

NOTICE TO ALL APPLICANTS: EQUITY FOR STUDENTS, EDUCATORS, AND OTHER PROGRAM BENEFICIARIES

Section 427 of the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA) ([20 U.S.C. 1228a](#)) applies to applicants for grant awards under this program.

ALL APPLICANTS FOR NEW GRANT AWARDS MUST INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION IN THEIR APPLICATIONS TO ADDRESS THIS PROVISION IN ORDER TO RECEIVE FUNDING UNDER THIS PROGRAM.

Please respond to the following requests for information:

1. Describe how your entity's existing mission, policies, or commitments ensure equitable access to, and equitable participation in, the proposed project or activity.

Montana Early Childhood and Family Support Division is committed to ensuring infants, young children, youth, individuals, and families connect to the highest quality services and supports they need to thrive.

Montana ECFSD services support the health, wellbeing, and positive development for all Montanans from the prenatal period through childhood, adolescence, and into the adult years.

- *Support equitable access to infant and childhood early intervention services.*
- *Promote access to Children and Youth with Special Health Care Needs services.*
- *Strengthen access to Early Intervention services across the state.*
- *Increase access to early hearing detection.*
- *Maximize participation in WIC through outreach and service coordination.*

2. Based on your proposed project or activity, what barriers may impede equitable access and participation of students, educators, or other beneficiaries?

Montana spans more than 147,000 square miles and has an estimated population of 1.14 million people (according to 2024 Census estimates). About 44 percent or 500,000 live in rural areas of the state. Ensuring access to Part C services for infants and toddlers with disabilities and their families in Montana's more rural areas can be a barrier. Additionally, with the lack of high-speed internet in rural areas, access to healthcare, referrals, and information about services can also provide as a barrier to Part C services.

The Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services, and more specifically the Early Childhood and Family Support Division, administers a variety of programs and services for children with special needs, which creates a unique opportunity to assess eligibility, gaps and duplications in services, family engagement, and funding mechanisms for coordinated and efficient services.

Additional barriers include:

- *Consumer information about the availability of Part C early intervention; Reliable transportation to early intervention service providers;*

- *Alignment of work hours with early intervention program hours of operation; and*
- *Limited specialized treatment options for children under the age of 3 with physical, emotional or developmental delays.*

3. Based on the barriers identified, what steps will you take to address such barriers to equitable access and participation in the proposed project or activity?

Montana is engaging in the implementation of the Pyramid Model framework to provide ongoing professional development for early intervention providers. Ongoing professional development includes targeted support to early intervention staff by practitioner coaches. An additional support is provided through the Department to local implementation sites to support local leadership teams and practitioner coaches.

Montana is working to establish agreements with community-based therapy providers to support the early intervention system in Montana. Included in the goals of this agreement is the provision of tele-intervention services when it is deemed by a family's multidisciplinary team to be appropriate and in the best interests of the child and family. Tele-intervention services may be supportive for families in rural areas of the state.

Montana is nearing completion of a Comprehensive System of Personnel Development learning system that will support the workforce with consistent service delivery across rural and urban areas of the state. This system will be updated as needed to continue to support additional needs in Montana.

Montana has employed a staff person to provide oversight to the professional development and quality improvement system in Montana. Through Continuous Quality Improvement theory and practices, relevant trainings, communities of practice, and updated processes are provided to early intervention providers. This staff person works closely with the data specialist and compliance specialist to ensure that needs being addressed are timely and/or proactive toward improvement in a preventative nature.

4. What is your timeline, including targeted milestones, for addressing these identified barriers?

Implementation of Pyramid Model- Two implementation sites in place by end of calendar year 2025. Additional implementation over 2-4 years (by 2028)

Therapist agreement- by 2026

Comprehensive System of Personnel Development learning system- Complete by end of calendar year 2025

Continuous Quality Improvement- Ongoing

Notes:

1. Applicants are not required to have mission statements or policies that align with equity in order to submit an application.
2. Applicants may identify any barriers that may impede equitable access and participation in the proposed project or activity, including, but not limited to, barriers based on economic disadvantage, gender, race, ethnicity, color, national origin, disability, age, language, migrant

status, rural status, homeless status or housing insecurity, pregnancy, parenting, or caregiving status, and sexual orientation.

3. Applicants may have already included some or all of this required information in the narrative sections of their applications or their State Plans. In responding to this requirement, for each question, applicants may provide a cross-reference to the section(s) and page number(s) in their applications or State Plans that includes the information responsive to that question on this form or may restate that information on this form.

Paperwork Burden Statement

According to the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, no persons are required to respond to a collection of information unless such collection displays a valid OMB control number. The valid OMB control number for this information collection is 1894-0005. Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 3 hours per response, including time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering, and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. The obligation to respond to this collection is required to obtain or retain a benefit. If you have any comments concerning the accuracy of the time estimate or suggestions for improving this individual collection, send your comments to ICDocketMgr@ed.gov and reference OMB Control Number 1894-0005. All other comments or concerns regarding the status of your individual form may be addressed to either (a) the person listed in the FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT section in the competition Notice Inviting Applications, or (b) your assigned program officer.