



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

FEB 27 2012

Honorable Mary E. O'Dowd, M.P.H.
Commissioner
Department of Health and Senior Services
Family Health Services/New Jersey Early Intervention Program
P.O. Box 360
Trenton, New Jersey 08625-0360

Honorable Gloria M. Rodriguez, D.S.W.
Assistant Commissioner
Department of Health and Senior Services/
Family Health Services/New Jersey Early Intervention Program
P.O. Box 364
Trenton, New Jersey 08625-0364

Dear Commissioner O'Dowd and Assistant Commissioner Rodriguez:

This letter is to inform you of the results of the Office of Special Education Programs' (OSEP's) Continuous Improvement Visit (CIV) to the Department of Health and Senior Services (DHSS) during the week of October 31, 2011. As indicated in our letter to you dated March 29, 2011, the visit consisted of two components: (1) the verification of State systems for implementing key requirements of Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA); and (2) a collaborative focus on improving results.¹ The CIV is designed to ensure compliance and improve performance with Part C of the IDEA, consistent with sections 616 and 642 of the IDEA.

The purpose of the verification visit is to review the State's systems for general supervision and fiscal management. OSEP developed critical elements that were used to guide its evaluation of the New Jersey Early Intervention System (NJEIS) general supervision (including 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.

OSEP is currently in the process of conducting a comprehensive review of States' systems for implementing the fiscal requirements of IDEA and related statutes and regulations, through the CIVs and other mechanisms, including the desk audits that OSEP's Recovery Act Facilitators are conducting with all States. In order to provide each State with an integrated response based on its review of States' fiscal systems, OSEP will be sending the State a separate letter addressing any fiscal issues, and has not included a fiscal section in the Enclosure. The fiscal information gathered during the verification visit will also be addressed in that separate letter.

¹ During the week of October 31, 2011, OSEP also conducted its Part B CIV to the New Jersey Department of Education, and the results of that visit are contained in a separate letter.

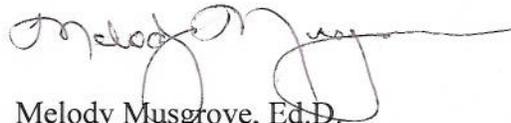
Generally, the Enclosure to this letter does not include descriptions of the State’s systems because this information is available on the State’s Web site in New Jersey’s State Performance Plan. OSEP’s analysis of each critical element and any required actions, if noncompliance was identified during the visit, are provided in the Enclosure to this letter.

During the CIV, New Jersey also focused on improving early intervention results and functional outcomes for infants and toddlers with disabilities. Prior to the visit, New Jersey participated in a process with OSEP to concentrate its efforts on Indicator 3, Outcome A, the percent of infants and toddlers with IFSPs who demonstrate improved positive social-emotional skills (including social relationships). With OSEP’s participation, NJEIS and stakeholders, which included participants from the Regional Early Intervention Collaboratives, local early intervention providers, the National Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center, the Northeast Regional Resource Center, the Data Accountability Center and the State’s Interagency Coordinating Council engaged in a facilitated process to examine the data, as well as current and past efforts to improve results in the Child Outcomes area, and formulate strategies that New Jersey will employ to improve results for children with disabilities in its selected area. New Jersey is developing a plan that includes specific benchmarks for improvement, as well as timelines, resources, and measurements for the NJEIS to improve results. NJEIS will publish this plan with updates on the State lead agency’s Web site at <http://www.njeis.org>.

OSEP appreciates the cooperation and assistance provided by your State staff and others, including the Statewide Parent Advocacy Network of New Jersey, Disability Rights New Jersey, the State Interagency Coordinating Council, and parents of infants and toddlers with disabilities in providing feedback and input on the State’s systems for providing early intervention services to infants and toddlers with disabilities.

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, Jennifer Miley, at 202-245-6049.

Sincerely,



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

Enclosure

cc: Terry Harrison
Part C Coordinator