

NOTICE TO ALL APPLICANTS: EQUITY FOR STUDENTS, EDUCATORS, AND OTHER PROGRAM BENEFICIARIES

Section 427 of the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA) ([20 U.S.C. 1228a](#)) applies to applicants for grant awards under this program.

ALL APPLICANTS FOR NEW GRANT AWARDS MUST INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION IN THEIR APPLICATIONS TO ADDRESS THIS PROVISION IN ORDER TO RECEIVE FUNDING UNDER THIS PROGRAM.

Please respond to the following requests for information:

- 1. Describe how your entity's existing mission, policies, or commitments ensure equitable access to, and equitable participation in, the proposed project or activity.**

Oregon's Equity Stance and Ableism

Education equity is the equitable implementation of policies, practices, procedures, and legislation that translates into resource allocation, educational rigor, and opportunities for historically and currently marginalized youth, students, and families, including civil rights protected classes. This means the restructuring and dismantling of systems and institutions that create the dichotomy of beneficiaries and the oppressed and marginalized.

Ableism is a form of systemic oppression faced by disabled individuals and individuals with disabilities embedded within our systems and institutions. Ableism gives unearned advantages to people who do not experience the world as disabled. This system results in: (a) barriers that people with disabilities uniquely face when trying to navigate the world and (b) unfair treatment and discrimination against people with disabilities. An example of ableism in education is when a teacher misinterprets a manifestation of a student's disability (e.g., distractibility or difficulty focusing) as a behavioral issue.

Oregon's existing Equity Stance reflects the Office of Enhancing Student Opportunities' mission in implementing IDEA Part B programs. The values of inclusion and equity for students and families whom the system has historically marginalized guides the decision-making processes and implementation of IDEA Part B activities. Oregon encourages local agencies to approach equity and ableism through a lens reflecting the multiple intersecting identities of students and families.

State Agency staff operationalize this equity stance by examining, disrupting, and revising the conditions contributing to the systematic marginalization of youth, students, and families served through IDEA Part B programs. The State Agency contributes to the restructuring and dismantling of systems serving students and families along the educational cascade at the levels of state policy development and implementation, allocation of funding based on priorities, and supports for local agencies to directly provide services to and on behalf of students and families in IDEA Part B programs.

The State Agency ensures equitable access to IDEA Part B programs through a robust state-level general supervision system. This general supervision system includes state-level policies aimed at providing equitable access, procedures for monitoring and supporting local agencies, and the allocation of resources in concert with data and priorities.

The State Agency further actualizes the equity stance through the approaches taken to community engagement and participation in public input related to activities including SPP/APR target setting, discussion of improvement strategies, and the evaluation of outcomes.

2. Based on your proposed project or activity, what barriers may impede equitable access and participation of students, educators, or other beneficiaries?

Statewide staffing shortages of special educators, instructional assistants, medical providers, and related service providers impact the ability of local educational agencies to fully serve students under IDEA Part B programs. Medical access for students and families has been identified as a barrier to participation in IDEA Part B programs. Additionally, students and families who are speakers of languages other than English may experience impeded participation in IDEA Part B programs.

The statewide staffing shortage impacts access during the pre-referral and eligibility processes, especially for students experiencing limited medical access and being considered for special education eligibilities requiring medical provider statements. The statewide shortage of medical providers may be more of a barrier in rural areas than in urban and suburban communities. There is also a shortage of behavioral specialists and mental health providers who can provide bilingual services in English and Spanish. This inequitably impacts Spanish speaking students and families. Barriers related to access to health services and allowable funding uses may exist in concert with staffing shortages.

The statewide staffing shortage also impacts the delivery of special education and related services. While many local agencies are experiencing staffing shortages, rural areas experience higher shortage rates than urban and suburban communities. The impact of staffing shortages is compounded for groups of students and families who speak Spanish as a home language and for students and families residing in rural Oregon.

3. Based on the barriers identified, what steps will you take to address such barriers to equitable access and participation in the proposed project or activity?

To address the statewide educator staffing shortage, the State Agency is coordinating activities with other state level agencies. In June 2023, the State Agency hosted a summit with the State teacher licensing agency, Oregon Teacher Standards and Practices (TSPC), as well as the Educator Advancement Council (EAC) and higher education providers who prepare special education staff. The summit resulted in key commitments from each of the summit partners to engage in activities to address the workforce shortage based on their unique vantage. These activities included research to better understand the barriers to special education hiring in Oregon, pursuing additional resources to support special education workforce initiatives, expanding grow-your-own special education training opportunities throughout the state, as well as targeted investments to address known barriers to special educator recruitment and retention. These steps represent a systemic approach to addressing barriers over time. Additionally, through SB 5506, the Oregon Legislature allocated \$8.9M in stipends for special educator recruitment and retention during the 2023-24 school year.

The State recently updated Oregon Administrative Rules to address the barrier of medical access and the implications for initial evaluations. In March 2023, Oregon's State Board of Education passed updated rules for special education eligibility and evaluation practices. These updates were designed to address some of the barriers to accessing special education eligibility related to the lack of medical providers. The updates included expanding the medical providers who were eligible to complete documentation of a medical exam, eliminating the requirement for a medical exam from three

additional eligibility categories (Intellectual Disability; Emotional Behavior Disability; Autism Spectrum Disorder for children over 5), as well as eliminating the requirement for the use of a specific form to document the medical examination. These rules were passed on March 16, 2023, with additional language changes to increase clarity passed on December 7, 2023.

