



IDEA '97 UPDATE

A MONTHLY FAX BULLETIN FROM OSERS ON IDEA'97 ACTIVITIES

SEPTEMBER 28, 1998

Archived Information

VOL. II, No.2

\$6 MILLION AWARDED TO EDUCATE FAMILIES AND SCHOOLS ABOUT 1997 LANDMARK AMENDMENTS TO SPECIAL EDUCATION LAW

On September 24, 1998, U.S. Secretary of Education Richard W. Riley announced the award of \$6 million in grants for a national education and outreach effort to ensure that children with disabilities are receiving a quality education. Improving the education of disabled children is a primary objective of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) which was reauthorized in 1997.

“The information and training that these grants will produce are critical to achieving better educational opportunities for disabled children which are the goals of the reauthorized IDEA,” Riley said. “This is part of the ongoing efforts of the U.S. Department of Education to ensure that all students are challenged to excel.”

The four grants are being awarded to three organizations, recognized as leaders in the education and disability field. They, in turn, have formed partnerships with more than 30 other associations, including the major education groups, to help in this nationwide effort.

In addition to producing various educational materials, an extensive communications network will be developed for dissemination of information and technical assistance. Toll-free numbers, websites, public service announcements and best practices reports are a few of the ways that people will be able to get information to help them. The grantees also will educate a group of trainers who will instruct administrators, educators and other service providers on their roles in implementing the new law.

“We have made great strides over the years in dispelling the myth that children with disabilities cannot learn,” said Judith E. Heumann, assistant secretary for special education and rehabilitative services. “Through these grants, we now are helping schools prepare to teach disabled young people to reach for the same level of excellence as every other child.”

Currently, more than 5.8 million children and youth with disabilities who are served under the IDEA are excluded from the general curricula and assessments used with their non-disabled classmates, Heumann said. Heumann also stated that, “these grants will serve two purposes; first to provide information and training on the law and the regulations and second, to get, practical, research-based best practices out to create better results for children with disabilities.”

She added that without established goals and standards, disabled children are all too often not challenged to excel. IDEA '97 strengthens academic expectations and accountability for disabled students and helps bridge the gap that has frequently existed between what children with disabilities are expected to learn and the higher standard that is required of non-disabled students.

The three grantees are the PACER Center, the National Association of State Directors of Special Education, and the Council for Exceptional Children (awarded two grants). Along with their partners, they represent families of disabled children and their supporters, policy makers, service providers and local-level administrators. Each award provides for \$1.5 million per year for up to five years.

More information on the grants, recipients and their partners is available at the IDEA'97 web site:
www.ed.gov/offices/OSERS/IDEA.train.html

(Editors Note: This edition is the first IDEA'97 UPDATE for the 1998-1999 school year. In this edition, we published the entire press release which announces the OSEP-funded national partnership grants designed to provide extensive public outreach on the implementation of IDEA'97. The next edition of UPDATE, scheduled to be released around October 15, 1998 will outline new additions to the IDEA'97 web site; provide an update on publication of the final regulations and share information on upcoming OSEP-sponsored conferences. Please share UPDATES with colleagues. THANKS.)

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