



BUDGET UNCERTAINTY IN SCHOOL DISTRICTS: A TIME FOR VIGILANCE BY PARENTS

The current budget cycles in federal, state, and local governments may affect all students in special education. While some districts will be affected more than others, every parent of a child with special needs must be prepared to carefully observe and evaluate any changes in the programs for their children with disabilities in their schools. Some of the circumstances which might affect the educational programs for children with disabilities could include the following, some or all of which could occur without advance notice to parents:

- Reduced numbers of classroom aides and/or personal care assistants
- Less experienced teachers, as more experienced staff are encouraged to take early retirement
- A reduction in the number of therapy sessions offered as part of IEPs
- Larger class sizes in both regular education and special education
- A reduction in after school programs, including tutoring and child care
- Reduction in extracurricular activities
- Longer periods of time on school buses going to and from school
- Reluctance to recognize problem behaviors and the need to conduct comprehensive Functional Assessments of Behavior and create Behavior Management Plans
- Request for waivers of Reevaluations or to conduct IEPs without full meetings of all staff
- Reduction of Extended School Year services
- Reluctance to identify some of students identified for special education who are only in limited need of Individualized Education Plans or Service Plans.

Naturally, careful vigilance of school programs by parents of children with disabilities is always critical, but in these challenging times, it is especially necessary to maintain a close watch on the development of school programs for these children.

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