

Resources for Classroom Access

By Louise Tripoli, Ph.D.

Resources for Classroom Access from U.S. Department of Education

“What can the U.S. Department of Education do for school administrators, teachers, educators, parents of deaf and hard of hearing children who receive regular and special education services?” After having been asked this question so many times, I realized that perhaps many of the deaf, hard of hearing and hearing folks I meet are not familiar about the wonderful resources that the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) has to offer. This office is located under the umbrella of the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS).

OSERS is committed to improving results and outcomes for people with disabilities of all ages. In supporting President Bush’s *No Child Left Behind* agenda and the *New Freedom Initiative*, OSERS provides a wide array of support to parents and individuals, school districts and states in three main areas: **special education** (OSEP), **vocational rehabilitation** (Rehabilitation Services Administration or RSA) and **research** (National Institute on Disability in Research and Rehabilitation or NIDRR). Their mission is to provide leadership to achieve full integration and participation in society of people with disabilities by ensuring equal opportunity, access to and excellence in education, employment and community living.

Since I have been working for the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) as an education program specialist for the past five years, I would like to share with you the various programs and products we have to offer. Consumers such as

administrators, special and regular education teachers, parents, post-secondary students, university personnel, and others can benefit greatly from our resources.

Let me begin with a brief history of OSEP. About forty years ago, Congress began to direct the resources of the federal government to the task of educating children with disabilities. In 1975 the federal Education for All Handicapped Children Act (PL 94-142) established the right of all students with disabilities to a “free appropriate public education.” This law specified that each student with a disability must be provided with an individualized education program (IEP) outlining both short-range and long-range goals for the child. Since that time, a number of other federal laws have reinforced and extended the commitment to special education. The Education of the Handicapped Act Amendments (PL 99-457), passed in 1986, provided for early intervention for children from birth to age two who are developmentally delayed. For states that choose to participate, programs must include a multidisciplinary assessment of the child’s needs, a written individualized family services plan (IFSP), and case management. Services may draw from a variety of areas, such as special education speech and language pathology, occupational or physical therapy, or family training and counseling, depending on the developmental needs of the child. PL 99-457 also stated that a free appropriate public education had to be extended to children with disabilities age three to five years old.

Later, two significant federal laws were passed by Congress in 1990: The Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). IDEA amended the 1975 Education for All Handicapped Children Act. ADA ensures the right of individuals with disabilities to nondiscriminatory treatment in other aspects of their lives besides education. IDEA also requires that all older students with a disability (usually at ages fourteen to sixteen) have an individualized plan for making the transition from school to work or additional education beyond high school, through age twenty-one. Congress also incorporated definitions of “assistive technology” into the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA). The U.S. Department of Education’s Office of Special



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Education Programs views assistive technology devices and services as important parts of the education program required by the IDEA.

The IDEA Amendments of 1997 (IDEA '97) represented a major milestone in the education of children with disabilities -- the first major revision to the Act in more than 23 years since the enactment of P.L. 94-142, the Education of all Handicapped Children Act of 1975. OSEP is dedicated to improving results for infants, toddlers, children and youth with disabilities ages birth through 21 by providing leadership and financial support to assist states and local districts. Under the administration of OSEP, IDEA authorizes formula grants to states, and discretionary grants to institutions of higher education and other nonprofit organizations to support research, demonstrations, technical assistance and dissemination, technology and personnel development and parent-training and information centers. These programs are intended to ensure that the rights of infants, toddlers, children, and youth with disabilities and their parents are protected. OSEP accomplishes this mission by:

- Developing, communicating and disseminating federal policy and information on early intervention and the education of infants, toddlers, children, and youth with disabilities;
- Administering formula grants and discretionary programs authorized by Congress;
- Fostering and supporting research and the development of knowledge and innovations to improve results for infants, toddlers, children, and youth with disabilities;
- Promoting and supporting the



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A kindergarten activity at KDES.

training of educational, related services, and leadership personnel, and parents and volunteers;

- Evaluating, monitoring and reporting on the implementation of federal policy and programs and the effectiveness of early intervention and educational efforts for infants, toddlers, children, and youth with disabilities and,
- Coordinating with other federal agencies, state agencies, and the private sector including parent and professional organizations, private schools, and organizations of persons with disabilities for the review of policy, program planning and implementation issues.

Now back to my original question, "What can the U.S. Department of Education do for school administrators, teachers, educators, parents of deaf and hard of hearing children who receive regular and special education services?" As most of you already know, on January 8, 2002, President George W. Bush signed the No Child Left Behind Act into law. This law means that every state must set clear and high standards for what stu-

dents in each grade should know and be able to do in the core academic subjects of reading, math and science. This law also redefines the federal role in K-12 education and will help close the achievement gap between disadvantaged and minority students and their peers. It is based on four basic principles: stronger accountability for results, increased flexibility and local control, expanded options for parents, and an emphasis on teaching methods that have been proven to work.

