

Budget Cuts Threaten Special Education Services, Survey Shows

94% of respondents say that districts feel the impact; 82% cite too few personnel to deliver services

Arlington, Va., Dec. 3, 2013 — Recent budget cuts at the federal, state and local levels are impacting the delivery of special education services for students with disabilities, according to a new survey conducted by the **Council for Exceptional Children (CEC)** and the **National Coalition of Personnel Shortages in Special Education and Related Services (NCPSSERS)**.

The survey of more than 1,000 special education professionals, including special education teachers and special education administrators from all 50 states, shows that the impact of federal, state and local budget cuts on special education is most evident in an increase in caseload and class size; lack of funding to purchase resources such as assistive technology; and reduced professional development opportunities.

In addition, budget cuts have resulted in layoffs and unfilled vacancies, with more than 80 percent of respondents reporting they have ‘too few personnel to meet the needs of students with disabilities.’ Some 94 percent of the respondents say that funding cuts have impacted their ability to provide services mandated by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), services that must be provided even when states and school districts face economic difficulties.

“To be successful in school, students with disabilities rely on a cadre of professionals who have expertise to address their complex academic, behavioral, and social-emotional needs” said Christy Chambers, president of CEC. “Budget cuts undermine the resources available to help students make progress. If we are going to ask students to put in 100 percent, then we ought to ask the same of our policymakers,”

The CEC/NCPSSERS survey shows that:

- 94% of respondents state that their school district has been impacted by budget cuts over the last year.
- 83% of respondents state that budget cuts have already impacted the delivery of special education services.
- 82% of respondents state that there are ‘too few personnel to meet the needs of students with disabilities’ in their school district.
- 78% of respondents state that budget cuts have resulted in an increase in caseload.
- 61% of respondents state that budget cuts have resulted in an increase in class size.
- 61% of respondents state that they work in a high-poverty school/district receiving Title I assistance;
- 43% of respondents state that budget cuts over the last year have been a combination of sequestration and state/local funding cuts.
- 40% of respondents say that budget cuts have led to unfilled vacancies of school personnel and nearly one-third report layoffs of specialized instructional support personnel and teachers.

In 2013, sequestration, the federal initiative that eliminated more than \$2 billion from the U.S. Department of Education's budget, specifically cut more than \$600 million from federal special education programs.

There are currently 6 million children and youth in the United States who receive special education services. For students with disabilities, access to such services is not only a legal right but it is a moral imperative. Prior to federal protections established in 1975, only 1 in 5 children with disabilities attended public school; today 4 out of 5 receive their education from their neighborhood public school.

With Congress now determining future funding levels and how to address the continued cuts imposed by sequestration, special educators are especially concerned about any further decreases that would continue to threaten services for students with disabilities.

"We are calling on Congress to reject any proposal that does not invest in education," said Chambers. "Students with disabilities and their families rely on a strong federal investment to access special instruction, accommodations, and personnel with expertise to meet their needs. Any further cuts would have a devastating impact on students who rely on special education services."

For more information about CEC and NCPSSERS visit www.cec.sped.org and www.specialedshortages.org

The Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) is an international community of educators who are the voice and vision of special and gifted education. CEC's mission is to improve the quality of life for individuals with exceptionalities and their families through professional excellence and advocacy.

The National Coalition for Personnel Shortages in Special Education and Related Services (NCPSSERS) is a group of more than 30 national organizations committed to sustaining a discussion among all stakeholders on the need for and value of special education, related services, and early intervention; and to identify, disseminate, and support implementation of national, state, and local strategies to remedy personnel shortages and persistent vacancies for the benefit of all children and youth.

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