From the Deputy Assistant Secretary

Letter from Ruth Ryder, Deputy Assistant Secretary for the Office of State Grant and Program Support

Dear Partners and Stakeholders:

I write at a time when I know you are facing unprecedented challenges due to the outbreak of the novel coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19). The U.S. Department of Education (Department or ED) and my office are committed to supporting you as you deal with widespread school closures. Over the last few weeks, the White House, the Department, and other federal agencies have released a significant amount of guidance to support schools, educators, and families regarding COVID-19. For updated information, please visit Coronavirus.gov, CDC.gov/coronavirus, and USA.gov/coronavirus.

For education-related information, the Department has established a dedicated coronavirus webpage (ed.gov/coronavirus) that includes resources
for institutions of higher education (IHEs) and for K–12. The Department has provided information for families and communities including:

- A [letter from the Office for Civil Rights](#) that addresses potential discrimination associated with coronavirus;
- [Information](#) regarding certain flexibilities under the *Every Student Succeeds Act* (ESSA);
- Broad flexibilities provided to states to [bypass ESSA mandated testing](#) for the 2019–20 school year due to the COVID-19 national emergency. State education leaders can find the [waiver application here](#);
- [Information](#) regarding services to children with disabilities;
- A [fact sheet](#) from our Office for Civil Rights on addressing the risk of coronavirus in schools while protecting the civil rights of students, and a short [webinar](#) on online education and website accessibility;
- [Information](#) on the *Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act*, or FERPA, as it pertains to K-12 and higher education students; and
- [Information](#) for accrediting agencies regarding temporary flexibilities provided to coronavirus impacted institutions or accrediting agencies.

The Department has set up a mailbox for questions related to coronavirus issues. Please direct education related questions to [COVID-19@ed.gov](mailto:COVID-19@ed.gov). We have a team working to respond to questions received in the mailbox. Finally, the Department will continue to update its web page, [ed.gov/coronavirus](http://ed.gov/coronavirus).

Thank you for your extraordinary efforts to ensure continuity of learning during this unprecedented event. My office will continue to be available to support you during this challenging time!

All the best –

Ruth Ryder

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**COVID-19 Resources for Educators**
The Department's Office of Safe and Supportive Schools and its Readiness and Emergency Management for Schools (REMS) Technical Assistance (TA) Center provide technical assistance on roles and responsibilities in school safety, security, emergency management and preparedness to public and private K-12 schools and IHEs, as well as their local, state, and federal partners. All services are free, and most can be accessed through the REMS TA Center Website, which is a hub of information and resources (e.g., apps, tools, guidance, trainings, publications). The REMS TA Center offers free products and resources to support education agencies in their infectious disease and continuity planning efforts during the coronavirus outbreak. Downloadable training packages, publications, online courses, tabletop exercises and other key resources can be found in the Coronavirus Disease 2019, COVID-19 section of the Biological Hazards Resources page as well as the Continuity of Operations page. The topic is also featured in the REMS TA Center's Community of Practice, a virtual space for school safety practitioners and their partners to collaborate, share, and learn from the experiences of others in the field.

Monthly Office Spotlight: Office of Indian Education
The Office of Indian Education (OIE) administers the Indian Education Program of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), as amended by ESSA (Title VI, Part A), which establishes policies and provides financial and technical assistance for supporting local educational agencies (LEA), Indian tribes and organizations, postsecondary institutions, and other entities in meeting the special educational, cultural, and academic needs of American Indians and Alaska Natives (AI/AN). OIE and the Department are also guided by the National Advisory Council on Indian Education (NACIE), which authors an annual report to Congress. NACIE’s primary purpose is to, “raise the profile of AI/AN students through Indian Education in every way possible” (NACIE Annual Report to Congress, Fall 2019).

While collaborating with key stakeholders, OIE’s staff currently consists of an acting director, and seven full-time program specialists, who administer formula and discretionary grants. OIE’s grant portfolio consists of approximately $160 million in annual award funding, including $110 million in formula and $50 million in discretionary grants. During fiscal year (FY) 2019, the OIE Formula Team managed 1,367 grantees—including LEAs, Bureau of Indian Education schools, Indian community-based organizations, and Tribal entities with Federally and State Recognized Tribal children—throughout the continental United States and Alaska.

The OIE Discretionary Team stewards four programs, including (1) Native American Language at the U.S. Department of Education (NAL@ED), (2) State Tribal Education Partnerships (STEP), (3) Demonstration (DEMO), and (4) Professional Development. Three of those discretionary programs – NAL, DEMO, and STEP – will hold new award competitions in FY 2020. OIE expects the Notice Inviting Applications for those competitions to be published in the Federal Register this spring. To support that effort, OIE recently posted a call for paid peer reviewers (interested individuals are invited to email a resume to Indian.Education@ed.gov).

