



Fact Sheet: The Vital Role of OSEP—and What's at Risk Without It

Overview

The Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) is part of the U.S. Department of Education. It ensures that all children with disabilities receive a free and appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment. OSEP also supports states in providing quality early intervention services for infants, toddlers, and their families.

What's Happening Now?

On October 10, 2025, the current administration laid off nearly all the special education experts at OSEP, reducing the workforce to fewer than five employees. This drastic reduction in staff means that OSEP will be unable to fully operate and fulfill its statutory functions, leaving over 8 million children with disabilities without the supports they are entitled to.

These OSEP staff members were responsible for administering federal programs that supported infants, toddlers, children, and youth with disabilities, as well as their families. They also ensured states complied fully with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

What Happens Without OSEP?

OSEP carries out an extensive list of functions that enable states to implement the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Without OSEP, IDEA does not go away. But without oversight and accountability, the rights and protections for students with disabilities are at high risk.

Function	What Suffers?	Consequences
Grant Oversight & Management	Without personnel to review grant applications, monitor expenditures, and ensure compliance, funds may be delayed, misallocated, or misused.	States and districts may lose access to vital funding, increasing the risk of misallocation or ineffective use of funds.
Monitoring & Enforcement	States may not be subject to strict monitoring, which means that instances of noncompliance could go unnoticed or remain unaddressed.	Students might be denied their rights under IDEA without resources or notice.



Function	What Suffers?	Consequences
Technical Assistance & Capacity-Building	National centers, training programs, and resources may lose funding or support.	States, districts, and schools will struggle to implement evidence-based practices, potentially leading to a decline in quality services and ineffective use of resources.
Data Collection, Reporting, & Transparency	The delivery of timely and accurate data to Congress, the public, and stakeholders will be significantly impeded or halted entirely.	There are no visible metrics to assess how well children with disabilities are served, resulting in a loss of accountability for families.
Specialized Oversight	Organizations like the Described Captioned Media Program and the American Printing House for the Blind may lose federal oversight and coordination.	Programs designed for individuals with sensory disabilities may face reductions in support, potentially leading to a decline in quality or loss of resources.
Legal & Regulatory Guidance	Families, states, and schools will not have current clarifications, memos, or "Dear Colleague" letters interpreting new issues or nuances in IDEA.	Districts, schools, educators, and families will experience greater confusion, litigation, and inconsistent practices across states.
Equity & Civil Rights Safeguards	Disproportionality oversight could become insufficient, allowing systemic discrimination to go unaddressed.	Historically marginalized groups will face a greater risk of having their rights violated and their needs unmet.

Each year, the U.S. Department of Education provides billions of dollars to states for early intervention, preschool, and special education services. OSEP manages these funds, but with most of its staff recently laid off, it's unclear how this critical funding will continue to be effectively administered. Without OSEP, students with disabilities are the ones who will suffer.