

Special Education Entitlement Grant Program For Eligible Children, Ages 3-5

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

FEDERAL LAW

Public Law, 105-17, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and the accompanying federal regulations at 34 CFR Part 300, Assistance to States for the Education of Children with Disabilities.

STATE LAW

Connecticut General Statutes 10-76(a)-(f), Children Requiring Special Education and the accompanying regulations of Connecticut state agencies 10-76(a)-(f), Children Requiring Special Education.

PURPOSE OF FEDERAL FUNDING

The purpose of the federal law is to:

- Ensure that all children with disabilities have available to them a free and appropriate public education that includes special education and related services designed to meet their unique needs;
- Ensure that the educational rights of children with disabilities and their parents are protected;
- Assist states and localities in providing for the education of all children with disabilities; and
- Assess and ensure the effectiveness of efforts to educate children with disabilities.

FEDERAL FUNDING SOURCE AND FORMULA

Annually, the Connecticut State Department of Education receives a federal grant award from the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) through the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA, Part B, Section 619, Preschool Grants to States (ages 3-5) Program.

The sum received by the state of Connecticut through the IDEA is determined by the following factors:

- The appropriation established by the United States Congress
- A base allocation to each State in the amount that was received by the State for federal fiscal year 1997
- An allocation of 85 percent of any remaining federal appropriation funds on the basis of the State's relative populations of children aged 3 through 5 (e.g., census data), and
- An allocation of 15 percent of any remaining federal appropriation funds on the basis of a State's relative populations of children aged 3 through 5 who are living in poverty (e.g., poverty data).

SPECIAL EDUCATION FOR CHILDREN AGES 3-5

FEDERAL FUNDING LEVELS

1999-2000 Funding Level	\$4,823,971
2000-2001 Funding Level	\$5,009,888
2001-2002 Funding Level	\$5,009,888
2002-2003 Funding Level	\$5,009,888
2003-2004 Funding Level	\$4,980,763

The above annual funding levels represent the amount of funds received by Connecticut from the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs. On an annual basis, the state distributes approximately 80% of the federal grant award to eligible school districts. A portion of funds, approximately 5%, is retained for state administrative purposes and 15% percent is utilized to support state activities specific to ensuring high quality early education to eligible preschool and kindergarten-age children with disabilities.

FEDERAL FORMULA REQUIRED FOR STATE DISBURSEMENT

The State Department of Education, in accordance with federal requirements, determines the amount of federal funds that will be disbursed to school districts serving eligible 3-, 4-, and 5-year-old children with disabilities in the state. The sum received by eligible school districts is determined by the following factors as identified in the IDEA:

- The grant award received by the State from the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs
- A base allocation of 75% of the State's grant award for fiscal year 1997 as would have been distributed to eligible school districts
- An allocation of 85 percent of remaining funds on the basis of the relative numbers of children enrolled in public and private elementary and secondary schools in the applicant's jurisdiction, and
- An allocation of 15 percent of remaining funds based upon the relative numbers of children living in poverty (Connecticut utilizes poverty data from the State's Temporary Assistance to Families (TAF) Program).

The State Department of Education issues 148 grant awards. Recipients include 133 individual school districts, 9 regional school districts (consisting of 21 towns), and 5 awards to school districts that entered into a consortia relationship (consisting of 18 towns) and one state agency school district, the Department of Children and Families. Every school district community receives federal funds for special education to eligible children with disabilities, ages 3-5.

The IDEA funds are the only dedicated source of funds for the population of children ages 3-, 4- and 5-years with disabilities. While the last few years have seen an increase in other federal and state grant programs for young children, the IDEA grant for children with disabilities, ages 3-5, was flat-funded in 2002 and 2003 and in 2004 there was a decrease of \$119,125 or a decrease of 2.5%. The federal funding has had an impact at the local level. School districts do report a greater reliance on other sources of funds to appropriately provide programs and services to meet the individual and diverse needs of preschool and kindergarten-age children with disabilities.

TARGET POPULATION

Eligible recipients of the IDEA preschool special education entitlement dollars are Connecticut school districts providing special education and related services to eligible children with disabilities, 3 through 5 years of age. Grant funds are provided to school districts to ensure that all children with disabilities, ages 3 through 5, eligible for special education and related services receive such services in accordance with their individual needs in the least restrictive environment and as documented on an individual educational program (IEP). Each school district is required to report, on an annual basis, the number of children with disabilities served, types of IDEA disabilities served within each age/grade, and other information.

The following represents the number of children, aged 3 through 5, with disabilities that were identified and received special education and related services, by fiscal years, along with the total federal appropriation. Generally, the state serves approximately 6% of the general population of children ages 3-, 4-, and 5-years of age.

<u>Fiscal Year</u>	<u>Number of 3, 4, and 5-Year Old Children With Disabilities</u>	<u>Total Appropriation</u>
1999-2000	7,275 children	\$4,823,971
2000-2001	7,172 children	\$5,009,888
2001-2002	7,421 children	\$5,009,888
2002-2003	7,722	\$5,009,888
2003-2004	7,900 (Approximate)	\$4,980,763

EXPECTATIONS AND ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES OF FEDERAL FUNDING

- Having high expectations for children with disabilities and ensuring their access to the general curriculum to the maximum extent possible;
- Strengthening the role of parents and ensuring that the families of children with disabilities have meaningful opportunities to participate in the education of their children at home and at school;
- Coordinating this federal law and requirements with other federal and state efforts to ensure that children benefit from such collaboration and coordination and to ensure that children benefit from such efforts and that special education becomes a service rather than a place they are sent;
- Providing appropriate special education and related services and aids and supports in the regular classroom to such children, whenever appropriate;

SPECIAL EDUCATION FOR CHILDREN AGES 3-5

- Supporting high-quality professional development for all personnel who work with such children in order that they have the necessary skills and knowledge to meet children's developmental goals, provide for challenging expectations and provide and promote independence and self-sufficiency.

STATE USE OF FEDERAL FUNDS

In addition to the federal funds directed to eligible school districts, the state utilizes a portion of funds to support state activities. These activities include:

- Development, implementation and evaluation of statewide training and technical assistance for the professional development of special education personnel and parents;
- The development, publication and dissemination of products, papers and other materials that provide information, support and assistance to consumers including parents of young children with disabilities, professionals serving children with disabilities, ages three through five, early care and education providers, early intervention (0-3) providers and others; and
- Additional projects and programs targeted in the area of preschool special education, school readiness, accreditation of programs through the National Academy of Early Childhood Programs, and professional development.

SPECIAL EDUCATION FOR CHILDREN AGES 3-5