



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

OFFICE OF SPECIAL EDUCATION AND REHABILITATIVE SERVICES

Honorable Rita H. Inos  
Commissioner of Education  
CNMI Public School System  
P.O. Box 50130  
Saipan, MP 96950

MAR 31 2006

Dear Commissioner Inos:

Thank you for your timely submission of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands' (CNMI) 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 and territories to submit, within one year after the date of enactment of the reauthorized IDEA, an SPP that evaluates the State's or territory's efforts to implement the requirements and purposes of IDEA and describes how the State or territory will improve implementation. We appreciate CNMI's efforts in preparing the SPP under a short timeline and in the face of many other competing priorities. In the SPPs, due by December 2, 2005, States and territories were to include: (1) baseline data that reflect the State's or territory'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 or territory will undertake to improve implementation of Part C.

The Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) is pleased to inform you that CNMI's SPP under Part C meets the requirements of section 616(b) to include measurable and rigorous targets and improvement activities. CNMI must make its SPP available through public means, including posting on the CNMI 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, CNMI must annually report to OSEP on its performance under the SPP. CNMI'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 CNMI's APR. As a result, CNMI 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 November 18, 2005 letter that responded to CNMI's FFY 2003 APR, that also may require additional reporting.

In addition to reporting to OSEP, CNMI must report annually to the public on the performance of each early intervention service (EIS) program located in CNMI on the targets in CNMI'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. For CNMI, this public reporting requirement is met by CNMI's reporting on the performance of the CNMI Public School System as the lead agency, which is the only EIS program in CNMI. 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 CNMI 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 and territories for guidance, we would be happy to hear from you as we work to develop further mechanisms to support State and territory 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 Lucille Sleger at (202) 245-7528.

Sincerely,



Troy R. Justesen  
Acting Director  
Office of Special Education  
Programs

Enclosures

Table A

Table B

cc: Suzanne Lizama  
Part C Coordinator