

EQUITABLE ACCESS AND PARTICIPATION IN PART C GENERAL EDUCATION PROVISIONS ACT (GEPA, 427)

The Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (the Department) is the lead agency responsible for implementing Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Missouri's early intervention program, First Steps, provides equitable access and participation for all infants and toddlers with disabilities and their families who are referred to, and served by the First Steps program, as well as for early intervention service providers and the general public.

It is the policy of the Department not to discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, age, or disability in its programs or employment practices as required by Title VI and VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Age Discrimination Act of 1975 and Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. The Department ensures the First Steps program is a statewide system of early intervention services that provides an environment without discrimination.

A state interagency coordinating council provides advice and assistance to the Department in order to identify and address any barriers that may hinder equitable access to First Steps services. One such barrier is the economically diverse population of infants and toddlers with disabilities and their families in Missouri. To ensure equitable access to and participation in early intervention services, the Department takes the following steps:

1. Infants and toddlers referred for early intervention receive a timely, multidisciplinary evaluation to determine eligibility for early intervention services.
2. Infants and toddlers determined eligible for early intervention services receive services in accordance with the child's Individualized Family Service Plan.
3. The Department conducts regular data monitoring of economic and racial diversity in infants and toddlers receiving early intervention services.
4. The Department applies the nondiscrimination policy to contracted administrators and/or service providers.
5. Documents are translated, at the state and/or local level, into other languages and formats as needed.
6. All workshops and conferences sponsored by the Department are located in accessible facilities.
7. The Department conducts diversity training for all staff.

At the local level, each contractor will assure equitable access to and participation in the Part C program as part of contractual obligations.