



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

JUL - 9 2007

Honorable Michelle Rhee
Chancellor
District of Columbia Public Schools
825 North Capitol Street, NE, 9th Floor
Washington, DC 20002

Dear Chancellor Rhee:

This is to inform you that we have conditionally approved the District of Columbia's application for Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2007 under Part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Our conditional approval is based on review of your application submitted by the District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS) to the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP), on May 2, 2007, including assurances provided in Section II, and incorporated by reference to this letter as noted in Enclosure A. In addition, the State provided specific assurances that it will:

1. Operate consistent with the applicable Part B regulations; and
2. Make such changes to existing policies and procedures as are necessary to bring those policies and procedures into compliance with the requirements of Part B of the IDEA, as amended, as soon as possible, and not later than June 30, 2008. Section II of the State's application identifies the IDEA statutory sections for which the State needs to amend policies and procedures and the timelines by which the State will amend its policies and procedures in order to comply with Part B of the IDEA. Within Section II, the State has included the date by which it expects to complete necessary changes associated with any policies and procedures that are not yet in compliance with the requirements of Part B of the IDEA, as amended.

Enclosed are grant awards for funds currently available under the Department of Education FFY 2007 Appropriations Act for the Part B Section 611 (Grants to States) and Section 619 (Preschool Grants) programs. These funds are for use primarily in school year 2007-2008 and are available for obligation by States from July 1, 2007 through September 30, 2009.

As set forth in Enclosure D, in April 2006, under the authority of the Education Department General Administrative Regulations (EDGAR), 34 CFR §80.12, the Department designated DCPS a "high-risk" grantee. At that time, Special Conditions were placed on all Department grants awarded to DCPS because of problems in DCPS' fiscal and program accountability, management systems, and related areas. Therefore, the DCPS FFY 2006 IDEA Part B grant awards were released subject to the Department-wide FFY 2006 Special Conditions. Because of

the problems noted in the Department's correspondence dated June 28, 2007 (Enclosure D), the District of Columbia's status as a "high-risk" grantee under 34 CFR §80.12 will continue and, therefore, Special Conditions will be applied to program grants and funds awarded to DCPS by the Department.

In addition to the Department-wide conditions, the State's FFY 2007 IDEA Part B grant awards are being released subject to FFY 2007 Special Conditions, as set forth in Enclosure E, that are being imposed pursuant to the Department's authority in 34 CFR §80.12. Specifically, OSEP determined that DCPS has continued to demonstrate noncompliance with the requirements to: provide timely initial evaluations and reevaluations (section 612(a)(7) and 614(a) through (c) of IDEA and 34 CFR §§300.301(c)(1) and 300.303); implement due process hearing decisions in a timely manner (section 615(f) and (i)); ensure placement in the least restrictive environment (LRE) (section 612(a)(5)(A) and 34 CFR §§300.114 through 300.120); and identify and correct noncompliance with the requirements of Part B of IDEA (section 612(a)(11) and 616(a), 20 U.S.C. 1232d(b)(3), and 34 CFR §§300.149 and 300.600).

Your State's failure to provide timely initial evaluations and reevaluations, to implement due process hearing decisions in a timely manner, to ensure placement in the LRE, and to identify and correct noncompliance resulted in the Department imposing the FFY 2006 Special Conditions contained in Enclosure E of the July 11, 2006 grant award letter. Because DCPS did not meet those Special Conditions, the Department is imposing Special Conditions on the State's FFY 2007 grant awards under Part B. The reasons for doing so and the specific conditions are detailed in the enclosure. The State must administer these awards both in keeping with the applicable provisions of Federal law and regulations and the Special Conditions attached to the grant award document. Acceptance by DCPS of these grant awards constitutes an agreement by the State to comply with the Special Conditions.

Please note that as part of your application for FFY 2007, your State has made an assurance, in 34 CFR §80.11(c), that it will comply with all applicable Federal statutes and regulations in effect with respect to the periods for which it receives grant funding. Any changes made by the State, after OSEP approval, to information that is a part of a State's application, must meet the public participation requirements in 34 CFR §300.165.

The amount in your award for Section 619 represents the full amount of funds to which you are entitled. However, the amount shown in your award for the Section 611 program is only part of the total funds that will be awarded to you for FFY 2007. Of the \$10,782,961,000 appropriated for Section 611 in FFY 2007, \$5,358,761,000 is available for awards on July 1, 2007, and \$5,424,200,000 will be available on October 1, 2007.

Under the Section 611 formula, subject to certain maximum and minimum funding requirements, State allocations are based on the amount that each State received from FFY 1999 funds, the general population in the age range for which each State ensures a free appropriate public

education (FAPE) to all children with disabilities, and the number of children living in poverty in the age range for which each State ensures FAPE to all children with disabilities. At the level of the decrease in the appropriation for the Preschool Grant program compared to that for prior years, each State is first allocated the amount it received for FFY 1997. The remaining funds are allocated based on the relative amount of the increase in funding that the State received between FFYs 1997 and 2006, as compared to the total of such increases for all States.

Enclosure B provides a short description of how Section 611 funds were allocated and how those funds can be used. In addition, Table I in Enclosure B shows funding levels for distribution of Section 611 funds and the parameters for within-State allocations. Table II in Enclosure B shows your State-specific information for within-State distribution of 611 funds based on your State's application. If you disagree with the information in Enclosure B Table II, notify your State contact immediately.

Enclosure C provides a short description of how Section 619 funds were allocated and how those funds can be used. In addition, Table III in Enclosure C shows State-by-State funding levels for distribution of Section 619 funds.

Section 611(e)(1)(C) of the IDEA provides that "[p]rior to expenditure of funds under this paragraph [section 611(e)(1) concerning funds for State administration], the State shall certify to the Secretary that the arrangements to establish responsibility for services pursuant to section 612(a)(12)(A) are current." We read this provision to mean that if a State does not have interagency agreements or other arrangements in place to establish responsibility for the provision of services, the State may not expend funds available to the State under section 611(e)(1) [State administration funds] until the State has these agreements or arrangements in place.

Under section 608(a)(2) of the IDEA, each State that receives funds under Part B is required to inform in writing local educational agencies located in the State of any State-imposed rule, regulation, or policy that is not required by IDEA or Federal regulations. A State may use the same list of State-imposed rules, regulations and policies that it was required to submit to the Department in Section IV of its Part B application for this purpose.

The enclosed grant award for FFY 2007 is made with the continued understanding that this Office may, from time to time, require clarification of information within your application, if necessary. These inquiries are needed to allow us to appropriately carry out our administrative responsibilities related to Part B.

Section 606 provides that each recipient of assistance under IDEA make positive efforts to employ and advance in employment qualified individuals with disabilities in programs assisted under the IDEA. Therefore, by accepting this grant a State is expressly agreeing as a condition of IDEA funding to ensuring that positive efforts are made to employ and advance employment of qualified individuals with disabilities in programs assisted under the IDEA.

We appreciate your ongoing commitment to the provision of quality educational services to children with disabilities.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Patricia J. Guard". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Patricia J. Guard
Acting Director
Office of Special Education Programs

Enclosures

- Enclosure A
- Enclosure B
- Enclosure C
- Enclosure D
- Enclosure E

cc: Deborah Gist, State Superintendent of Education
Gayle Amos, State Director of Special Education