

# OSERS' LONG-TERM GOALS

## **GOAL 1: ACHIEVE TRUE EXCELLENCE IN EDUCATION FOR ALL CHILDREN AND YOUTHS WITH DISABILITIES.**

---

We have achieved much in the way of physical access for children with disabilities to our nation's education system. Now we must achieve full access to high quality curricula and instruction leading to improved education achievement for all children and youths with disabilities. The reauthorized *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)* reinforces the importance of accountability for results by including the requirements for the State Performance Plans in the law. These requirements include a factual statement showing how states are implementing *IDEA* and how well students are progressing under *No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB)*. We will release the final regulations for *IDEA* this summer and offer states the assistance they need to implement the new regulations, followed later by the 2 percent regulations, which allow an additional 2 percent of students with the most significant cognitive disabilities to be assessed with modified standards. These are students who can achieve high standards but may not reach grade level in the same time frame as their peers, even with the best instruction. The reauthorized *IDEA* aligns more closely with the *NCLB* with its emphasis on accountability for results. *NCLB* is working, in concert with the *IDEA*, to close the achievement gap for students with disabilities. To accomplish this, we must support children from birth through their school years and empower families to be true partners in their educational experience.

To help states raise student achievement and reach the goals of *NCLB*, OSERS and the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education (OESE) have forged a new federal collaboration on technical assistance. The Office of Special Education Programs jointly funded three OESE Comprehensive Centers in the content areas of teacher quality, instruction and high schools. At the end of April 2006, OSERS and OESE provided an additional resource for state officials, the *Tool Kit on Teaching and Assessing Students With Disabilities*. It includes papers by experts on large-scale assessments that are used to judge academic achievement in schools and districts and also covers student assessment, instructional practices, behavior and accommodation for the education of students with disabilities. Roll out plans, technical assistance and dissemination will be a big effort to help states in this process for assessing academic achievement for students with disabilities.

## **OSERS' LONG-TERM GOALS**

### **GOAL 2: EXPAND MEANINGFUL AND COMPETITIVE EMPLOYMENT FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES AND EMPHASIZE THE TRANSITION OF YOUTHS WITH DISABILITIES TO POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT OR BOTH.**

Helping state agencies achieve positive employment outcomes for the people with disabilities they serve requires a robust system of collaboration, monitoring, and state improvement plans that address identified needs and goals. Excellence in special education is also a workforce issue. We need to start early in life in order to prepare well-educated, skilled students with disabilities who will compete for and attain good, promising jobs that will lead to fulfilling careers. Providing effective programs to support the transition of youths with disabilities into postsecondary education and employment is a major focus for OSERS. In addition to helping state agencies achieve positive outcomes that result in a more promising future for all youths and adults with disabilities they serve, OSERS promotes interagency collaboration, partnering with employers and effective independent living programs to help youths and adults prepare for a more promising future. In addition, OSERS contributes to evidence-based rehabilitation practices that improve the lives of individuals with disabilities by funding and conducting rigorous and consumer-relevant research in the areas of employment, participation and community living, technology, health and medical rehabilitation, and related areas. These practices are intrinsic to the president's New Freedom Initiative (NFI), which is focused on individual self-reliance and full integration into American society.

## OSERS' LONG-TERM GOALS

### **GOAL 3: IMPROVE OUTREACH, COMMUNICATION AND VISIBILITY.**

---

Constituents around the country can benefit from research results and technical assistance from all of the programs of OSERS' three components: the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP), the National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research (NIDRR) and the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA). OSERS provides a wide array of support to parents and individuals, school districts and states in three main areas: special education, vocational rehabilitation and research. The public must have access to the results of monitoring activities and how these drive program improvements. OSERS emphasizes direct, positive and beneficial results for consumers. More effective utilization of printed and electronic publications, Web pages, and listserv messages—elements of Knowledge Translation, which involves the synthesis, exchange and ethically sound application of knowledge within a complex set of interactions among researchers and users—will help to inform and engage interested persons. Our best outcomes are those that improve the lives of individuals with disabilities and special needs.

## **OSERS' LONG-TERM GOALS**

### **GOAL 4: BUILD PARTNERSHIPS LEVERAGING RESOURCES WITH FEDERAL AND OTHER GOVERNMENT AGENCIES, NONGOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS AND THE PRIVATE SECTOR.**

---

OSERS must serve as a repository of information to the public and all its federal partners. OSERS' programs, grants and conferences produce or highlight helpful technologies, services and resources for people of all abilities. We need to utilize these activities in ways that will attain the greatest possible impact. Improved collaboration and partnerships will generate improved outcomes from combining governmental programs. Creative ways to partner with business and nongovernmental organizations through mentoring, job shadowing, internships or technical assistance also will help to make a greater difference in peoples' lives. Together we can accomplish the mission of serving and improving outcomes for America's 54 million citizens with disabilities.

## OSERS' LONG-TERM GOALS

### **GOAL 5: EXPAND ACCESS TO, UTILIZATION OF, AND REUSE OF ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY.**

---

Assistive Technology (AT) levels the playing field for people with disabilities. It can provide access to the general curriculum for students with disabilities and expand employment opportunities for adults with disabilities. One opportunity to greatly expand access to and utilization of AT is through programs that support the reuse of AT devices and durable medical equipment (DME). Across the country, many people have AT or DME, from wheelchairs to special computer keyboards, that they no longer need or use. Yet, other people with disabilities are seeking affordable items to meet their needs. Organizations throughout the country help bring together both groups of individuals in creative ways through device reuse programs that exchange, recycle, repair, redistribute and properly fit AT and DME. Common sense dictates that we try to match up needs with available resources. This can be a big boost to the medically uninsured and underserved populations and a big cost saver for government. OSERS provides leadership to coordinate these nationwide efforts, and we sponsored a national conference on this issue in Atlanta, May 8–10, 2006, titled “Pass It On!” This conference was designed to help organizations share successful strategies and build new networks for reuse of AT, and it was a great success, with 174 people from 50 states and territories participating. Going forward, OSERS will work with states on implementing the reauthorized *Assistive Technology Act* to promote AT and DME access, financing, training and reuse. In addition, OSERS will be funding special demonstration projects specifically to support AT and DME reuse.