

TO: Directors of Special Education and Pupil Services
Directors of Private Approved Special Education Facilities
Directors of Charter Schools

FROM: George P. Dowaliby, Chief
Bureau of Special Education

DATE: December, 2003

SUBJECT: Update #34

As the Holidays are upon us, the staff of the Bureau of Special Education and I want to take this time to wish all of you Happy Holidays. We hope that you have the chance to spend some time with family and friends.

As we await reauthorization of IDEA (I hear the Senate will take up its version of the bill in March 2004) and work together to understand the opportunities and challenges of NCLB, the work that you and your dedicated staff do for young people with disabilities is more important than ever.

Best wishes for a healthy and peaceful New Year!

BIRTH TO THREE INFORMATION FOR SCHOOL DISTRICTS

As the implementation of parent fees for direct services approaches, school districts should be aware of two of the consequences which are that:

1. Some families have withdrawn from the Birth to Three System rather than pay fees. Even though 30-40 withdrawals per month are typical, September's figure was 88 and October's was 258. Figures for November have not yet been compiled. This means that some families who were formerly receiving Birth to Three services may, as their children approach age three, refer their children to their school districts. Although a child's former Birth to Three program has maintained the child's record (which can be released with parental consent), no current information on the child's developmental status will be available. These children will not appear on any quarterly information sent to districts since they are no longer enrolled in the Birth to Three System.
2. Some families have, rather than withdrawing, opted to receive those services which, under the IDEA Part C, must be offered "at no cost." This includes evaluation, IFSP development and evaluation, assessment, and service coordination. Any direct services would have to be obtained by the family outside of the Birth to Three System. These children will appear on quarterly reports sent to the school districts and may be referred to their school district as they approach age three. Updated assessment information can be made available upon request and with parental consent, however typical information such as how the child is progressing with services would have to be obtained from the family's other service providers who are outside of the Birth to Three System. At present, this affects about 50 families statewide, however that number is expected to increase.

The Birth to Three System will continue to provide information about the impact of the legislative changes made in the last session through venues such as the Special Education Update and the Birth through Five Newsletter.

LYME DISEASE (See Attachment A)

Enclosed is information and resources related to Lyme Disease.

SUICIDE PREVENTION (See Enclosed Brochure)

Enclosed please find information on the Conference, "Preventing Suicide Through Proactive Policy and Interventions"

BASIC PRIMER ON SECTION 504 AUDIO CONFERENCE

On January 14, 2004, Perry Zirkel, a university professor of education, will provide a systematic overview of the most important practical forms and procedures 504/ADA coordinators should have and understand during a 90-minute interactive audio conference. This event will be hosted by Thompson Publishing Group. For more details and to register, please go to www.thompson.com/sp011404.

90-DAY TRANSITION CONFERENCES

Part of the IDEA improvement plan for the State of Connecticut says that all children enrolled in the Birth to Three System will have a transition conference convened at least 90 calendar days before their third birthday. For those children whose families are seeking special education services, the transition conference must include a representative from the school district. The state's demonstrated compliance with this IDEA requirement has been low and the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) has demanded that, by January, 2004, for 100% of these children, timely 90-day transition conferences are to be held with the appropriate representatives participating, including representatives from school districts when the child has been referred to special education.

The Birth to Three System's data from the first four months of this fiscal year (July 2003 through October 2003) indicates that for those children who were referred to the Birth to Three System by 28 months of age and then were referred on to their school district by at least 30 months of age, 78% had timely transition conferences, meaning transition conferences were held on or before the IDEA required 90-calendar day timeline.

Of the 102 children for whom the transition conference exceeded the 90-day timeline, 44% were due to the school district, 40% were due to the family, 9% were due to scheduling problems by both the school district and the family, 4% were due to the service coordinator, and 3% were due to issues connected with the uncertainty of the child's residence because of foster care and/or nexus decisions.

The non-compliance issues attributed to the school district primarily reflect (a) the lack of availability of a school district representative to attend the 90-day transition conference in the late spring or during the summer and (b) the desire of the school district to have the transition conference held in conjunction with a planning and placement team (PPT) meeting and then not being able to schedule the PPT meeting such that it meets the IDEA required 90-calendar day timeline for the transition conference.

In order to rectify practices that lead to non-compliance with the intent of IDEA, school districts are reminded that under the IDEA:

1. The convening of the 90-day transition conference is the responsibility of the Birth to Three System. This includes Birth to Three contacting the appropriate school district and coordinating with them and the child's family, the date, time and place of the conference,
2. Such 90-day transition conferences with the appropriate representatives are to be convened no later than 90 calendar days before the child turns three years of age,
3. School district representatives are required to participate in the 90-day transition conference for those children referred by the Birth to Three System to special education. This obligation extends throughout the calendar year, and
4. School districts desiring to coordinate the 90-day transition conference with the first PPT meeting must ensure that they work with the Birth to Three System and the child's service coordinator to ensure that the date of the conference/PPT is within the IDEA required timeline and that the meeting meets the IDEA Part C and Part B requirements for the transition conference and the IEP meeting respectively.

