

July 5, 2002

Honorable Rita H. Inos
Commissioner of Education
CNMI Public School System
P.O. Box 501370CK
Saipan, MP 96950

Dear Commissioner Inos:

This is to inform you that we have conditionally approved the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands' Eligibility Document Submission for Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2002 under Part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Our determination that you are eligible for a conditional approval is based on our receipt of the following documents submitted by the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands to the Office of Special Education Programs:

1. The Part B Eligibility Document Submission for FFY 2002 including the Eligibility Documents submitted April 11, 2000, subsequent revisions to those Eligibility Documents and the Submission Statement submitted May 21, 2002; and
2. The July 1, 2002 letter from the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands to OSEP, in which the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands assures that as soon as possible, but no later than July 1, 2003, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands will complete all of the changes set forth in the June 20, 2002 issues chart including: [1] Issues Chart I (issues from the policies and procedures that are not resolved) that includes: §300.136(g)(3)(ii), §300.347(c), §300.504(a), §300.381(b), §300.382(d), (g) and (h), and §300.142(a)(1) and (2); [2] Issues Chart II and procedural manual issues from Issues Chart I that includes: §300.7(a)(ii) and (c)(1)(i), §300.24(a), (b)(5), (b)(7) and (b)(13), §300.26(a)(2), (a)(4) and (b)(3)(ii), §300.28, §300.29(a) and (b), §300.121(a), §300.450, §300.532(b), §300.533(a), §300.535(a), §300.574(c), §300.347(a), §300.514(a), §300.517(a), §300.550(b)(2), §300.455, §300.456(b), and §300.457(b), and [3] Issues Chart III regarding the procedural safeguards notice that includes: §300.504(b), §300.500(b)(1), §300.502(a)(1) and (2), §500.502(b)(2) and (4), §500.502(e) and (e)(2), §500.505(a)(2), (a)(3), (b),(c),(d) and (e), §500.506(a) and (c)(1), (c)(2), (d)(1) and (d)(2), §300.507(b), (c)(1), (c)(3), (c)(4), §300.512(b); §300.513(c)(1), (c)(2)(ii) and (c)(3), §300.514(c), §300.519(a) and (b), §300.520(a), (b), and (c), §300.521, §300.522(a) and (b), §300.523(a), (b), (c),(d), (e), and (f), §300.524(b) and (c), §300.525(a) and (b), §300.526(a), (b) and (c), §300.527(a), (b), (c) and (d), §300.528 (a), (b), (c), and (d), §300.403(a), (b) and (c), §300.660(a) and (b), §300.661(a), (b) and (c), §300.662(a), (b) and (c), §300.568, §300.569, §300.569(a),

§300.570, §300.571(a), (b) and (c), §300.572(a), (b), (c), and (d), §300.573(a) and (b), §300.574(a), (b) and (c), §300.575, and §300.576(a), (b), and (c).

In the July 1, 2002 letter, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands also assures that it will take steps to ensure that, throughout the period of this grant award, all public agencies in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands that provide special education and related services to children with disabilities will operate their programs in a manner fully consistent with Part B. The Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands further assures that it will provide OSEP with a copy of a memorandum notifying all public agencies of the changes that impact on public agencies' provision of special education and related services that OSEP requires as a result of its review of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands' eligibility documents.

Please note that as part of your Eligibility Document Submission for FFY 2002, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands has made an assurance, under 34 CFR §80.11(c), that it will comply with all applicable Federal statutes and regulations in effect with respect to the periods for which it receives grant funding. Any changes made by the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, after OSEP approval, to information that is a part of a State's eligibility documentation, must meet the public participation requirements of the IDEA and must be approved by OSEP before implementation.

The Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands' FFY 2002 IDEA Part B grant award is being released subject to FFY 2002 Special Conditions as set forth in Enclosure B that are being imposed pursuant to the Department's authority in 34 CFR §80.12. Specifically, OSEP determined that the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands is not developing and administering alternate assessments for children with disabilities in *grades 10 and 11* and reporting on their participation and performance publicly, and to the Secretary, with the same frequency and in the same detail as for nondisabled children in grades 10 and 11 as required at 20 U.S.C. 1412(a)(16)-(17); 34 CFR §§300.137-300.139.