This law presents a challenge for us. By providing funding to

programs that serve infants, toddlers, children and adults with disabilities, OSERS works to ensure that these individuals are not left behind ... in school, in employment, in life. OSERS also provides funds to programs that offer information and technical assistance to parents of infants, toddlers and children with disabilities, as well as members of the education community who serve these individuals.

Within OSEP, the staff is divided into two divisions: 1) Research to Practice and 2) Monitoring and State Improvement Planning Division. For the purposes of this article, I will only discuss the Research to Practice Division where I am currently employed. This division is composed of four teams: 1) Early Childhood 2) Elementary and Middle School 3) Secondary, Transition and Post-Secondary; and 4) National Initiatives. Within these teams, the staff oversees and supports a comprehensive array of programs and projects that improve results for infants, toddlers, children and youth with disabilities. Examples of such program and project funded activities within each team:

Early Childhood:

Parent Training and Information Centers

<http://www.fctd.info>

National Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center

<http://www.nectas.unc.edu>

Technical Assistance Alliance for Parent Centers

<http://www.taalliance.org>

Early Childhood Longitudinal Studies: Kindergarten and Birth Cohorts

<http://www.ed.gov/offices/OERI/ECI/researchprojects.pdf>

Research and Training Center on the Development of Infants, Toddlers, and Preschool Children with or at Risk of Disabilities

<http://www.ed.gov/legislation/FedRegister/announcements/2001-1/030901a.pdf>

Elementary and Middle School:

Elementary and Middle Schools Technical Assistance Center

<http://www.emstac.org>

Family Center on Technology and Disability

<http://www.fctd.info>

National Center on Accessing the General Curriculum

<http://www.cast.org/ncac>

National Information Center for Children and Youth with Disabilities (IDEA '97 Training Package)

<http://www.nichcy.org>

IDEA Local Implementations by Local Administrators

<http://www.ideapractices.org>

National Center to Improve Practice in Special Education through Technology, Media, and Materials

<http://www2.edc.org/NCIP>

Secondary/Transition/Postsecondary Education:

Postsecondary Education Programs Network Centers for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (PEPNET): <http://www.pepnet.org>

National Clearinghouse on Postsecondary Education for Individuals with Disabilities

<http://www.heath.gwu.edu>

National Center on Secondary Education and Transition

<http://www.ncset.org>

National Initiatives:

The Caption Center at WGBH

<http://main.wgbh.org>

The Captioned Media Program

<http://www.cfv.org>

National Captioning Institute

<http://www.ncicap.org>

National Clearinghouse for Professions in Special Education

<http://www.special-ed-careers.org>

To obtain more information about these or additional projects under any of these programs, you may write to the: Office of Special Education Programs, 330 C Street, S.W., Washington, DC 20202

An electronic copy of this IDEA Program Funded Activities can be obtained by accessing the OSEP web site at: www.ed.gov/offices/OSERS/OSEP/ Select "Programs and Projects", then "FY 2001 Program-Funded Activities"

This brings you to a directory, in four separate sections, describing more than 1,000 discretionary grants and contracts supported by the Research to Practice Division of OSEP that administers these discretionary programs as authorized by the 1997 Amendments to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). The projects are grouped into four sections representing the seven program areas of IDEA, Part D: 1. Research, Innovation, and Evaluation (covers two programs: Research and Innovation and Studies and Evaluations); 2. Personnel Preparation; 3. Technical Assistance, Dissemination, Parent Information, and State Improvement (covers three programs: Technical Assistance and Dissemination; Parent Training and Information, and State Improvement Grants); and 4. Technology and Media Services. The information in this directory is also available online as a searchable database at: <http://ericec.org/osep/search.html>.

So whether you are an administrator looking for information on the IDEA '97 amendment, a teacher looking for information on new methods to teach deaf and hard of hearing students, a college student looking for careers in the field of special education or information on student stipends and financial aid, paraeducator, speech pathologist, school counselor/psychologist, administrator, or a university professor looking for information on grant opportunities. OSEP has the answers for you. For more information, contact Dr. Louise Tripoli at 202-260-4986 (TTY) 202-205-0378 (V) or email at Louise.Tripoli@ed.gov or browse our website at <http://www.ed.gov/offices/OSERS/OSEP/>. This article was written by the author in his/her capacity. No official support or endorsement by the U.S. Department of Education is intended or should be inferred.

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