NASHIA celebrates 45 years of the law that established the rights of children with disabilities to a free appropriate public education.

NASHIA Celebrates the 45th Anniversary of IDEA
December 3, 2020

Dear NASHIA Member,

The National Association of State Head Injury Administrators (NASHIA) joins other advocates and organizations in celebrating the 45th anniversary of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). On Nov. 29, 1975, President Gerald Ford signed the "Education for All Handicapped (EHA) Children Act" into law (Public Law 94-142), the landmark federal legislation that guaranteed a “free, appropriate public education” to all children and young adults with disabilities aged 3–21. The 1990 amendments changed the law’s name to IDEA. Among other provisions, the 1990 amendments added traumatic brain injury as an eligible disability for special education and related services. The law was last reauthorized in 2004.

Infants and toddlers, birth through age 2, with disabilities and their families receive early intervention services under IDEA Part C. Children and youth ages 3 through 21 receive special education and related services under IDEA Part B. To learn more about the Part B program, read the Report to Congress: "The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Part B: Key Statutory and Regulatory Provisions," updated August 29, 2019.

Pres. Ford Signs Special Education Law 45 Years Ago


A skeptic, Pres. Ford said, "I have approved S.6, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975. Unfortunately, this bill promises more than the Federal Government can
In 1972, Congress launched an investigation and found that millions of children with disabilities did not receive an appropriate education. On Nov. 19, 1975, Congress enacted "The Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975" to ensure that all children with disabilities would "have a right to education, and to establish a process by which State and local educational agencies may be held accountable for providing educational services for all handicapped children."

deliver, and its good intentions could be thwarted by the many unwise provisions it contains. Everyone can agree with the objective stated in the title of this bill -- educating all handicapped children in our Nation. The key question is whether the bill will really accomplish that objective."

November 29, 1975

Reauthorization History: Selected Laws

- The 1986 reauthorization (Public Law 99-457) addressed early intervention and mandated that individual States provide services to families of children born with disabilities from the time they are born. Previously, these services were not available until a child reached the age of three.

- The 1990 reauthorization (Public Law 110-476) changed the law’s name from EHA to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, or IDEA. It added traumatic brain injury and autism as new disability categories. Congress mandated that as a part of a student’s individualized education program (IEP), an individual transition plan (ITP) must be developed to help the student transition to post-secondary life.

- The IDEA 1997 (Public Law 105-17) reauthorization included an emphasis on access to the general curriculum. States were also given the authority to expand the “developmental delay” definition to also include students up to age nine. The law also required parents be provided an opportunity to resolve disputes with schools and local educational agencies (LEAs) through mediation and provided a process for doing so.

Federally Funded Resources

- Center on Brain Injury Research and Training
- Center for Parent Information & Resources
- IDEA Website, OSERS
- PACER's National Parent Center on Transition and Employment
- U.S. Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS)
- U.S. Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP)

Do you know these special ed acronyms?

| ABA -- Applied Behavioral Analysis | NCLB -- No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 |
ADD/ADHD -- Attention Deficit/Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder
ASL -- American Sign Language
AT – Assistive Technology
BIP -- Behavioral Intervention Plan
CCSS -- Common Core State Standards
ESEA -- Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965
FAPE – Free Appropriate Public Education
ID -- Intellectual Disabilities
IDEA – Individuals with Disabilities Education Act
IEE -- Individualized Education Evaluation
IEP – Individualized Education Program
ITP -- Individualized Transition Plan
LEA – Local Education Agency
LD -- Learning Disability
LRE – Least Restrictive Environment

OHI -- Other Health Impairment
OSEP -- U.S. Office of Special Education Programs
OSERS -- U.S. Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services
Part B -- Special Education, School Aged Children
Part C -- Special Education, Birth through 2
RTI -- Response to Intervention
SEA -- State Education Agency
SLD -- Specific Learning Disability (formerly LD)
TBI -- Traumatic Brain Injury
VR -- Vocational Rehabilitation

Take an online quiz!

The National Association of State Head Injury Administrators assists State government in promoting partnerships and building systems to meet the needs of individuals with brain injuries and their families.


Visit our website

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