



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

JAN 24 2011

Honorable Cary F. Boswell
Commissioner
Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services
602 S. Lawrence Street
P.O. Box 4280
Montgomery, Alabama 36103-4280

Dear Commissioner Boswell:

This letter is to inform you of the results of the Office of Special Education Programs' (OSEP's) verification visit to the Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services (ADRS) during the week of September 20, 2010. As indicated in our letter to you dated July 22, 2010, 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 C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).¹ 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 infants, toddlers, children, and youth 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. OSEP developed critical elements that were used to guide its evaluation of Alabama's general supervision, data, and fiscal systems. The Enclosure to this letter describes the scope of OSEP's review of the State's systems and briefly outlines relevant statutory and regulatory requirements for each critical element. Generally, the Enclosure to this letter does not include descriptions of the State's systems because this information is available on the State's Web site in the State's State Performance Plan. 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. OSEP found noncompliance, and has required corrective action in the following areas: (1) the State did not make a finding of noncompliance in all cases in which record review showed less than 100% compliance with a Part C requirement, as required by IDEA sections 616, 635(a)(10)(A) and 642 and 34 CFR §§303.500 and 303.501; and (2) the State had not adopted procedures that are consistent with the resolution process requirements in 34 CFR §300.510.

OSEP would like to recognize several improvement initiatives being implemented in the State that are designed to improve results for infants and toddlers with disabilities and their families.

¹ During the week of September 20, 2010, OSEP also conducted its Part B verification visit to the Alabama Department of Education (ALSDE). OSEP is sending the Part C verification letter and enclosure to ALSDE under separate cover.

Alabama's Early Intervention Services (AEIS) continually develops, evaluates, and implements a three-tiered statewide, interagency public awareness program that includes: (1) outreach to the general population, (2) outreach that explains the nature and scope of AEIS to primary referral sources, and (3) specific awareness procedures and materials that are geared to the eligible families and their service providers. OSEP found the strength of the system to be that families are involved at all levels of the public awareness process: as consultants at the State level, in the development and review of materials via the State Interagency Coordinating Council and District Coordinating Council outreach, and via family support groups.

AEIS maintains, evaluates, and reviews a database of outreach activities and outcomes at the state level for monitoring and planning activities. AEIS provides outcome-based data to partners and stakeholders in an ongoing manner. AEIS concentrates its outreach initiatives to parents and family members who are considered hard to reach and are not in the usual and accepted paths of service delivery systems, but who may be eligible for early intervention supports and services such as: Supplemental Security Income offices, Housing Authority offices, churches/religious organizations, Red Cross offices, camps/recreational facilities, public/private libraries, county extension agents, family service centers, hospitals/medical facilities, community action organizations, military establishments, shopping malls, Salvation Army offices, beauty shops/laundromats, toy stores, United Way offices, and parent teacher association/parent teacher organization or other parenting organizations. AEIS also utilizes a toll-free telephone line for Spanish-speaking families and bilingual staff. Finally, AEIS provides training and ongoing technical assistance to the Department of Human Resource staff for the implementation of the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act.

AEIS also developed the "Vital Message Training" and "Journey 1 & 2" annual trainings, which the State uses to help ensure compliance with Part C requirements for individualized services in natural environments. AEIS also conducts an annual Early Intervention-Preschool Conference, now in its 26th year, which focuses on family-centered practices.

OSEP appreciates the cooperation and assistance provided by your State staff and others, including staff from the Alabama Parent Education Center and parents of infants and toddlers with disabilities 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 and toddlers 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, Kate Moran, at 202-245-7315.

Sincerely,



Melody Musgrove, Ed.D.
Director
Office of Special Education Programs

Enclosure

cc: Betsy Prince
Part C Coordinator