



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

OFFICE OF SPECIAL EDUCATION AND REHABILITATIVE SERVICES

Honorable Larry Ledoux  
Commissioner of Education  
801 West 10<sup>th</sup> Street, Suite 200  
P.O. Box 110500  
Juneau, Alaska 99811-0500

JAN 25 2010

Dear Commissioner Ledoux:

The purpose of this letter is to inform you of the results of the Office of Special Education Programs' (OSEP's) verification visit to the Alaska Department of Education during the week of October 5, 2009. As indicated in our letter to you dated July 2, 2009, OSEP is conducting verification visits to a number of States as part of our Continuous Improvement and Focused Monitoring System (CIFMS) for ensuring compliance with, and improving performance under Part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). CIFMS is designed to ensure compliance and improve performance with Parts B and C<sup>1</sup> of the IDEA in accordance with 20 U.S.C. 1416 and 1442. Sections 616 and 642 of the IDEA require the Department to monitor States 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 meet the program requirements, particularly those most closely related to improving early intervention and educational results for children with disabilities.

The purpose of the verification visit is to review the effectiveness of the State's systems for general supervision, collection of State-reported data, and fiscal management, as well as the State's systems for improving child and family outcomes and protecting child and family rights. During the verification visit, OSEP: (1) analyzed the components of the State's general supervision, data and fiscal systems to determine the extent to which they are effective in ensuring compliance and improving performance; and (2) reviewed the accuracy of the data the State submitted for selected indicators in the State's FFY 2007 Annual Performance Report (APR)/State Performance Plan (SPP).

As part of the verification visit to Alaska, OSEP staff met with Art Arnold, State Director of Special Education, Sharon Fishel, Special Projects Manager and other State personnel responsible for implementing the general supervision, data or fiscal systems, and local agency staff. Prior to and during the visit, OSEP staff reviewed a number of documents, including the following: (1) Alaska's Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2007 APR submitted to OSEP in February 2009; (2) Alaska's SPP submitted to OSEP in December 2005 and updated in 2007, 2008 and 2009; (3) Alaska's eligibility document submissions under Part B of the IDEA for FFY 2009; (4) OSEP's Verification Visit letter to Alaska dated December 30, 2003; (5) Alaska's Department of Education's website; and (6) other

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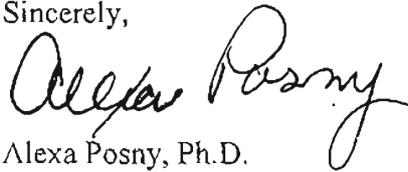
<sup>1</sup> During the week of October 5, 2009, OSEP also conducted its Part C verification visit to the Alaska Department of Health and Social Services.

pertinent information<sup>2</sup>. OSEP also collected and reviewed stakeholder input from Stone Soup Group, the State's Parent Training and Information Center (PTI) and the Governor's Council on Disabilities, the State's Special Education Advisory Panel (SEAP).

OSEP developed critical elements that were used to guide its evaluation of Alaska's general supervision, data, and fiscal systems. OSEP's analysis of each critical element and any required actions, if noncompliance was identified during the verification visit, are provided in the Enclosure to this letter. As further detailed in that Enclosure, OSEP found noncompliance, and has required corrective action for 34 CFR §300.515(c) that specifies that a hearing officer may grant specific extensions of time beyond the 45-day timeline at the request of either party.

OSEP appreciates the cooperation and assistance provided by PTI staff, SEAP and parents in providing feedback and input on the State's systems for special education. We look forward to collaborating with all stakeholders and actively working with the State to improve results for infants, toddlers, and children 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, Sheila Friedman, at 202-245-7349.

Sincerely,



Alexa Posny, Ph.D.  
Acting Director  
Office of Special Education Programs

Enclosure

cc: Mr. Art Arnold  
State Director of Special Education

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<sup>2</sup> Documents reviewed as part of the verification process were not reviewed for legal sufficiency, but rather to inform OSEP's understanding of your State's systems.