More information about OIE, as well as current grant and peer review opportunities can be found on our new website. OIE is excited about the future and welcomes your communication via our main listserv, Indian.Education@ed.gov. We look forward to our continued partnership and appreciate everyone’s support for Indian Education!
Technical Assistance Resources and Updates

The State Support Network

The State Support Network (Network) is a four-year technical assistance initiative begun in 2016 designed to support state and district school improvement efforts. Technical assistance support includes: communities of practice (CoP), peer-to-peer exchanges (P2P), individualized technical assistance (ITA), and the publication of resources and tools. CoPs seek to bring together state and local leaders on a common topic. P2Ps foster sharing experiences with peers to build on solutions and lessons learned. ITAs seek to provide differentiated, hands-on support.

Recently, the Network initiated several new CoPs on topics such as Principal Talent Management, Networked Improvement Implementation, ESEA Ombudsman, and State Systems for Developing an Evidence Base. While those CoPs begin, activities for Foster Care and Report Card Communications will conclude in the coming weeks. Combined, nearly 30 different states are participating in these activities. Additionally, the Network continues to produce materials and resources and to provide additional technical assistance opportunities. The ESSA Implementation Planning Tool was recently published, which helps guide state teams through a planning process to develop a comprehensive strategy for implementing consolidated state plans. On February 11, a P2P session on Improving Outcomes for English Learners had over 40 participants from more than 30 different states and territories.

Please subscribe here to receive the Network’s newsletter.

Human Trafficking Webinar Series

This year marks the 20th anniversary of the passage of the Trafficking Victims Protection Act. In recognition of this significant milestone, the Department is conducting a webinar series to address the growing response of America’s schools to child trafficking. The first webinar in this series, Identifying and Supporting Students Affected by Human Trafficking, is archived and available online.

For more information on this webinar series, please contact Shauna Knox at shauna.knox@ed.gov.
Upcoming Events and Due Dates

Upcoming Events

Impact Aid Application Amendments Now Through June 30

If your district completed the FY 2021 Impact Aid program application and needs to make a change, you may do so until June 30. It is a good idea to review your application to ensure that all of your federally connected students are reported properly in the Impact Aid Grant System [https://impactaid.ed.gov/](https://impactaid.ed.gov/).

Visit our portal [https://impactaid.ed.gov/news/](https://impactaid.ed.gov/news/) to find our video and user guide to get started right away. Help is available by phone (202-260-3858) or email (Impact.Aid@ed.gov).

Due Dates and Competitions

Are You Interested in Being a Peer Reviewer?

Individuals are needed for the Department’s peer review process to review applications for competitive grant funding. [This Federal Register notice](https://www.federalregister.gov) spotlights specific needs of the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, the Office of Postsecondary Education, and the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services.

The Department will accept submissions on a rolling basis, although requests should be submitted at least four weeks prior to a program’s application deadline.

In addition, the Department issued a toolkit, "[How to Be Considered as a Peer Reviewer for Programs Administered by the Department of Education](https://www.ed.gov)."

Insular Areas Update
**Consolidated Grant Onsite Visit with Virgin Islands Department of Education**

Recently, members of the Insular Areas Team (IAT), in the Office of Rural, Insular, and Native Achievement Programs, returned from a monitoring trip to the U.S. Virgin Islands, where they met with representatives of the Virgin Islands Department of Education (VIDE) to discuss the implementation of VIDE’s Consolidated Grant activities and to identify areas for technical assistance. The team visited schools in St. Thomas and St. John to observe projects funded with the Virgin Islands’ Consolidated Grant.

In St. John, the IAT visited Gifft Hill School, which uses funding from the Consolidated Grant to implement a Safe and Healthy Schools program, offering students the opportunity to cultivate vegetables in class gardens that they plant themselves. The team also visited Julius E. Sprauve School, which hosts a Well-Rounded Students program through its Consolidated Grant funding.

On St. Thomas, the team visited Jane E. Tuitt Primary School, where Consolidated Grant funds are used to purchase equipment and facilitate teachers’ professional development for the Technology Integration program.

If you have any questions about the aforementioned Consolidated Grant activities for VIDE, please contact Matthew Hensell (matthew.hensell@ed.gov), IAT Program Officer for the Virgin Islands.

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**Data Update**

2017–18 Data Now Available on ED Data Express

The 2017–18 state educational agency (SEA) data for the following programs are now available on ED Data Express:

- Assessment
Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate and Title III SEA data will be available in the near future.

To explore the newly published data visit: [https://eddataexpress.ed.gov/](https://eddataexpress.ed.gov/)

If you know someone who would like to subscribe to the SGPS Newsletter, encourage them to sign up HERE! This link also will allow subscribers to manage their subscriber settings and unsubscribe.

Check out more Department of Education News and Alerts resources, including:

- [ED Review](#)
- [Office of Special Education Programs Update](#)
- [Safe&SupportedED—ED’s Safe and Supportive Schools News Bulletin](#)
- [ED’s Early Learning Newsletter](#)
- [Institute of Education Sciences News Flash Alerts](#)

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