



Fact Sheet: Department of Education (ED) and Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Special Education and Rehabilitative Services Partnership

What is the nature of the partnership? ED and HHS are deepening their partnership in a commitment to improving early childhood, education, and employment outcomes, optimizing the coordination of resources, and advancing opportunities for all individuals with disabilities. This commitment includes: (1) ensuring that all children with disabilities have available to them a free appropriate public education that emphasizes special education and related services designed to meet their individual needs and prepare them for further education, employment and independent living; (2) ensuring the rights of infants, toddlers, children, youth and adults with disabilities and their families are fully protected; and (3) advancing employment outcomes for individuals with disabilities to maximize their independence and integration into the community and competitive labor market.

Why is this partnership being launched? Secretary McMahon and her team have participated in listening sessions with hundreds of parents, educators, state early intervention and special education directors, and advocates across the country to better understand the current state of services for individuals with disabilities.

These discussions highlighted the promise and importance of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and the vital programs that support individuals with disabilities. At the same time, many parents described long, bureaucratic, and costly efforts to secure the services their children need and to which they are entitled under Federal law, especially in the education setting.

ED and HHS' partnership is intended to reduce the bureaucracy surrounding programs for individuals and support the coordination of federal resources in order to serve the child and the family as a whole.

Why is ED partnering with HHS? The protections and responsibilities guaranteed under IDEA predate the Department of Education – and will continue after. The Trump Administration remains firmly committed to carrying out the Federal government's duty to enforce IDEA and invest in critical supports for individuals with disabilities. This partnership does not alter that obligation.



ED and HHS' partnership aims to strengthen coordination across the many Federal programs that serve people with disabilities.

How do OSERS programs overlap with existing HHS services? The partnership between ED and HHS aims to strengthen coordinated efforts to improve outcomes for expectant mothers, infants, toddlers, children, youth, and adults with disabilities.

HHS administers a broad portfolio of programs that support individuals with disabilities across multiple divisions. Examples include Medicaid, the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP), Head Start, Centers for Independent Living, and the Title V Maternal and Child Health Block Grant. Together, these programs provide essential services that complement and strengthen the programs and grants offered through OSERS.

For example, the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) at HHS administers the Federal Head Start program, which serves a minimum of 10% of children with disabilities and requires coordination with local education agencies to deliver IDEA Services. HHS also administers the Administration on Disabilities, which supports individuals with disabilities to live and participate fully in their communities. ED's Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS), through the Rehabilitation Services Administration, supports individuals with disabilities in securing competitive, integrated employment. This collaboration aims to help these programs work better together so they can more effectively support people with disabilities in building independence, learning important skills, and finding opportunities to thrive.

The [FY2026 Appropriations Act](#) includes expanded language to help expecting parents of infants with disabilities access the information and tools they need to prepare for their child's arrival and to secure appropriate supports and services after birth through Part C of the IDEA. HHS' Title V Maternal and Child Health Block Grant provides critical funding to improve maternal health outcomes by supporting prenatal, delivery, and postnatal care, and child outcomes through developmental monitoring and services for children and youth with special health care needs.

The ED and HHS partnership also enhances alignment between IDEA and Head Start, administered by HHS, which promotes school readiness and supports the early learning, development, health, and family wellbeing of children from birth to age five, including infants and toddlers with disabilities. Together, ED and HHS are advancing



coordinated services that promote health, wellness, and access to federally protected educational supports, ensuring stronger outcomes for children and families.

Under what authorities will this partnership be launched? The ED-HHS partnership follows a commonly utilized Interagency Agreement (IAA) framework, set forth under the Economy Act (see 31 U.S.C. § 1535). ED has broad authority to enter into contracts with other agencies for such agencies to provide services to ED. Under this partnership, HHS will provide grant administration services to ED in managing and overseeing this program.

