

**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:

(Alaska State Application under Part C of IDEA FFY2023)

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

Alaska takes steps to identify barriers to equitable access by gathering input from the State Interagency Coordinating Council, during stakeholder meetings, through family surveys, and by reviewing population data and prevalence information. Our Part C system takes steps to address these barriers to ensure equitable access to and participation in Part C services, as required section 427(b) of GEPA. Foundations of equitable access to Part C services in Alaska include:

- a. Establishment of regional EIS Program agencies that provide statewide coverage throughout designated geographic regions to assist DOH EI/ILP with local planning, coordination of community resources and partnerships, Child Find, public awareness, family support, training and technical assistance, data collection and informal dispute resolution.
 - b. Implementation of a statewide toll-free number that connects to a statewide system point of entry for information and referrals to Alaska EI/ILP.
 - c. Family Service Coordinators available in each region to respond timely to referrals and ensure timely initial evaluation and assessment to determine eligibility and provide each eligible infant and toddler and their family with ongoing service coordination.
 - d. One or more multidisciplinary evaluation teams in each region to ensure timely access to initial evaluation and assessment, and to provide individualized early intervention services to eligible infants and toddlers and their families.
 - e. Statewide web-based EI/ILP database system that allows DOH EI/ILP to monitor referrals, enrollment, and early intervention service data throughout the State and to provide timely oversight and technical assistance to ensure equitable access to services in every region of Alaska.
2. Based on your proposed project or activity, what barriers may impede equitable access and participation of students, educators, or other beneficiaries?

Geographical diversity is the overarching lens for understanding barriers to equitable access to and participation in Early Intervention service in the State of Alaska. The concept of geographical diversity considers factors such as the vast geography of our state and travel challenges that accompany this, significant local and regional differences in culture and values, diversity in

race/ethnicity, challenges of poverty, access to affordable foods and/or subsistence foods, variability in community infrastructure such as utilities, suitable housing, law enforcement and governance. Values related to parenting, disabilities, and participation in service delivery systems vary widely among families, cultural groups, and communities. Three main categories summarize the barriers to equitable access of Part C services in Alaska:

- a. Geography - Alaska covers a large geographical area, with some regions of the state accessible only by plane or ferry. Providing services to remote regions of the state are costly, time consuming, and difficult for providers. There is often limited and unreliable internet, phone and cellular service in homes and community locations to allow telehealth or hybrid services. Families often move around Alaska from community to community or from rural areas to urban centers. The smooth transfer of services from program to program is a challenge our system is working on.
 - b. Social - Families referred to Part C by Child Protection under the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) are often difficult to contact and engage in services. Families with stressors such as poverty, homelessness or housing insecurity, domestic violence, substance abuse and social stressors can be difficult to engage and enroll if eligible. Their contact information may change frequently, and they often lose access to cell phones, internet and other technology during times of transition, making it difficult for providers to contact them. Families experiencing significant social stressors may be more reluctant to have providers in their lives and may not have the time, energy, and internal capacity to participate in services.
 - c. Race/Ethnicity – Race may be a barrier to equitable enrollment in Alaska, but further understanding of our enrollment and population data is required. Enrollment of Black/African American, Asian, and White children appeared to become less representative of the state this year, based on new census data. However, Part C data allows families to identify as “Two or more races,” and the number of families selecting this has increased to 15% of our enrolled families. We don’t have data on which races are represented in this category.
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?
- a. Geography:
 - i. Scholarships: Alaska Part C will continue to implement a scholarship program to address workforce shortages in both urban and rural areas and to support residents of rural communities in becoming highly qualified providers of early intervention services.
 - ii. Funding: The factors considered in distribution of funds to regional programs will be updated to strengthen consideration of geography, population density, travel costs and cost of living for regional Part C programs.
 - iii. Telehealth: State Part C staff and stakeholder groups including the Interagency Coordinating Council (ICC) and Service Delivery committee will develop recommendations for the role of telehealth in the Part C system in Alaska, to be distributed to regional Part C Programs.
 - iv. ILP Without Walls: Alaska Part C will continue to develop projects building on the concept of “ILP Without Walls.” This concept focuses on removing barriers in providing services to families across ILP regions. Projects include funding one regional program to provide statewide low incidence services, changing program

guidance and data systems to allow children to receive services from more than one Part C program at a time, and strengthening program relationships to ensure that an Alaska IFSP can be quickly implemented in a new region if the family moves within the state permanently or temporarily.

b. Social:

- i. Family Engagement: The Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority (AMHTA) has funded a four-year project designed to increase engagement of CAPTA referred and other high-risk families in the Early Intervention system. This project, administered by the Alaska Part C office, is being piloted by four regional Part C Programs representing geographically diverse communities. Part C programs are working with partners, stakeholders, and the child protection systems in their communities to develop more effective strategies for engaging highly stressed families. Strategies and results are shared with Part C programs statewide.
- ii. Data Reports: Additional reports will be made available in the Statewide ILP Database to help us understand the outcomes of referrals from various referral sources. These reports will help us understand where the enrollment process breaks down and why we have low engagement and enrollment of referrals from sources such as Child Protection and the NICU.

c. Race/Ethnicity:

- i. Diversity Plan: Alaska Part C will engage with stakeholders to create a Diversity Plan. This plan will consider our Part C system from a diversity lens and include elements such as assessment, data collection and analysis, identification of concerns, goal setting, implementation, training and activity planning, and evaluation.
- ii. Data Analysis: Race/ethnicity data will be further analyzed in the Part C data system to help us consider its role as a potential barrier to participation in services in Alaska. Changes in data collection to allow families to self-identify with more than one race have made it more challenging to understand our Part C data in comparison to census and other available data. We will review our current method for collecting race/ethnicity data, determine whether to collect additional data, and annually review the representativeness of Part C enrollment with the Alaska Part C population of birth to 3-year-olds.
- iii. Forms: Based on stakeholder input, Alaska will provide additional forms, including Prior Written Notice, Consent to Bill, Procedural Safeguards, IFSP, and Transition forms in Hmong, Korean, Russian, Samoan, Spanish, Tagalog, and Yup'ik.

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

a. Geography:

- i. Scholarships
Targeted Milestone: Scholarships distributed. Timeline: Annual
- ii. Funding
Targeted Milestone: Fund distribution factors updated. Timeline: February 2024
- iii. Telehealth
Targeted Milestone: Telehealth guidance document completed. Timeline: June 2024
- iv. ILP Without Walls
Targeted Milestone: Fund ILP Without Walls projects for vision and hearing.
Timeline: July 2025

- b. Social:
 - i. Family Engagement
Targeted Milestone: Increase engagement of CAPTA referrals by 20% Timeline: July 2026
 - ii. Data Reports
Targeted Milestone: Referral report available to state and local programs Timeline: August 2023
- c. Race/Ethnicity:
 - i. Data Analysis
Targeted Milestone: Data committee recommendations for Part C race/ethnicity data Timeline: June 2024
 - ii. Forms:
Targeted Milestone: Forms translated. Timeline: 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 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.