

How to Address Common Issues in Special Education

August, 20 2019

Objectives

Grow and
strengthen
partnerships with
PSA Community

Review changes
in role of ISDs

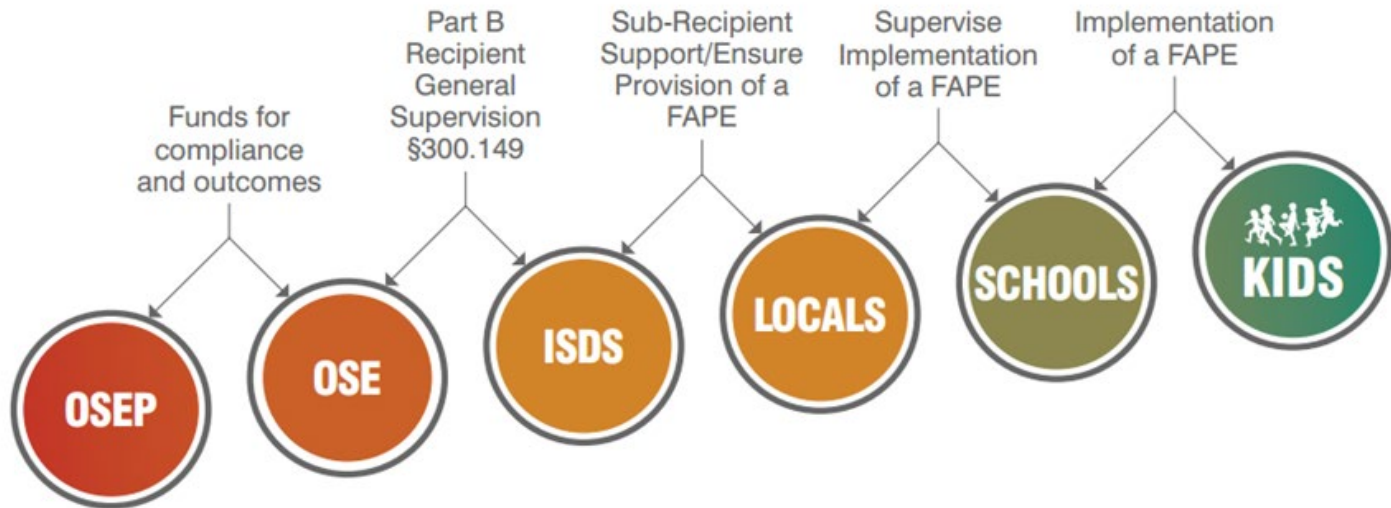
Assure
compliance with
special education
mandates

General Supervision Monitoring

MDE “Sub-Recipient Role”

IDEA SUPERVISION

Coordination and Communication



MDE “Sub-Recipient Role”

WHAT SYSTEM(S) IS IN PLACE TO:

1.



2.



3.



Oakland Schools Support Offerings

- Facilitation of an array of **professional development**
 - County-wide
 - District-centric (on-site, per request)
- Provision of **technical assistance**
 - **Consultation**
 - Resource Development
- **Professional Learning Communities**
 - PSA Leadership Network
 - Special Education Administrators of Oakland County

Universal Monitoring Activities

- IEP Review and Feedback
 - Compliance
 - Quality
- Verification of IEP implementation
 - Review of service logs
- Review of progress on IEP goals/objectives
- Educational Benefit Review

Common Preventable Issues

Staffing Infrastructure

What We've Learned

- Small, independently managed schools often have one special educator (that functions in multiple roles)
 - Higher reports of staff burnout
 - Higher reports of staff feeling uninformed about compliant practices
 - More likely to engage in noncompliant practices
 - Often report feeling uncomfortable informing building leaders of:
 - Needed changes
 - Added costs associated with educating certain students

Staffing Infrastructure

Considerations to Address Need

- Develop a professional learning plan for the year
- Listen and respond to reported needs of special ed. staff
- Provide autonomy to special. ed. staff to make decisions
- Partner with the ISD to learn about the supports available to staff
- Contact the ISD for technical assistance
- Budget funds to address “added costs” that may arise during the year
- Provide release time for professional development

Staff Turnover

What We've Learned

- Impacts compliance with special education rules/regulations
- Impacts student access to specialized instruction
- Impacts quality of instruction and/or quality of service delivery
- If interruption in service(s) occurs, staff unaware of need for compensatory services

Staff Turnover

Considerations to Address Need

- Set up a “Plan B” to prepare the following situations:
 - Loss of a teacher
 - Contractual agency pulls out of their contract
- Conduct an exit interview
- Develop written procedures around the identification, evaluation, and delivery of special education programs and services
 - ISDs can support schools with this development

Programs and Services

What We've Learned

- Many schools have a limited continuum of special education programming available
 - Singular Resource Programming
 - Majority of students receiving the same number of hours/min. of service regardless of their needs
- Limited availability of contracted related service providers
 - Staff commit to only one particular day of the week to service students, so decisions are made on availability of service as opposed to need of student

Programs and Services

Considerations to Address Need

- Build internal capacity
- Contract with a neighboring school district (through cooperative agreement)
- Request consideration for a center program placement
 - Students with most significant needs
- Budget for “added costs”
 - NCSECS recommends allocating 25% of your budget for special education)
- If contracting related services, ensure flexibility with schedule

Transfer Students

What We've Learned

- Students previously enrolled in another school (particularly a traditional public school) often not receiving “comparable services” when they enroll in charter
 - Example: Student receives 10-15 hours a week of specially designed instruction in previous school and upon enrollment in the PSA, only receives 1-2 hours per week

Transfer Students

Considerations to Address Need

- Ensure special educators and administrators understand:
 - Decisions regarding the frequency and duration of special education programs and services must be made on an individual basis; and
 - Cannot be based on the configuration of your delivery system; or
 - Based on administrative convenience

Enrollment Practices

What We've Learned

- There is greater enrollment of higher incidence disabilities (as opposed to lower incidence) in charters
- Parents and staff report instances of 'counseling out' occurring, including:
 - Parents report subtle messages of feeling unwelcomed or are often told "this is all we have to offer"
 - Staff recommending that families return to their resident district to access additional programming

Enrollment Practices

Considerations to Address Need

- Ensure fair, equitable enrollment practices
 - Train front office staff on non-discrimination practices/policies
 - Train all staff on what constitutes “counseling” behavior that influences an enrollment decision
- Evaluate enrollment trend data of students with disabilities
- Conduct exit interviews with families

Discipline

What We've Learned

- Student removals from the educational environment are not always documented
 - Can lead to a violation of their right to FAPE
- Families have reported being informed by schools that they can avoid expulsion, for a behavioral infraction, if they enroll elsewhere

Discipline

Considerations to Address Need

- Ensure that specialized staff and other administrators understand what constitutes a removal
- Develop a procedure/practice that will track and document removals for all students (especially students with an IEP or Section 504 Plan)
- Ensure that Manifestation Determination Review meetings are being conducted, when appropriate and with fidelity
- Ensure that administrators and other staff never counsel a family to disenroll, in order to avoid expulsion

IEP Implementation

What We've Learned

- Many schools have difficulty producing documentation that verifies the accurate implementation of IEPs
 - Including special ed. programming, direct/consultative related services, and supplementary aids and services
 - This is especially difficult for those who contract with a service agency for services

IEP Implementation

Considerations to Address Need

- Ensure that special education and related service providers document their services each and every time it is provided
- If contracting related services, ensure flexibility with schedule
- Consider having staff utilize a common documentation log
- 'House' the documentation in a common, yet confidential placement (for accessibility)



FEEDBACK

