




**STATE OF LOUISIANA**  
**DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**  
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October 14, 2005

**TO:** Parish/City School Superintendents  
State Director of SSD  
Superintendents of BESE Special Schools  
Administrators of Type 2 and 5 Charter Schools

**FROM:** Cecil J. Picard   
State Superintendent of Education

**RE:** Hurricanes Katrina and Rita Issues Related to Special Education

Our school systems and our state have endured catastrophic hurricanes in which most students and their families as well as faculty and staff have been impacted to some degree. Students with special needs are impacted in the same manner as students in regular education but have additional issues, as do the school districts who have enrolled special education students with little or no information concerning their eligibility for services and what services the students were receiving.

Attached to this memorandum is a Question and Answer document addressing some of the issues that your directors and supervisors of special education have submitted to the department. Additional issues from department staff are included. We must be sensitive to the needs of all displaced students and must ensure that students with special needs are not without services or treated in a manner that would be considered discriminatory. For the most part, we are not providing blanket waivers of state regulations or procedures. Individual waivers will be handled as usual, according to department and BESE policies. *Bulletin 1706, Parts A and B*, and *Bulletin 1508* allow extensions on evaluation and reevaluation timelines for specific circumstances. I encourage you to take advantage of these provisions if necessary. There are provisions for interim Individualized Education Programs (IEPs), expedited evaluations, as well as a range of pupil/teacher ratios that can be used to ensure that students receive the services needed in accordance with their IEPs.

Please be reminded that some special education requirements are federal statutes or regulations, and we do not have the authority to waive them; however, I have requested specific waivers, some of which concerning the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), from Secretary Margaret Spellings of the U.S. Department of Education.

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You may view the full text of that letter of request and Secretary Spellings' response on our website at <http://www.doe.state.la.us/lde/index.html>. As you know, services for Louisiana students who are gifted or talented are state-mandated, not federal; *Bulletin 1706, Part B* contains the regulations to implement services for these students.

The department's data management staff have been able to provide you with access to special education information through the recently implemented Special Education Reporting (SER) system. We are able to release jurisdiction, allowing you to review the information for specific students on SER. I hope this has assisted you in providing at least the basic information about students with special needs.

Department staff are available to assist you as you face the challenges of serving more children with special needs. While travel statewide may be limited, conference calls and electronic mail may be used to assist you. I know there will be more questions as we progress in relocation and enrollment efforts.

Please contact Dr. Robin G. Jarvis at 877-453-2721 or 225-342-3355 if you have any questions concerning these issues or need additional information. Thank you for your tireless efforts on behalf of Louisiana's school children.

CJP:SWB

Attachment

c: Robin G. Jarvis, Ph.D.  
Division of Special Populations Staff  
Directors/Supervisors of Special Education  
Special Education Regional Coordinators  
Preschool Special Education Regional Coordinators  
Cindy Arceneaux, Parent Training Information Center  
Diane Fruge'  
Families Helping Families Centers