



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

OFFICE OF SPECIAL EDUCATION AND REHABILITATIVE SERVICES

Honorable Brian W. Amy
State Health Officer
Mississippi Department of Health
570 East Woodrow Wilson Drive
P.O. Box 1700
Jackson, Mississippi 39215-1700

MAR 27 2006

Dear Dr. Amy:

Thank you for your timely submission of Mississippi'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, including the challenges of responding to the impact of Hurricane Katrina. In the SPPs, States were able 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 Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) is pleased to inform you that your State's SPP under Part C meets the requirements of section 616(b) to include measurable and rigorous targets and improvement activities. The State must make its SPP available through public means, including posting on the State lead agency's website, distribution to the media, and distribution through public agencies. (Section 616(b)(2)(C)(ii)(I))

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. Attached to this letter you will find Table A that addresses issues identified during our review of the SPP that – while not requiring disapproval of your plan – will affect our annual determination of State performance and compliance based on data presented in the State's APR. As a result, your State needs to provide additional information as part of its February 2007 APR submission. Table B includes OSEP's analysis of your submission related to issues included in our September 30, 2005 letter that responded to your State's Federal fiscal year (FFY) 2003 APR.

The State's longstanding noncompliance, reported under Indicator 7 in Table B and related to the 45-day timeline requirements in 34 CFR §§303.321(e)(2), 303.322(e)(1) and 303.342(a), is the subject of special conditions on the State's FFY 2005 Part C grant award. Also reported in Table B is the State's longstanding noncompliance, related to: (1) the timely early intervention service provision requirements in 34 CFR §§303.340(c), 303.342(e) and 303.344(f)(1) (Indicator 1); (2) the requirements under 34 CFR §303.501(b)(4) to ensure the timely correction of identified

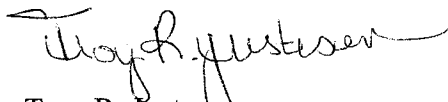
noncompliance (Indicator 9); and (3) the service coordination requirements in 34 CFR §303.23(a) (Indicator 9B). OSEP's February 27, 2004 letter that accepted the State's plan to ensure compliance with these three requirements also required the State to submit a final progress report one year from the date of the letter (which coincided with the FFY 2003 APR) that demonstrated full compliance. By June 1, 2006, the State must provide the data and information requested in Table B on these four indicators (1, 7, 9 and 9B). Failure to provide data by that time demonstrating compliance may result in the State's being designated a "high risk" grantee related to the outstanding noncompliance or otherwise affect its FFY 2006 grant award.

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 Rhonda Spence at 202-245-7382.

Sincerely,



Troy R. Justesen
Acting Director
Office of Special Education Programs

Enclosures

Table A

Table B

cc: Danita Munday
Part C Coordinator