To address barriers related to health services, Oregon updated Medicaid billing policies for school-based health services, expanding beyond IDEA's requirements. In May 2023, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid approved Oregon's Medicaid State Plan Amendment, allowing schools to bill Medicaid for eligible non-IDEA health services and adding practitioners like counselors, behavioral specialists, and respiratory therapists. To implement these changes, the Oregon Health Authority is updating its School-Based Administrative Rules, expected to be in place by the 2024-25 school year. Additionally, SB 1557, passed in 2024, directs state agencies to develop strategies to leverage federal funds to support the well-being of Oregon students eligible for medical assistance, with a report due to the Legislative Assembly by October 1, 2024.

Oregon's updated Medicaid waiver, spanning from 2022 to 2027, offers continuous coverage for children from birth to age six and two-year continuous enrollment for older individuals, potentially increasing School Medicaid billing and streamlining processes. Notably, the waiver expands Early Periodic Screening, Diagnosis, and Treatment (EPSDT) coverage to all Medicaid-enrolled children and youth up to age 21, fostering greater access to essential health services. These changes aim to address fiscal challenges and staffing shortages in schools, particularly in mental and behavioral health services, while reducing disparities in healthcare access among students.

State legislation is also intended to address the educator staffing shortage in Oregon. In 2023, HB 2618 directed the Oregon Department of Education (ODE) to conduct a study to identify the best methodology for determining the appropriate number of students on a workload for occupational therapists, physical therapists, and speech-language pathologists. Findings include a recommendation to adopt a methodology employed by North Carolina. Supporting school districts to provide special education teachers with manageable caseloads is expected to increase teacher retention. SB 756 requires school district employees assigned to work with students with specialized needs to have access to specified records related to students and to be consulted when an education plan for a student is reviewed or revised. The bill specifies compensation, scheduling and training requirements for school district employees assigned to work with students with specialized needs to implement the education plan. The bill also directs the Department of Education, Teacher Standards and Practices Commission, and Educator Advancement Council to identify a career pathway for school district employees assigned to work with students with specialized needs.

To improve access to IDEA Part B programs for students and families who are speakers of languages other than English, the State is enacting multiple strategies at the state and local levels. Statewide, there has been an expansion in the number of languages that documents are translated into. This will increase access to and understanding of programs for students and families who speak a language other than English or one of the previously available languages for translation. Additionally, the statewide Parent Training and Information Center, FACT Oregon, is supporting families with live and on-demand training about IDEA topics available in English and Spanish. Furthermore, FACT Oregon and ODE are partnering to identify and address barriers that arise when transition planning with culturally and linguistically diverse parents.

4. What is your timeline, including targeted milestones, for addressing these identified barriers?

The State Agency hosted the Educator Workforce Summit in May 2024 and continues to implement the recommendations. The State Agency has already implemented a regional support system for

special educators and has multiple additional grow-your-own programs for special educators beginning Fall 2024. Stipends for special educators, licensed and classified, will be distributed by June 30, 2024. The State Agency anticipates continuing this work with its partners.

To address the barriers related to participation in School Medicaid, the Oregon Health Authority (OHA) is conducting an update of their School Based Administrative Rules and expects to have the rules in place by the start of the 2024-25 school year. The next milestone related to these changes will be initial implementation and offerings of statewide technical assistance, and an increase in School Medicaid billing for eligible non-IDEA health services.

The State anticipates it will maintain the current partnership with FACT Oregon to continue addressing ways to increase family involvement and understanding of IDEA, especially for families who are speakers of languages other than English.

Notes:

1. Applicants are not required to have mission statements or policies that align with equity in order to submit an application.
2. Applicants may identify any barriers that may impede equitable access and participation in the proposed project or activity, including, but not limited to, barriers based on economic disadvantage, gender, race, ethnicity, color, national origin, disability, age, language, migrant status, rural status, homeless status or housing insecurity, pregnancy, parenting, or caregiving status, and sexual orientation.
3. Applicants may have already included some or all of this required information in the narrative sections of their applications or their State Plans. In responding to this requirement, for each question, applicants may provide a cross-reference to the section(s) and page number(s) in their applications or State Plans that includes the information responsive to that question on this form or may restate that information on this form.

Paperwork Burden Statement

According to the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, no persons are required to respond to a collection of information unless such collection displays a valid OMB control number. The valid OMB control number for this information collection is 1894-0005. Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 3 hours per response, including time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering, and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. The obligation to respond to this collection is required to obtain or retain a benefit. If you have any comments concerning the accuracy of the time estimate or suggestions for improving this individual collection, send your comments to ICDocketMgr@ed.gov and reference OMB Control Number 1894-0005. All other comments or concerns regarding the status of your individual form may be addressed to either (a) the person listed in the FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT section in the competition Notice Inviting Applications, or (b) your assigned program officer.