

Archived Information

AUGUST 12, 1997

Dear State Director:

You recently received a letter dated July 28, 1997 from Dr. Thomas Hehir, Director of the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP). In his letter, Dr. Hehir indicated that I would be sending you more detailed information on OSEP's 1997-98 monitoring effort. I have talked with many of you since you received Dr. Hehir's letter. During those telephone calls, and with this letter, I hope the information provided will clearly articulate the intent of Dr. Hehir's correspondence as well as provide you with more details of the process. As stated in Dr. Hehir's letter, we are very excited about a venture that promises to ensure implementation and effect change through a partnership between OSEP, the States, local school districts, parents and others.

The purpose of this collaborative effort is to provide support and guidance for all States, as we move forward with implementation of IDEA 1997. The result of this endeavor will be a plan between OSEP and the SEA for implementation of the new law - including a plan that incorporates the unique aspects of each State's needs, resources and administrative structure. As noted below, we realize that some States have moved well along in the planning process and have begun implementation. It is our intent to work with each State so as to build on what has already been done and move forward. We realize that to do this, we will have to work closely on an individual basis with each State. We believe that taking a thoughtful and inclusive approach to planning for implementation, that is focused on States' systems, will ensure the most positive and effective result.

OSEP'S ONSITE VISIT

In most cases, two OSEP staff will be onsite in your State for a week to participate in a series of meetings/discussions to develop activities to ensure effective implementation of the IDEA 1997 requirements. We recognize that implementation efforts are already underway in many States. As you plan for our visit, we encourage you to continue these efforts, and we will coordinate our activities with those already being carried out in your State. The agenda for the week will depend on what specific implementation planning your State has undertaken.

We will work with you to plan the week to best meet the needs of your State. You may wish to organize our meetings around topical areas, clustering like requirements for the purpose of planning, developing strategies and involving appropriate individuals. Another suggestion is to organize the week to prioritize areas of the new IDEA requirements for which your State has not had the opportunity to develop complete systems for implementation. Attached is a sample agenda and schedule that you may wish to use as a guide as you develop the week's agenda. In order to ensure the most productive use of time at these meetings, you may wish to consider facilitation. We have found it helpful in the planning and implementation we have undertaken here at OSEP. OSEP has been in contact with each of the Regional Resource Centers (RRC); all have expressed their interest in and willingness to participate in this process in whatever way you would prefer, including facilitation of the meetings. We encourage you to contact your RRC staff to discuss their involvement.

We understand that many States are well on their way to assessing the State's compliance with the IDEA 1997 requirements. In order to best prepare for the visit, if you haven't already completed such a review, please assess your State's compliance with the requirements. We would appreciate your sharing the results of this review with us prior to our visit, to provide us with as much information as possible. In addition, to facilitate our work while onsite, we suggest that you identify the five to ten new requirements you are finding

to be the most challenging and any questions you have on those requirements. This will better prepare us to be of assistance to your State.

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

The expected results of this process is a plan for implementation of IDEA 1997 in your State. For those states that are already developing implementation plans, we will use that plan for the basis of our work, ensuring that it appropriately addresses all of the IDEA 1997 requirements. Many States are currently working to complete outstanding corrective actions from previous OSEP monitoring. In light of IDEA 1997, many of these activities will need to be revised to reflect current law. OSEP staff will work with the Implementation team in your State to incorporate the revised corrective actions into the overall plan. This will be particularly advantageous for those states monitored in the 1996-97 monitoring cycle that have recently received their reports, and are working to develop corrective action plans.

While onsite, OSEP staff will work with you to develop a process for obtaining public comment on the plan. Subsequent to the public comment process, you will forward your plan to this Office for approval. Implementation Team

Dr. Hehir's July 28, 1997 letter also addressed the constituencies to be represented on the Implementation Team for each State. Many States have expressed their intention to utilize their State advisory panel or other constituent group in the planning process. While we find this to be an acceptable approach, the participants on the Implementation Team should include, at a minimum, individuals representative of the constituency groups. We believe that this collaborative approach (which continues the inclusive process utilized by Committee staff to develop the reauthorized IDEA as well as OSEP's process for regulation development) is the most effective means to ensure comprehensive and effective implementation of IDEA 1997, and will ensure commitment from all constituencies.

OSEP's process of monitoring for implementation of IDEA 1997 promises to be a challenging undertaking for us all. We are pleased to work with you and your constituencies in this exciting endeavor. A member of my staff will be in touch with you to begin planning for potential dates for the visit, and provide further details

Sincerely,

Ruth E. Ryder
Director
Division of Monitoring and State Improvement Planning
cc: Martha Fields

Attachment

SAMPLE SCHEDULE/AGENDA FOR IDEA-97 PLANNING VISIT

DAY ONE

OSEP staff travel to State.

- Afternoon meeting with SEA Director, RRC staff (or other facilitator) to review agenda, clarify expectations, work out any remaining logistical concerns.

DAY TWO

Introduction

- IDEA Planning Meeting convened by SEA/OSEP.
- OSEP/SEA Director presents to group on background and purpose, participants' roles, agenda, ground rules, and expected results.
- SEA Director reviews summary of assessment, suggests areas upon which to focus.

Discussion of Content Areas

- For each area, OSEP will summarize important changes in IDEA.
- Discussion of State's status with regard to IDEA requirement.
- Identification of activities needed to fully implement IDEA requirement. Action steps, staff responsible, needed resources, timelines and method of verification will be determined.

DAYS THREE AND FOUR (AS NEEDED)

Continuation of Discussion of Content Areas

DAY FIVE (MORNING)

- Planning Meeting Wrap-Up Session
- Summarize agreements.
- Determine process for public input.
- Clarify next steps.
- Participants complete process evaluation.
- Adjourn/OSEP staff return to Washington.