

## **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 1.06 million people (according to 2018 Census estimates). About 44 percent or 470,000 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 broadband in rural areas, access to healthcare, referrals, and information about services can also provide as a barrier to Part C services.*

*Throughout the State of Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services, and more specifically the Early Childhood and Family Support Division, there are 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; 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?

*Leveraging American Rescue Plan Dollars, Montana is completing a comprehensive statewide needs assessment focused on services for children with special needs within the early childhood system. The focus of the needs assessment is on identifying underserved populations and geographical areas that have limited access to services and supports for infants and toddlers with disabilities, program effectiveness, care coordination, and funding mechanisms.*

*With a completed Needs Assessment, Montana will develop a strategic plan using a consensus-based planning approach at the local level, leveraging the infrastructure of local early childhood coalitions and the statewide FSSAC (ICC) to facilitate the planning process. Strategies will likely address approaches to improving system coordination and collaboration, reducing barriers to accessing Part C services and supports, and opportunities for professional development. Montana will also develop an evaluation plan and implementation plan.*

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

*Conducting a Needs Assessment: January 2023 through December 2023  
Finalizing the Needs Assessment: December 2023  
Strategic Planning: January 2024 – January 2025  
Evaluation and Implementation Plan development: December 2023  
Presented to the FSSAC (ICC) : December 2023*

**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](mailto: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.