

Preschool Grants for Children with Disabilities (CDFA No. 84.173)

I. Legislation

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Part B, Section 619 (20 U.S.C. 1419), is permanently authorized.

II. Funding History

<u>Fiscal Year</u>	<u>Appropriation</u>	<u>Fiscal Year</u>	<u>Appropriation</u>
1977	\$12,500,000	1990	\$251,510,000
1980	25,000,000	1991	292,766,000
1985	29,000,000	1992	320,000,000
1986	28,710,000	1993	325,773,000
1987	180,000,000	1994	339,257,000
1988	201,054,000	1995	360,265,000
1989	247,000,000	1996	360,409,000

III. Analysis of Program Performance

A. Goals and Objectives

This program is designed to provide an incentive to states to make a free, appropriate public education (FAPE) available to all children with disabilities who are three, four, or five years old.

B. Strategies to Achieve the Goals

Services Supported

The Preschool Grants Program provides grants to states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the outlying areas. Awards are made on the basis of a formula using the state's FY 1997 award as a base amount, with additional funds awarded on the basis of the state's relative population of three, four, and five years old children and the state's relative population of three, four, and five years old children living in poverty. These funds are provided in addition to funds received under the Grants to States Program, but the Preschool Grant funds must be used for preschool-aged children with disabilities, whereas a state is not required to use their Grants to States money on preschoolers. The method of calculating grants for the states, as well as the states' method of calculating awards to local educational agencies changed with the enactment of P.L. 105-17 on June 4, 1997.

To be eligible for these grants, states must meet eligibility criteria in Section 612 of Part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), and serve all children with disabilities who are three through five years old. A state that does not make FAPE available to all children with disabilities who are three, four, or five years old cannot receive funds from this program or funds attributable to this age group under the Grants to States Program and is not eligible for grants under various IDEA discretionary programs for activities pertaining solely to this age group. Currently, every state makes FAPE available to all three-, four-, and five-year olds with disabilities.

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At their discretion, states may include in the program preschool-age children who are experiencing developmental delays (as defined by the state and as measured by appropriate diagnostic instruments and procedures) and who need special education and related services. States, and local education agencies, if consistent with state policy, may also use funds received under this program to provide a free, appropriate public education to two-year-olds with disabilities who will turn three during the school year.

States may retain an amount equal to 25 percent of their FY 1997 award, adjusted annually by the lesser of inflation or a percentage of a larger federal appropriation for state administrative functions and other state-level activities related to preschool programs.

C. Program Performance—Indicators of Impact and Effectiveness

Between 1991 and 1997, the number of children served under this program increased by 33 percent. Even after 1991, when the statutory requirement for states to make FAPE available to all children with disabilities ages three, four, or five as a condition for participation in this program was in effect, large increases occurred beyond what was anticipated. For 1994 the Department projected an increase of 12,411 children, or 2.8 percent over the 1993 child count. The actual increase in the child count was 37,616, or 8.5 percent. For 1995, the Department predicted that the count would increase by 5 percent. The Part B, 3 through 5 count increased 2.2 percent from FY 1996 to FY 1997, but it is premature to judge whether program growth is leveling off, especially since the number of infants and toddlers served under Part H continues to increase.

Improvements in medical technology have enabled an increasing number of children who previously would not have survived to be born, although frequently they are born physically fragile and dependent on medical technology. In addition, the growing number of children living in poverty leads to a corresponding increase in the number of children at risk for disability. The National Center for Children in Poverty's 1995 report, *Young Children in Poverty: A Statistical Update*, reported that the number of U.S. children under six years of age living in poverty grew from 5 to 6 million between 1987 and 1992. The center states: "The significance of these figures for our society cannot be overstated because we will pay the costs for the next several decades. Poverty gives rise to many types of deprivation, and many of our youngest, poorest children suffer severe consequences in terms of their physical health and psychological development."

States used Preschool Grant funds to support many state-level activities to support statewide systems for preschoolers with disabilities and their families. This may include support for local interagency coordinating committees (ICCs) and other collaborative activities with Part H Infant and Toddlers with Disabilities programs. In 15 states, the focus of the ICCs includes children from birth through age five. All states report participating in coordination activities in some combination with other state agencies and programs in conducting "child find" (efforts to identify eligible children), public awareness, or training activities. For example, 43 states have interagency agreements between special education and Head Start that define fiscal responsibility, collaborative activities related to child find, such as assessment/evaluation of children, referral and training, and agency responsibility for services to children with disabilities. In addition, a majority of state education agencies are collaborating with the Even Start program and with Child Care Block Grant activities. Most states report that they have developed or are developing policies or transition agreements concerning the transition of children from early intervention to preschool. Twenty-five states have developed or are developing policies regarding use of funds for two-year-old children who will turn three during the school year. This interagency

coordination allows state education agencies to combine the efforts of a variety of agencies to meet the diverse needs of preschool children with disabilities and their families.

Studies of the effectiveness of early intervention services. The Department is funding several projects to provide information on the effectiveness of early intervention services. The Early Intervention Research Institute Longitudinal Study is completed. Results on the long-term effects and costs varied among the nine study sites. No particular results with respect to type, amount, frequency, parental involvement models were significant across the study. Currently, the Early Childhood Research Institute on Inclusion is looking at issues such as how to support and increase integration of preschool children with disabilities with other children who do not have disabilities. States are not required to serve preschool children who have no disabilities, so it can be difficult to find appropriate community-based programs in which children with disabilities can receive services. Progress is being made in this area, however.

Long-term outcomes of preschool programs. The Center for the Future of Children, part of the David and Lucile Packard Foundation, published a report on the *Long-term Outcomes of Early Childhood Programs*, which was released in December 1995. This report analyzed 25 years of research and reviews of 144 national and international kindergarten programs, beginning with the federal Head Start Program in 1965. There was variation in the reports analyzed, but the weight of the evidence indicates that early childhood education can produce positive effects on IQ during the early years and sizable, persistent positive effects on achievement, grade retention, high school graduation rates, special education participation, and socialization. The center found that children who attend early childhood programs do better in math and science than their peers who did not attend preschool, and that they are less likely to drop out of school and commit crimes. The report noted that, in particular, the evidence for effects related to grade retention and special education was overwhelming. It indicated that preschool programs can help many children stay out of trouble, and can mean the difference between passing and failing and regular or special education. While the analysis was not specifically targeted on children with disabilities, it is likely that early education has even more significance for children with developmental delays.

IV. Planned Studies

National Profile of the Preschool Grants Program: The National Early Childhood Technical Assistance System (NEC*TAS) annually assembles information from state preschool program coordinators to develop a national profile of the Preschool Grants Program.

V. Sources of Information

1. Seventeenth Annual Report to Congress on the Implementation of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, 1995).
2. Program files.
3. Young Children in Poverty: A Statistical Update (Washington, DC: National Center for Children in Poverty, 1995).
4. Long-term Outcomes of Early Childhood Programs (Washington, DC: Center for the Future of Children, 1995).

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5. Eighteenth Annual Report to Congress on the Implementation of the Individuals with Disabilities Educational Act (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, 1996).

VI. Contacts for Further Information

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