

NAPSO

NATIONAL ALLIANCE OF PUPIL SERVICES ORGANIZATIONS

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NAPSO IDEA RECOMMENDATIONS

The National Alliance of Pupil Services Organizations (NAPSO) encourages Congress to consider the following principles and recommendations for the Reauthorization of IDEA.

ELIGIBILITY AND SERVICES

- All eligible students should receive related services as appropriate to enable each student to make academic progress in the school environment.
- Early intervention and preschool services must be available to all eligible children. States must have the resources to effectively screen and identify all eligible children for developmentally appropriate progress to maximize their ability to enter school ready to learn.
- In developing the Individualized Education Program (IEP) (Sec. 614 (d) (3)) and Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) (Sec. 636 (a) (1)), all related services should be considered, and included in the IEP and IFSP where appropriate. Health and mental health barriers should not be overlooked.
- Interventions and services that address emotional and behavioral barriers to learning must be provided, as they serve to improve student well being and increase academic achievement.

COORDINATED SERVICES

- Local education agencies must indicate how they will implement interagency agreements to coordinate and collaborate on service delivery and resource sharing. Mental health, public health and juvenile justice agencies should be explicitly included in coordination efforts. Coordination of services (Sec. 613(f)) with any and all agencies should be considered part of the child's overall services and delineated as such on the IEP or IFSP.
- General education and special education personnel should work collaboratively with related services personnel to address student needs within the general education curriculum.
- The provision of funds for 'Services And Aids That Also Benefit Nondisabled Children' (Section 613(a)(4)(A)) should be maintained and enhanced. These services enable related services providers to reach more students in the most cost-effective manner.

QUALIFIED PERSONNEL

- All children should receive services from the best-trained and qualified related services personnel.
- Personnel preparation is an area of critical importance deserving greater federal investment and attention. In addition to quality pre-service education, ongoing professional development must be provided to related services personnel, in conjunction with general educators and administrators. Related services personnel must be versed in academic content, and general education personnel must be trained to implement the modifications and accommodations on students' IEPs.
- The shortage of special education teachers and related services personnel is a critical problem. Incentives such as loan forgiveness must be offered to assist in recruitment and retention of these staff to ensure that students receive services from the best-trained and qualified personnel.

- Related services personnel must have manageable caseloads that ensure students receive appropriate services under IDEA. Federal guidance should be provided regarding appropriate caseloads.

EFFECTIVE DISCIPLINE

- Ceasing educational and other services as a means of disciplining students does not improve school safety or effectively address problem behaviors. Students with violent or disruptive behavior must have their needs addressed through the provision of appropriate and effective interventions and services, such as positive behavioral supports.
- Preventive behavioral supports should be used to improve the overall school environment and classroom management capacity and to help teachers and students to focus on academic achievement. It is more cost-effective to society in the long term to prevent behavioral problems and address mental health needs early than to allow these problems to escalate.

FUNDING & SUPPORT

- To ensure adequate resources for effective implementation of the law, Congress should fully fund Part B of the IDEA, as well as support commensurate increases in funding for Part C, the Preschool Grant Program (Sec. 619), and Part D.
- Part D personnel preparation grants (Sec. 673), should be significantly increased. Personnel preparation grants are crucial to ensuring an adequate supply of qualified, trained related services personnel and to reducing excessively high caseloads and staff-student ratios, thus providing the highest quality of services to students and their families.

ACCOUNTABILITY

- The federal government must ensure that state special education programs comply with IDEA through improved accountability and monitoring. Adequate data regarding IDEA implementation are necessary to validate compliance.
- The U.S. Department of Education should work with states to provide model documentation procedures that do not create an excessive paperwork burden for related services providers. The procedures must also provide adequate safeguards for parents.

RESEARCH & DISSEMINATION

- Effective research-based instruction should be used whenever possible. The U.S. Department of Education should identify and disseminate models of best practices to states and LEAs.
- All schools must provide effective research-based reading instruction to all students, including students with disabilities. Related service professionals with training and expertise in communication disorders should be an integral member of the school literacy team.
- The U.S. Department of Education should engage in research projects and data collection regarding the outcome of related services on student achievement.

The National Alliance of Pupil Services Organizations (NAPSO) is a coalition of national professional organizations whose members provide a variety of school-based prevention and intervention services to assist students in becoming effective learners and productive citizens. NAPSO organizations represent over a million members, including school counselors, school nurses, psychologists, school psychologists, social workers and school social workers; occupational, physical, and creative arts therapists; and speech-language pathologists, audiologists, students, parents, and pupil services administrators. NAPSO promotes interdisciplinary practice and cooperation and advocates for ensuring access to quality pupil services for all students.