



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

OFFICE OF SPECIAL EDUCATION AND REHABILITATIVE SERVICES

Honorable Timothy K. Webb
Commissioner of Education
Tennessee Department of Education
6th Floor - Andrew Johnson Tower
710 James Robertson Parkway
Nashville, Tennessee 37243-0375

JAN 15 2009

Dear Commissioner Webb:

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 Tennessee Department of Education during the week of September 22, 2008. As indicated in my letter to you dated August 7, 2008, OSEP is conducting verification visits to a number of States as part of our Continuous Improvement and Focused Monitoring System (CIFMS). CIFMS is designed to ensure compliance and improve performance with Parts B and C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). 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 results for infants and toddlers with disabilities, and educational results for children with disabilities.

The purpose of the verification visit is to review 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 whether they are reasonably designed to ensure compliance and improve performance; and (2) reviewed data the State submitted for selected indicators in the State's FFY 2006 Annual Performance Report (APR)/State Performance Plan (SPP).

As part of the verification visit to Tennessee, OSEP staff met with Joseph Fisher, State Director of Special Education, James Kilpatrick, State Lead Agency Coordinator, and 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) Tennessee's Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2006 APR submitted to OSEP in February 2008; (2) Tennessee's SPP submitted to OSEP in December 2005 and updated in 2007 and 2008; (3) Tennessee's eligibility document submissions under Part B and Part C of the IDEA for FFY 2008; (4) OSEP's verification visit letter to Tennessee dated February 6, 2004; (5) Tennessee Department of

Education's website; and (6) other pertinent information.¹

OSEP developed critical elements that were used to guide its evaluation of Tennessee's general supervision, data, and fiscal systems. OSEP's analysis of each critical element is set out in the two enclosures to this letter, one for Part B and one for Part C. The enclosures identify any noncompliance with applicable Part B or Part C requirements and any required actions that OSEP has determined the State must take to address the noncompliance. We appreciate the cooperation and assistance provided by TDE personnel during our visit. We look forward to collaborating with the State as you continue to work 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 Part B State Contact, Daniel Schreier, at 202-245-6552 or your OSEP Part C State Contact, Charles Kniseley at 202-245-7322.

Sincerely,



William W. Knudsen

Acting Director

Office of Special Education Programs

Enclosures

cc: State Director of Special Education
State Lead Agency Coordinator

¹ 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.