The Biennial Performance Report for Part B of the IDEA for grant years 1999-2000 and 2000-2001 was due on May 31, 2002. Among other information, the Biennial Performance Report required that States submit information regarding children with disabilities' participation in and performance on Statewide assessments. 34 CFR §300.138 requires that children with disabilities participate in general State and district-wide assessment programs with appropriate accommodations and modifications in administration, if necessary. In addition, States are required to develop alternate assessments for those children with disabilities who cannot participate in State and district-wide assessment programs, even with appropriate accommodations and modifications in administration. States also must report on the progress of children with disabilities in the State toward meeting the established performance goals and indicators for children with disabilities on assessment, dropout rates and graduation rates, at a minimum (34 CFR §300.137).

The requirements that States establish performance goals and indicators on performance of children with disabilities on assessments, drop-out rates and graduation rates and report publicly and to the Secretary every two years on the progress of the State and of children with disabilities within the State toward meeting those goals, ensure that children with disabilities participate in State and district-wide assessment systems; develop and administer alternate assessments, if necessary; and report publicly on the participation and performance of children with disabilities in State and district-wide assessments are crucial to ensuring that children with disabilities are provided access to high-quality instruction in the general curriculum, and that States and districts are held accountable for the progress of these children. 20 U.S.C. 1412(a)(16)-(17); 34 CFR §§300.137-300.139. The requirements regarding the participation of children with disabilities in, and reporting on participation and performance of children with disabilities in regular assessments have been in effect since July 1, 1998; the same requirements regarding alternate assessments have been in effect since July 1, 2000. The information reported to the Department in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands' Biennial Performance Report for the 2000-2001 school year demonstrates that the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands has not developed and administered alternate assessments for children with disabilities in *grades 10 and 11*, and reported on their participation and performance publicly, and to the Secretary, with the same frequency and in the same detail as for nondisabled children in grades 10 and 11 as required by Part B.

The Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands' failure to develop and administer alternate assessments for children with disabilities *in grades 10 and 11*, and report on their participation and performance publicly, and to the Secretary, with the same frequency and in the same detail as for nondisabled children in grades 10 and 11, has resulted in the Department imposing the FFY 2002 Special Conditions contained in Enclosure B of this letter. The reasons for doing so and the specific conditions are detailed in the enclosure. The Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands must administer these awards both in keeping with the applicable provisions of Federal law and regulations and the Special Conditions attached to the grant award document. Acceptance by the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands of this grant award constitutes an agreement by the State to comply with these Special Conditions.

Enclosed is a grant award for funds currently available under the Department of Education FFY 2002 Appropriations Act for the Part B Section 611 (Grants to States) program. These funds are for use primarily in school year 2002-2003 and are available for obligation by States from July 1, 2002 through September 30, 2004.

The amount shown in your award for the Section 611 program is only part of the total funds that will be awarded to you for FFY 2002. Of the \$7,528,533,000 appropriated for Section 611 in FFY 2002, \$2,456,533,000 is available for awards on July 1, 2002, and \$5,072,000,000 will be available on October 1, 2002.

The funding formula for the Section 611 program is the same as was implemented for FFY 2000. Subject to certain maximum and minimum funding requirements, State allocations are based on the amount that each State received from FFY 1999 funds, the general population in the age

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range for which each State ensures a free appropriate public education (FAPE) to all children with disabilities, and the number of children living in poverty in the age range for which each State ensures FAPE to all children with disabilities.

Enclosure A provides a short description of how Section 611 funds were allocated and how those funds can be used. In addition, Table I in Enclosure A shows funding levels for distribution of Section 611 funds.

This award is based on submission of a complete eligibility document package, a signed assurance statement regarding resolution of issues identified in OSEP's review of that eligibility document package, and implementation of the provisions of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. The complete eligibility document package and assurances must be made available for public inspection.

We appreciate your ongoing commitment to the provision of quality educational services to children with disabilities.

Sincerely,

Stephanie S. Lee
Director
Office of Special Education Programs

Enclosures

cc: Suzanne Lizama