



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

MAR 10 2006

Honorable Joan Miles
Director
Department of Public Health and Human Services
Disabilities Services Division
P.O. Box 4210
11 N. Sanders, Room 301/308
Helena, Montana 59604-4210

Dear Commissioner Miles:

Thank you for your timely submission of Montana'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 under a short timeline and in the face of many other competing priorities. In the SPPs, due by December 2, 2005, 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 SPP included a description of the broad stakeholder input that went into its development and clearly delineated both how the State solicited that involvement and how the State used the responses received through that process. The State convened a Work Group to address the SPP that included representatives of the State Interagency Coordinating Council, regional Part C agencies, State monitoring staff, a Part C technical assistance provider and the Early Childhood Outcomes Center. Other constituencies were provided drafts of the SPP and informed about how to provide input for the final SPP.

Analysis of the State's baseline data for all indicators was thorough and complete. The results of that analysis were displayed in an easy-to-use format and the descriptions were useful in understanding the presentation of the data. The targets for each of the 14 indicators were measurable and demonstrated the intent of the State to improve performance and compliance for infants and toddlers with disabilities and their families. In addition, 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 appeared to be designed to impact performance and compliance and assist the State in meeting the established targets.

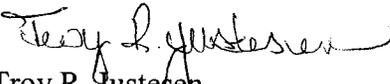
applicable, compliance, with each of the indicators. The activities appeared to be designed to impact performance and compliance and assist the State in meeting the established targets.

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. 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 Jacquelyn Twining-Martin at 202-245-7558.

Sincerely,


Troy R. Justesen
Acting Director
Office of Special Education
Programs

cc: Erica Peterson Swanson
Part C Coordinator