Individuals with Disabilities Education Act – Part B Section 619
Preschool Program

PURPOSE

The Preschool Grants Program (also known as Section 619) is intended to help states ensure that all preschool-aged children (3-5 years of age) with disabilities receive special education and related services. In 1986, before this program existed, only half of the states provided services to preschoolers with disabilities. Since 1987, however, when this expanded program began operating, the number of children served has increased from 265,000 to an estimated 710,400 in fiscal year 2011.

WHO RECEIVES FUNDING

State education agencies (SEAs) receive this funding, and through them, local education agencies (LEAs) and educational service agencies are eligible for grants under this program.

ACTIVITIES SUPPORTED

Funds are used to provide the full range and variety of appropriate preschool special education and related services to children with disabilities 3 through 5 years of age.

FUNDING CONSIDERATIONS

Over the last two decades, the enrollment of preschool children with disabilities receiving services provided by IDEA has grown by over 420,000 or 60%, while federal funding has only increased by 25%, without taking into account inflation. Over the last decade alone, funding has decreased by over $15 million. In 1992, the federal government spent $803 dollars per child by 2010 it was only spending $527 dollars per child, a decrease of 34%. While ARRA infused a substantial and needed amount into this program, without a sustained commitment to funding, children will fail to receive appropriate services especially in these difficult economic times. Thus, the reality is that when federal funding fails to keep pace with program growth, children, families, schools and states bear a disproportionate share of the financial burden.

Decreasing Commitment: Decline in IDEA Preschool Funding

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Arkansas State Profile

How Many Children in Arkansas Receive Preschool Services?

In 2008, 12,288 Arkansas children ages 3-5 received preschool services.

What was the federal IDEA Part B Section 619 allocation awarded to Arkansas in 2010? What was the ARRA appropriation?

In 2010, Arkansas received $5,279,320 for IDEA Part B Section 619, and in 2009 Arkansas received $5,565,646 for Part B Section 619 under ARRA.

How is Arkansas’ IDEA preschool program administered?

The Arkansas state education agency special education unit administers preschool special education.

How does Arkansas use federal IDEA preschool funds?

Accountability and outcomes activities, state level administration, address technical assistance related to annual performance review determination, direct services, and preschool.

How is Arkansas IDEA preschool program involved in comprehensive services for all young children and their families?

Arkansas Division of Early Care and Early Childhood Education is supporting the SpecialQuest Initiative. The State Preschool Special Education Coordinator serves on the State team. There are six local teams on which an EC Special Education Local Coordinator serves. Training has been developed for the local child care providers in the areas of meeting ADA and coordination with their local Early Childhood Special Education Programs provided by the LEA.

Has the Arkansas developed preschool policies to enhance parent involvement?

Yes, Arkansas has developed preschool specific policies and strategies to enhance the involvement of parents.

How does Arkansas work with federal parent information centers?

Arkansas’ state education agency work with parent information centers through special projects, provision of technical assistance, shared resources, and joint conferences.

Does Arkansas have early learning standards/guidelines?

Yes, Arkansas has early learning standards/guidelines that apply to all children ages birth through two, and all children ages 3 through 5.

Does Arkansas have a pre-kindergarten program?

Yes, Arkansas has the following general education pre-kindergarten programs: state funded Pre-K for at risk; Title I Pre-K; locally funded Pre-K; and state Head Start.

Source: National Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center http://www.nectac.org/~pdfs/pubs/q1-44.pdf