

The State Department of Education Special Education Division desires to provide local school professionals with a web-accessible resource that provides solutions and assistance to special education administrators and helps them stay connected to the newest developments and trends when special education questions and issues arise, when they need practical guidance, when they need to provide professional development materials, want to get a quick picture of what is happening in special education today, need interpretations from the US Department of Education's legislative agendas, want the most up-to-date guidance regarding Section 504 or need a sample form or policy.

This web-accessible resource must meet the following specifications:

1. Designed specifically for education professionals whose priority is providing high-quality services to children with disabilities and their families. The information must offer legal and practical guidance that are necessary to ensure that students receive the services to which they are entitled in a manner that enhances post-school quality of life for individuals with disabilities.
2. Enables educators to access the latest updates on how professional practice is impacted by case law, statutes, regulations, and the activities of agencies and organizations across the nation. Factual, as well as practical, guidance is delivered in a format that is easy to interpret and utilize. The practitioner is informed of the status of debates and actions regarding methodologies, assessment and accountability, identification practices, and other issues of universal importance.
3. Tools must be incorporated that explain complex legal and policy issues and provides practical implementation strategies and tips to help special education professionals do their jobs. A team of special education attorneys summarize key topics based on SEA decisions, Supreme Court and federal circuit court rulings, IDEA and Section 504 – and experts from across the country supply commentary and practical advice; coverage of OSERS and OSEP must be provided; and the program must break down law and policy into easy-to-understand parts and links to related case law, sample forms and tools and implementation tips.
4. Sample Forms & Tools such as usable charts, checklists, forms, letters, notices and policies must be available for use in a printable version, or copy and paste into a word processing program to fill in or modify.
5. Federal Policy and Guidance – must be available for key guidance and policy statements on disability-related issues that affect staff every day. OCR Letters of Findings, resolution agreements, and policy memoranda; OSEP/OSERS rulings and memoranda; as well as other federal guidance must be included.
6. Topical guides for researching special education which gives a brief overview of a topic followed by key points that summarize specific issues - complete with links to pertinent case decisions, statutes, regulations, with sample policies, forms, checklists and letters must be included.
7. Must be able to access the actual language of the IDEA, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, No Child Left Behind Act and Americans with Disabilities Act statutes and regulations.
8. Electronic version of the Special Ed Dictionary - Words and phrases with easy-to-access explanations. This comprehensive dictionary must cross-reference definitions to other related terms. Must be written in non-technical language, the reference source must be easy to understand and user-friendly.
9. Must include a source that provides the latest information from across the nation on special education topics of interest including reports, litigation, legislation, trends, events and issues.

10. Easy link access to other pertinent sites: advocacy, charter schools, early childhood, general education, pupil services, school psychology and counseling, special education, technology, and transition must be provided. Additional Alabama-specific links can be added.
11. Administrative forms, charts, sample letters, sample notices, policy forms and checklists. Must be able to print the documents and use them as they are, or as templates to develop own documents.
12. A feature to find the most current grant information from the Department of Education, private foundations and corporations must be included.
13. E-mail newsletters must be distributed to users every weekday morning that highlights the best practices articles, new features and helpful tools.
14. **Washington, DC Coverage and Updates** – Must maintain staff for coverage from Washington, DC in order to receive up-to-the-minute updates on critical special education issues in Congress, OSERS/OSEP, OCR and other federal agencies.

In LEAs with site-based management, many administrators feel a need to “level the playing field” in terms of information access. Unfortunately, in some districts there is funding disparity among schools which can result in fewer resources available for providing compliance information to the individuals who are “in the trenches” every day. Schools in economically depressed areas where administrators fill multiple roles often find it difficult to keep up with the legal landmines that can lead to due process. This web-accessible resource must ensure that all district personnel have the tools to effectively navigate through the volume of legal compliance, and that less affluent schools are not left at an information disadvantage.

Program must be currently used nationally by the U.S. Department of Education Office of Civil Rights, U.S. Department of Education Office of General Counsel, State Education Departments, School Districts, Educational Service Agencies, Law Firms and advocates.

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