It is anticipated that the information in this Update will assist in clarifying any confusion or inappropriate practices. The goal and intent is to ensure compliance with the IDEA requirements regarding the 90-day transition conference and the obligations of the Birth to Three System and school districts to participate within the appropriate timeline.

Individuals with any questions can contact Linda Goodman, Director of the Connecticut Birth to Three System at (860) 418-6147 or via e-mail at Linda.goodman@po.state.ct.us or Maria Synodi, Coordinator of Preschool Special Education at (860) 807-2054 or via e-mail at maria.synodi@po.state.ct.us

P.J. ET AL SETTLEMENT AGREEMENT

Following is an update on the activities occurring resulting from the Settlement Agreement:

Expert Advisory Panel

1. During October the Expert Advisory Panel (EAP) had an opportunity to meet Connecticut parents, educators, administrators and higher education faculty during the **"Expanding Horizons" 6th Annual Conference on Educating Students with Disabilities in General Education Classrooms**. In addition to the EAP presenting information on inclusive education from a systems, building, parent and data perspective, they engaged in conversation with the participants attending the EAP breakout session. This experience, along with the past year of meetings with the State Department of Education helped provide a context for their work here in Connecticut.

The EAP will be visiting schools here in the state during their next meeting in January and will be conducting a Leadership Forum on January 21, 2003, for building administrators.

Qualified Specialists

The SDE and SERC are collaborating on hosting a networking session mid –January for school district personnel that serve in coaching or facilitation roles which assists classroom teachers, special educators and administrators in serving students in general education classrooms. This session will be open to any person serving in a district role which may be known as an “inclusion facilitator” or “instructional coach”. Districts will be notified of this session shortly to provide further details. The SDE is interested in providing networking training opportunities for these individuals to build local capacity in educating children with disabilities in general education classrooms through responsible inclusive practices.

Parent Training and Information

The Bureau is working with Central Connecticut State University to conduct a survey of parents of class members. The survey was mailed out in early November. The survey asks questions about parent’s knowledge of and agreement with the goals of the settlement agreement. The results of the survey will be available early next year. If parents have questions about the survey they can contact Dr. Joan Nicoll Senft at (860) 832-2403.

Focused Monitoring

During the next two months, the Bureau is conducting focused monitoring in the original 8 districts that were targeted for monitoring as a result of the Settlement Agreement. The monitoring is focusing on:

1. the use of promising practices in the district, schools and classes that educate students with intellectual disabilities;
2. the use of supplementary aids and services to support education in the general education classroom; and
3. the participation and progress of students with intellectual disabilities in the general education curriculum.

The monitoring process includes observations in general education classrooms; review of student records; analysis of district data on the participation and progress of students with intellectual disabilities on statewide assessments; and interviews with general education staff who have students with intellectual disabilities in their classes.

Additionally, each of the 16 sixteen districts that have been targeted for focused monitoring in the second year will be submitting progress reports in January. These 16 districts will be reporting on the activities being implemented during this fall and the impact of those activities on the goals of the Settlement Agreement. Further monitoring will be determined following a review of these reports.

For those remaining districts in the state that have not been identified in either the 8 or 16 district lists, the Bureau will be doing random review of districts’ action plans and the impact of those actions on the goals of the Settlement Agreement. A letter of assurance from district Superintendents is to be on file with the Bureau of Special Education (BSE) indicating that a plan is in place and being implemented within each district regarding the five goals of the Settlement Agreement. If you would like to check the status of your district’s filing of this letter of assurance, please contact Marlene Chameroy at (860) 807-2091.

Training

The SDE and SERC continue to encourage districts to avail themselves of the wide variety of training opportunities offered to district staff to assist in providing responsible inclusive practices for serving students with disabilities effectively in general education classrooms. Please refer to the SERC LRE/Inclusion Training Booklet for details or the SERC website at www.ctserc.org.

Spotlight Visits

Spotlight visits have begun and the learning and sharing of ideas has been reciprocally beneficial to visiting and hosting schools. Please consider sending a team from your district or a building within your district to one or more of the Spotlight districts. They are well prepared to host an informative visit for your school personnel. A personal learning agenda is requested in advance of each visit in order to best meet the needs of your staff. Spotlight districts are providing a variety of materials for visitors to use upon return to their district. Follow up communication is encouraged between visitors and hosting school personnel to assist in visitors implementation of what was learned during the visit. As time for reflection and sharing is valuable among educators, it is limited, so we encourage visiting school personnel to consider driving together and take advantage of the time to prepare for and debrief from the visit.

