
CEC: Leading the Charge for IDEA Full Funding

Overview

For over three decades, CEC and its members have been steadfast advocates for increased funding for all IDEA programs, strategically conveying to Congress the importance of investing in special education and early intervention. This year, CEC continues its campaign to convince Congress and the Administration to **fully fund** all programs authorized by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). This includes full funding for all of the following: grants to states for school aged students (Part B), preschool children (Part B Section 619), infants and toddlers (Part C) and the support programs which undergird the delivery of special education services (Part D).

Background

IDEA Part B: Grants to States for School Aged Students

- **CEC Recommendation: \$13,644,222**

The requirement for full funding for IDEA originates from the authorizing legislation itself. When Congress enacted P.L. 94-142, *The Education for All Handicapped Children Act* in 1975, it authorized the federal government to pay 40 percent of each state's "excess cost" of educating children with disabilities. That amount – commonly referred to as the "IDEA full funding" amount – is calculated by taking 40 percent of the national average per pupil expenditure (APPE) multiplied by the number of children with disabilities served under IDEA in each state.

To ensure IDEA was not a burden on states and local entities and assure that full funding was reached in a fiscally responsible manner, Congress also adopted a full funding formula that phased-in funding increases for IDEA Part B over a period of 5 years -- intending to reach full funding by fiscal year (FY) 1981. During the phase-in time, Congress expected local communities and states to provide the balance of funding. Over the years, however, while the law itself continues to work and children with disabilities are being educated and served, the intended federal/state/local cost-sharing partnership has not been realized because Congress never fulfilled its financial obligation.

This year, the President has requested level funding. If that is enacted IDEA will drop to 15.8% of full funding – not including the impact of sequestration. As a result, local communities and states continue to have to pay an ever higher proportion of the special education costs.

For states and local communities, maintaining this commitment, especially in the face of the current fiscal crisis, has become very difficult. Especially, as costs for providing special education have risen and it is now commonly asserted that the actual cost of educating a student with a disability is more than twice the national average per pupil amount.

To help address this problem, CEC, as a founding member of the *IDEA Guaranteed Full Funding Campaign*, has advocated that funding for IDEA Part B be moved from the discretionary budget – which is subject to the annual appropriations process – into mandatory spending which would guarantee increased federal funding.

IDEA Part B Section 619: Grants to States for Preschool Programs

- **CEC Recommendation: \$1,102,500**

The IDEA Preschool Grant Program is intended to assist states in ensuring that all preschool-aged children with disabilities receive special education and related services. In 1986, only half of the states ensured services to preschoolers with disabilities. Since 1987, when this program expanded, the number of children served has increased from 265,000 to over 700,000 in 2007. Despite this 60% growth, however, federal funding has only increased by 25%, without taking into account inflation, resulting in cuts to services and increasing local taxes.

IDEA Part C: Grants to States for Infants and Toddlers With Disabilities Program

- **CEC Recommendation: \$984,427**

The IDEA Infants and Toddlers With Disabilities Program provides grants to states to develop and implement a statewide, comprehensive, coordinated, multidisciplinary, interagency system that provides early intervention services to infants and toddlers with disabilities, and their families. Here again, due to increasing financial pressures and a lack of federal commitment, over the last decade, 20% of states have narrowed their eligibility criteria and 75% have enacted systems that charge families for services.

IDEA Part D: Support Programs

- **CEC Recommendation: \$979,264**

The IDEA Part D Support Programs provide the critical infrastructure, training, research, and development functions necessary to drive improvements in all aspects of special education/early intervention practice. These competitive grant programs provide professional development, technical assistance, and dissemination of knowledge about promising practices for children and youth with disabilities. They have also created several promising practices which research has proven work for all children in schools. These include positive behavioral supports and response to intervention. Yet, while these programs serve a critical function in the delivery of special education services, the total investment in them in recent years has been a paltry 1% of the entire IDEA federal funding budget. Notably, they did not receive any ARRA monies and they don't reflect similar levels of investment in research in other professions. Indeed, this 1% figure is way below the industry standard for research and development (R&D), which – in business settings - is typically 10 percent.

A Special Note About the Impact of Sequestration

IDEA's full funding level is expected to plummet further when the *across the board cuts* also known as Sequestration, begin on January 2, 2013. In August, 2011, Congress passed and the President signed the Budget Control Act. This legislation allowed the federal government to increase its debt limit but only if either (1) a joint committee of Republicans and Democrats from both the House of Representatives and the Senate could agree to cut \$1.2 trillion dollars from the budget, or if that committee failed, then (2) an across the board cut of approximately 8% will be applied to all federal programs, including all parts of IDEA. Thus, right now, IDEA will be cut on January 2, 2013 unless Congress can pass a balanced budget plan.

If the cut occurs, the IDEA Full Funding Level, will fall to approximately 14.5% - the lowest level since 2001. Additionally, estimated impact on other IDEA programs is:

IDEA Part B Grants to State CUT by **\$903 Million**
IDEA Part B Section 619 Program CUT by **\$29 Million**
IDEA Part C Infants & Toddlers CUT by **\$35 Million**
IDEA Part D National Programs CUT by **\$19 Million**

CEC Recommended Congressional Action

As Congress moves forward with its fiscal year 2013 budget, CEC urges Congress to pursue full funding for all IDEA programs, in addition to passing a balanced budget plan that eliminates the need for sequestration. Finally, CEC urges Congress to shift IDEA Part B funds from discretionary to mandatory spending.