in CNMI that are designed to improve results for infants, toddlers, children, and youth with disabilities. All high school students with disabilities in CNMI must have a Course of Study Form completed as one of their transition requirements. The Course of Study Form includes all the courses, with

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appropriate accommodations, that the student needs to complete in order to graduate from high school with a regular diploma. For the parents of infants and toddlers with disabilities, CNMI annually hosts a “Family Weekend” project to focus primarily on providing technical assistance to parents to help them effectively advocate for their children.

Additionally, OSEP appreciates the cooperation and assistance provided by CNMI staff and others, including staff from Part B Special Education State Advisory Panel and the Part C Interagency Coordinator Council in providing feedback and input on CNMI’s systems for early intervention and special education services. We look forward to collaborating with all stakeholders and actively working with CNMI to improve results for infants, toddlers, children, and youth with disabilities and their families. If you have any questions or wish to request technical assistance, please do not hesitate to call your OSEP State Contact, Lucille Sleger, at (202) 245-7528.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Melody Musgrove". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Melody Musgrove, Ed.D.  
Director  
Office of Special Education Programs

Enclosures

cc: Suzanne Lizama  
Acting State Director of Special Education and  
Part C Coordinator