Following are the current dates available for districts to visit the four (4) Spotlight Districts. All visits are to be scheduled by contacting the district contact person indicated below.

MONTH	Farmington	Greenwich	Guilford	Suffield
January	THR 29 th	THR 29 th	WED 14 th and 28 th	MON 12 th
February	THR 26 th	THR 26 th	WED 4 th	MON 2 nd
March	THR 25 th	THR 25 th	WED 10 th and 24 th	MON 1 st
April	THR 29 th	THR 29 th	WED 14 th	MON 5 th
May	THR 27 th	THR 27 th	WED 19 th	MON 3 rd
June	THR 10 th	THR 17 th	WED 2 nd	MON 7 th

<p><u>During the visitations team members will have the opportunity to:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participate in an orientation to the district’s inclusive beliefs and practices • Visit preschool, elementary, middle and high schools as pertinent to the needs of the visiting team members • Observe students and educators engaged in instruction and learning in regular classes • Engage in dialogue with role-alike school personnel • Examine materials used in the district that contribute to the development and implementation of inclusive practices • Provide Spotlight district with feedback regarding visitation 	<p><u>Spotlight Districts- Contact Information</u></p> <p>Farmington Public Schools Jane Currie, Director of Special Education curriej@fpsct.org</p> <p>Greenwich Public Schools Eric Arlin, Inclusion Coach Eric_arlin@greenwich.k12.ct.us</p> <p>Guilford Public Schools Joe Onofrio, Director of Special Education (203) 453-0128 onofrioj@guilford.k12.ct.us</p> <p>Suffield Public Schools Ann Loughrain, Director of Special Education (860) 668-3806</p>
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SECONDARY TRANSITION PLANNING

Each year the Bureau works closely with SERC to develop appropriate and relevant transition-related training opportunities for LEA staff. Recognizing that many school districts contract with adult service agencies for transition activities, the Bureau would like a better understanding of the extent that LEA's contract with adult agencies for services such as situational assessments, job placement and other community-based training activities.

Enclosed is a very short survey (**See Attachment B**) that requests your input regarding this issue. Your completion of this survey would be greatly appreciated and assist the Bureau and SERC in targeting transition training to build the capacity of LEA personnel to conduct more comprehensive transition programming.

Please contact Karen Halliday at (860) 807-2020 or karen.halliday@po.state.ct.us if you have any questions.

REVISION OF STATE LAW ON RECOMMENDING PSYCHOTROPIC MEDICATIONS

Earlier this fall, Cheryl Carotenuti, Health Promotion Consultant for the State Department of Education, disseminated a memo to school nurse supervisors and school medical advisors about P.A. 03-211, "An Act Concerning the Provision of Medical Care For Students' Health Care Needs," which was passed and signed into law on July 9, 2003. One section of this Act replaces P.A. 01-124 (2001), the state law that prohibits school personnel from recommending the use of psychotropic drugs for children.

P.A. 03-211 clarifies the status of school mental health professionals and of planning and placement teams with regard to recommending a medical evaluation, and requires the establishment of procedures for communication among school personnel, medical practitioners, and parents on such matters.

Key points of P.A. 03-211 include the following:

- PPT teams may continue to recommend medical evaluations as part of their initial evaluation or reevaluation for special education and related services.
- The Act expands the list of persons who are authorized to recommend medical evaluations to include school mental health professionals and other school personnel identified by school board policy.
- Schools need to establish procedures for communication between school personnel and school health and mental health personnel about a child who may need a medical evaluation.
- Schools need to develop communication methods for school personnel to notify a parent or guardian that such a medical evaluation is recommended.
- Schools need to establish procedures for obtaining the required parental authorizations for school personnel to communicate with the medical practitioner, both before and after the evaluation.
- The Act provides a definition of psychotropic drugs, which includes prescription medications for behavioral or social emotional concerns, such as attention deficits, impulsivity, anxiety, depression and thought disorders, and includes stimulant and anti-depression medications.

The relevant text of P.A. 03-211 is as follows:

Sec. 8. Section 10-212b of the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1, 2003*):

(a) For purposes of this section, (1) "psychotropic drugs" means prescription medications for behavioral or social-emotional concerns, such as attentional deficits, impulsivity, anxiety, depression and thought disorders, and includes, but is not limited to, stimulant medication and antidepressants, and (2) "school health or mental health personnel" means school nurses or nurse practitioners appointed pursuant to section 10-212, school medical advisors appointed pursuant to section 10-205, school psychologists, school social workers, school counselors and such other school personnel who have been identified as the person responsible for communication with a parent or guardian about a child's need for medical evaluation pursuant to a policy adopted by a local or regional board of education as required by subsection (b) of this section.

