



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

OFFICE OF SPECIAL EDUCATION AND REHABILITATIVE SERVICES

Honorable Frederick P. Cerise
Secretary
Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals
P.O. Box 629
Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70821-0629

APR - 3 2006

Dear Secretary Cerise:

Thank you for your timely submission of Louisiana's State Performance Plan (SPP) for review under Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Section 616(b) of the Act requires States to submit, within one year after the date of enactment of the reauthorized IDEA, an SPP that evaluates the State's efforts to implement the requirements and purposes of IDEA and describes how the State will improve implementation. We appreciate the State's efforts in preparing the SPP in the face of many other competing priorities and the challenges of responding to the impact of Hurricane Katrina. In the SPPs, States were to include: (1) baseline data that reflect the State's efforts to implement Part C of the IDEA; (2) measurable and rigorous targets for the next six years for each of the indicators established by the Secretary in the priority areas under section 616(a) of the IDEA; and (3) activities the State will undertake to improve implementation of Part C.

The Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) is pleased to inform you that your State's SPP under Part C meets the requirements of section 616(b) to include measurable and rigorous targets and improvement activities. The State included a variety of detailed activities with timelines and resources designed to improve performance and, where applicable, compliance, with each of the indicators. The activities appear to be designed to impact performance and compliance and assist the State in meeting the established targets. The State must make its SPP available through public means, including posting on the State lead agency's website, distribution to the media, and distribution through public agencies. (Section 616(b)(2)(C)(ii)(I)).

Under section 616(b)(2)(C)(ii)(II) of the Act, the State must annually report to OSEP on its performance under the SPP. The State's first Annual Performance Report (APR) on its progress in meeting its targets is due to OSEP by February 1, 2007. Attached to this letter you will find Table A that addresses issues identified during our review of the SPP that – while not requiring disapproval of your plan – will affect our annual determination of State performance and compliance based on data presented in the State's APR. As a result, your State needs to provide additional information as part of its February 2007 APR submission. Table B includes OSEP's analysis of your submission related to previously-identified noncompliance or other issues included in our October 14, 2005 letter that responded to your State's Federal fiscal year (FFY) 2003 APR, that also may require additional reporting.

The State's longstanding noncompliance, reported under Indicators 1, 7, and 9 in Table B, is the subject of Special Conditions on the State's FFY 2005 Part C grant award. The four areas of longstanding noncompliance (originally identified in OSEP's 2001 monitoring report) are related to: (1) the timely provision of early intervention services under 34 CFR §§303.340(c),

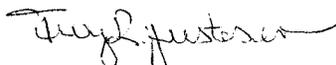
303.342(e) and 303.344(f)(1); (2) the 45-day timeline under 34 CFR §§303.321(e)(2), 303.322(e)(1), and 303.342(a); (3) the individualized family service plan (IFSP) meeting and parent consent requirements under 34 CFR §§303.342 and 303.404(a); and (4) the identification of all needed early intervention services on the IFSP under 34 CFR§303.344(d). The State must provide data demonstrating compliance with these requirements by the date of its final Progress Report under the Special Conditions, which is due April 14, 2006. Failure to provide data demonstrating compliance at that time may result in the State's continuing designation as a "high risk" grantee or otherwise affect its FFY 2006 grant award.

In addition to reporting to OSEP, the State must report annually to the public on the performance of each early intervention service (EIS) program located in the State on the targets in the State's performance plan. (Section 616(b)(2)(C)(ii)(I)) The requirement for public reporting on EIS program performance is a critical provision related to ensuring accountability and focusing on improved results for infants and toddlers with disabilities. OSEP will be providing technical assistance regarding the reporting on EIS program performance, at the National Accountability Conference, September 18 and 19, 2006 in Denver and through periodic technical assistance conference calls.

We hope that your State found the August 5, 2005 guidance on submission of the SPPs and the technical assistance that we provided through the August 11-12, 2005 Summer Institute, periodic conference calls, and the SPP Resources website helpful in this endeavor. If you have any feedback on our past technical assistance efforts or the needs of States for guidance, we would be happy to hear from you as we work to develop further mechanisms to support State improvement activities.

Thank you for your continued work to improve results for infants and toddlers with disabilities and their families. We encourage you to work closely with your State Contact as you proceed in implementing improvement activities and developing your APR. If you have any questions regarding the SPP or the APR, please contact Mary Louise Dirrigl at 202-245-7324.

Sincerely,



Troy R. Justesen
Acting Director
Office of Special Education
Programs

Enclosures

Table A

Table B

cc: Nichole Dupree
Part C Coordinator