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Reauthorization of IDEA

What does it mean for Speech-Language Pathologists and Special Educators?

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On December 3, 2004, President George W. Bush signed a law reauthorizing the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act* (IDEA) also known as Public Law 108-446. Currently over six million children in the United States receive special education services under IDEA. These changes directly impact those working with children with disabilities.

Some provisions to 2004 IDEA include:

1. Paperwork Reduction Waiver/Model Forms
2. Maintaining Qualified Providers
3. Modifying Individual Education Programs (IEPs)
4. Birth to six programs/ Early intervention programs
5. Funding changes
6. Options to identify children with specific learning disabilities
7. Qualification for Specific Learning Disabilities

Paperwork Reduction Waiver/ Model Forms

In order to reduce paperwork, school personnel may revise an IEP every three years. Legislators hope that the reduction of paperwork allows more time for instructional activities that directly impact educational performance. School personnel may choose to conduct IEP meetings on a more frequent basis if needed.



Maintaining Qualified Providers

School personnel must meet state approved or state recognized certification/ licensing qualifications. Personnel may not waive these requirements on any basis (i.e., emergency, temporary, and provisional). Local and state agencies must take measurable steps to recruit, hire, and retain qualified school personnel.

Modifying Individual Education Programs (IEPs)

Modifications to the IEP process, which now include the ability to exclude a member of the IEP team from a meeting under the following circumstances:

- No one can make changes to the IEP.
- Excused member provides input before the meeting.

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(cont.)

- IEP team members agree to excuse the member.
- Use alternate methods to conduct the meeting such as video conference or conference call.

Another modification to the IEP process impacts short term objectives. Short term objectives are no longer a required part of the IEP except for students and children participating in alternative forms of assessment.

Birth to Six Programs/Early Intervention Programs

States may provide programs for birth to age six using IDEA funding. In addition, Individualized Family Service Plans (IFSP) require an educational component promoting school readiness that incorporates pre-literacy, language, and number skills.

Funding Changes

Part B of IDEA contains provisions relating to the education of preschool and school-aged students and funding. Local educational agencies may use up to 15% of their Part B funds for supportive services to help students K-12 not yet identified with disabilities. Supportive services may include: professional development for teachers



and other school staff to use research-based academic instruction, provision of educational and behavioral evaluations, services, and supports.

Qualifying for Specific Learning Disabilities

Response-To-Intervention (RTI) focuses on using research-based intervention strategies to remediate those identified as at-risk for placement in a special education classroom. The purpose of this change is to ensure students considered at-risk for failing in the early grades receive research-based intervention services or contextually-based assessments that prevent them from receiving a special education label.

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