(b) Each local and regional board of education shall adopt and implement policies prohibiting any school personnel from recommending the use of psychotropic drugs for any child. Such policies shall set forth procedures (1) for communication between school health or mental health personnel and other school personnel about a child who may require a recommendation for a medical evaluation, (2) establishing the method in which school health or mental health personnel communicate a recommendation to a parent or guardian that such child be evaluated by an appropriate medical practitioner, and (3) for obtaining proper consent from a parent or guardian of a child for the school health or mental health personnel to communicate about such child with a medical practitioner outside the school who is not a school employee. The provisions of this section shall not prohibit (A) school [medical staff] health or mental health personnel from recommending that a child be evaluated by an appropriate medical practitioner, [or prohibit] (B) school personnel from consulting with such practitioner with the consent of the parents or guardian of such child, (C) the planning and placement team from recommending a medical evaluation as part of an initial evaluation or reevaluation, as needed to determine a child's (i) eligibility for special education and related services, or (ii) educational needs for an individualized education program.

Districts should take this opportunity to review their policies to ensure compliance with the new language, and communicate any policy revisions to school personnel.

If you have any questions, please contact Cheryl Carotenuti at (860) 807-2108 or cheryl.carotenuti@po.state.ct.us, or Bob Lichtenstein at (860) 807-2042 or bob.lichtenstein@po.state.ct.us.

CONTRACT/TRAVELING SLP SERVICES

Since I wrote on this subject a few years ago, I have accumulated additional contacts that you may find helpful in securing short-term and long-term SLP services when your local and state searches haven't been successful. I am updating the information I sent previously for completeness. The ASHA site may also be helpful when you are looking for bilingual SLPs.

Source	Contact	Telephone	Email/Websites
American Speech-Language-Hearing Association			www.asha.org On the home page on the upper left, click on "Find A Professional", then click on "Online Directory" in the narrative that appears. Enter the information requested (e.g., states where looking, language sought, age group to be served) – you don't need all the details (e.g., city). Follow the directions to get more information on the selections that appear.
Bilingual Therapies	John Consalvi	(773) 784.9393	www.bilingualtherapies.com
Career Staff Unlimited (owned by Sun Health Care)	Holly Gibbons	(888) 782-3360	holly.gibbons@sunh.com www.sunhealthcare.com
Cross Country Staffing	Joe Cimetti	(800) 810-5334	jcimetti@crosscountrystaffing.com www.crosscountrystaffing.com
EBS Health	Robert Doerr	(800) 578-7906	ebshealthcare@bigplanet.com
Health Tour (owned by Star Med)	Peter Roy	(800) 523-9353	proy@starmed.com www.starmed.com
Progressus Therapy Inc	Michael Berthelette	(800) 892-0640	MichaelB@PTIMail.com www.JobsForTherapists.com
REFLECTX Staffing	Carla Wright	(800) 579-4690	cwright@reflectxstaffing.com www.reflectxstaffing.com
The Futures Health Core	Carole Bergeron	(800) 218-9280	cbergeron@futureshealth.com www.futureshealth.com
VTA Management Services	Amy Fridel	(888) 868-8297	jfridel@cox.net

cc: Betty J. Sternberg, Commissioner
Mark Stapleton
George Coleman
Edward Prenta
James Granfield
Nancy Prescott
Superintendents of Schools
Hearing Officers
SDE Staff

ATTACHMENT B

**TRANSITION SURVEY
CONTRACTING FOR TRANSITION SERVICES FROM ADULT SERVICES AGENCIES**

School District: _____

1. Does your school district contract with adult service agencies to provide transition-related services to youth? Yes No

2. If yes, what types of services do you contract for (check all that apply)?

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Career Exploration | <input type="checkbox"/> Job Tryouts |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Situational Assessment | <input type="checkbox"/> Functional Living Skills Assessment |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Job Placement | <input type="checkbox"/> Community-Based Functional Skills Training |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Job Coaching | <input type="checkbox"/> Ongoing Support Services |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation Training | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ |

3. What is the age of the student when you typically contract for transition services from outside adult service agencies?

- 14 15-16 17-18 19-21

4. What is the reason you contract for transition-related services from an outside adult service agency (check all that apply)?

- Inability to hire staff dedicated to transition service provision
 Lack of trained staff at the high school to fulfill transition needs of students
 Higher quality of services available from adult agencies
 More cost effective to contract with adult services
 Other: _____

5. In general, are you pleased with the quality of transition services provided by the adult agencies you contract with?

- Yes No In some instances

Please explain: _____

6. Do you feel that adult agency staff is well trained to provide transition-related services to your students?

- Yes No In some instances

Please explain: _____

7. Are there any other needed transition-related services that are currently not provided through adult agencies that you would contract for if they were available?

- Yes No If yes, please specify those services: _____

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR ASSISTANCE IN COMPLETING THIS SURVEY!
Please fax to Karen Halliday at (860) 807-2047 by January 16, 2004**