

NJ Council on Developmental Disabilities Position Statement on Education

Position

The New Jersey Council on Developmental Disabilities (NJCDD) endorses the findings of the US Congress regarding the education of children with disabilities contained in “The Developmental Disabilities Assistance & Bill of Rights Act of 2000” and the “Individuals with Disabilities Education Act” (IDEA):

“Disability is a natural part of the human experience and in no way diminishes the right of individuals to participate in or contribute to society. Improving educational results for children with disabilities is an essential element of our national policy of ensuring equality of opportunity, full participation, independent living, and economic self-sufficiency for individuals with disabilities.¹”

NJCDD recognizes that individualized appropriate educational instruction and related services must be provided by highly qualified teachers and service providers who understand their shared responsibility with parents, guardians and administrators for student success. Successful inclusive education requires that education programs prepare all educators and administrators, not just those in ‘special education’, to effectively work with students with a wide range of needs. Schools, classrooms, programs and appropriate transportation must be physically and programmatically accessible to all students.

The Council supports the use of positive behavior interventions and supports on a school-wide basis as an effective way to improve school climate and prevent the use of negative discipline strategies and extreme measures such as restraint and seclusion. The NJCDD opposes the use of any measures that cause physical, emotional, or psychological pain, or discomfort.

Background Information

Education is a lifelong process that assists all individuals with attaining fulfilling, meaningful lives. Successful outcomes of an appropriate education for students with disabilities should be evidenced by employment and/or enrollment in postsecondary education classes, and meaningful engagement in community life. Students with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities (I/DD) have the right to learn with students their own age, with and without disabilities, in the same schools, classrooms, and other educational and extracurricular programs.

The right to an individualized education for students with disabilities is legally mandated by IDEA. Under IDEA, every child with a disability that impacts his or her ability to learn is entitled to a “free appropriate public education” (FAPE) in the least restrictive environment. Students with I/DD must be provided opportunities for inclusive and integrated academic and vocational instruction, and evidence-informed supports. A continuum of alternative placements must also be considered.

The importance of student participation in their own education and individualized education plan (IEP) development cannot be over-emphasized. Individualized, student-centered approaches used in IEP development are important to the achievement of meaningful outcomes and successful transitions to adult life.

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