

Maryland to Receive \$14.4 Million in Federal Stimulus Funding

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The Maryland State Department of Education reports that it will soon receive \$14,382,810 through a special education grant from the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs as part of the education funds provided in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009.

State Superintendent of Schools, Dr. Nancy S. Grasmick, made the announcement on Friday, July 10 during the Autism Summit held in Baltimore. At this time, Maryland is the only state to receive this incentive grant, which will create Maryland's Extended Individualized Family Service Plan Option.

This new State incentive grant will provide Maryland the opportunity to create a seamless birth through five early childhood intervention and special education system of services for our youngest children with disabilities and their families, allowing a full continuum of services to become a reality.

Under Maryland's existing Infants and Toddlers program model, at age three, a child and family are no longer eligible for early intervention services through an Individualized Family Service Plan. The option, effective January 1, 2010, will allow families currently receiving infants and toddlers services to have a choice to access IFSP services beyond age three until the child is eligible to enter kindergarten. Families will be offered the option if the child has a current plan and is determined eligible for preschool special education and related services as a child with a disability.

The Extended IFSP Option will ensure young children with disabilities are ready for kindergarten by fostering educational proficiency, while at the same time, providing families with the training and support they need to promote their children's school readiness.

"School readiness is the ultimate goal in expanding the possibilities for children with disabilities and their families," said Dr. Grasmick. "This new grant will provide the opportunity to incorporate the strength of our early childhood education system, along with the existing infants and toddlers family center service model."

For more information about the Extended Individualized Family Service Plan Option for children with disabilities age three to kindergarten and their families, visit the Maryland State Department of Education website at www.MarylandPublicSchools.org and click on the Division of Special Education/Early Intervention Services and under Branches click on the Early Childhood Intervention Education Branch.

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