What will each agency do as part of this partnership? In coordination with and at the direction of OSERS, HHS will support meaningful stakeholder outreach; grant administration; enforcement, compliance, and monitoring activities; annual performance determinations and assessments; collection, reporting, and analyzing of data for monitoring compliance; and drawdowns of Federal funds. All Fiscal Year 2026 grant awards, and supplemental awards, will be awarded through ED's G5 system. Subsequent grant awards will be awarded and managed through HHS's GrantSolutions and Payment Management System.

The partnership will completely preserve the independent statutory functions of OSERS in overseeing special education. ED-OSERS will manage and lead OSERS programs and activities; coordinate the execution of cross-functional priorities; coordinate clearance of policy and grant documents; manage the resolution of matters requiring the exercise of final and conclusive authority that has been assigned by statute to the Secretary of Education; and provide technical assistance and meaningful stakeholder outreach to ensure that ED and HHS work jointly with members of the disability community, including individuals with disabilities and their families, to improve outcomes for infants, toddlers, children, youth, and adults with disabilities. HHS will support the administration of the following programs:

- Formula grant program components and discretionary grant program components authorized under the Individuals with Disabilities in Education Act (Part B, Part C, and Part D)
- Formula grant program components and discretionary grant programs components authorized under the Rehabilitation Act of 1973
- Randolph-Sheppard Vending Facility Program



- Vocational Rehabilitation Disability Innovation Fund
- Program components authorized under the Special Olympics Sport and Empowerment Act of 2004
- Program components authorized under the Education of the Deaf Act of 1986, including the National Technical Institute for the Deaf
- Program components authorized under the Helen Keller National Center Act
- Program components relating to the American Printing House for the Blind
- Gallaudet University

These programs are currently managed by OSERS at ED. With oversight by ED, HHS will manage competitions, provide technical assistance, and integrate ED's programs with the larger suite of early childhood, community support, disaster preparedness and response programs HHS already administers. ED will maintain all statutory responsibilities and will continue its oversight of these programs.

Is there precedent for such partnerships? IAAs are a tool commonly used by government agencies to share services, collaborate, and ensure efficient service delivery. Agencies frequently rely upon these agreements, so much so that the government has standardized forms to facilitate agencies' use of them. IAAs have been used by both large and small agencies in Democrat and Republican administrations alike. IAAs serve many purposes, and they are often used for administering grant programs.

For example, in 2022, the Biden Administration's Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Prisons signed an IAA designating the Department of Labor (DOL) to administer grants under the First Step Act. More recently, ED and DOL successfully implemented an [IAA](#) to streamline the adult education and family literacy programs funded under Title II of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and career and technical education (CTE) programs funded by Perkins V. As of May 2026, ED's Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education (OCTAE) has processed over 4,900 payment requests totaling \$1.3 billion and has onboarded all grantees to DOL's GrantSolutions (GS) and Payment Management System (PMS). In summary, for many years ED has entered into IAAs with other Federal agencies when doing so has been in the best interest of the U.S. government — for example, when such agreements are cost-effective or provide enhanced or more efficient program support.



Likewise, the Economy Act has been used by Federal agencies in the past to enter into contracts with other agencies to perform services. These contracts are commonly used to implement IAAs through a contract for services. ED will continue to perform all statutorily required duties and responsibilities.

Will this agreement change program eligibility for agencies, entities, and institutions? There is no anticipated adverse impact on eligible agencies, entities, and institutions, as all programs will continue to be administered in accordance with the applicable statutory requirements.

Who should State agency staff contact if they have questions or need technical assistance? States and grantees should not expect to experience programmatic disruptions due to the partnership. States and grantees should continue to remain in contact with their respective OSERS and HHS programmatic staff. Announcements on any additional process-related transitions will be made available through known channels of communication with appropriate staff. OSERS will continue to support state agency staff to ensure school districts are in compliance with the law and that states and school districts are meeting their obligations to serve students, parents, and families under IDEA.