



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
OFFICE OF POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION

THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY

GEN-11-01

JAN 18 2011

Dear Accrediting Agency Executive Director:

This communication serves to make you aware of new provisions under title IV of the Higher Education Act, as amended (HEA), that affect accrediting agencies.

The Higher Education Opportunity Act, Pub. L. 110-315, added provisions to the HEA in sections 760 and 766 that enable eligible students with intellectual disabilities to receive Federal Pell Grant, Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant, and Work-Study funds if they are enrolled in an approved program. These programs, which can be degree, certificate, nondegree, or noncertificate programs, are referred to as comprehensive transition and postsecondary (CTP) programs for students with intellectual disabilities (<http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/PLAW-110publ315/pdf/PLAW-110publ315.pdf>).

The regulations governing the eligibility of CTP programs are in 34 CFR Part 668, Subpart O. Under those regulations, an institution that currently participates in the federal student financial aid programs under title IV of the HEA is eligible to apply to have its CTP program determined to be an eligible program for the federal student aid programs. The institution must submit an updated Electronic Application for Approval to Participate in the Title IV Federal Student Aid Programs (E-App) to the Department (34 CFR 600.20). The application must include a detailed description of the CTP program and must indicate how the program meets all of the regulatory requirements for a CTP program.

As noted below, an institution must also notify its accrediting agency of its CTP program. Accrediting agencies are not obligated to take any immediate action in response to this notification letter. However, the CTP program should be included in the self-study an institution prepares for its next comprehensive review and considered by the agency in that comprehensive review for renewal of the institution's accreditation.

The CTP program must:

- (1) (a) Be delivered to students physically attending the institution;
- (b) Be designed to support students with intellectual disabilities who are seeking to continue academic, career and technical, and independent living instruction at an institution of higher education in order to prepare for gainful employment;
- (c) Include an advising and curriculum structure;

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(d) Require students with intellectual disabilities to have at least one-half of their participation in the program, as determined by the institution, focus on academic components through one or more of the following activities:

- i. Taking credit-bearing courses with students without disabilities.
- ii. Auditing or otherwise participating in courses with students without disabilities for which the student does not receive regular academic credit.
- iii. Taking non-credit-bearing, non-degree courses with students without disabilities.
- iv. Participating in internships or work-based training in settings with individuals without disabilities; and

(e) Provide students with intellectual disabilities opportunities to participate in coursework and other activities with students without disabilities.

An institution's application for approval of its CTP program must also include:

- (2) The institution's policy for determining whether a student enrolled in the program is making satisfactory academic progress;
- (3) The number of weeks of instructional time and the number of semester or quarter credit hours or clock hours in the program, including the equivalent credit or clock hours associated with noncredit or reduced credit courses or activities;
- (4) A description of the educational credential offered (e.g., degree or certificate) or identified outcome or outcomes established by the institution for all students enrolled in the program;
- (5) **A copy of the letter or notice sent to the institution's accrediting agency informing the agency of its CTP program. The letter or notice must include a description of the items in paragraphs (1) through (4) of this section.**

The successful implementation of these programs will require CTP program leaders, financial aid administrators, and institutional academic officers to collaborate to ensure that the CTP program is integrated into the overall institutional policies and practices related to title IV participation and accreditation. To learn more about the CTP program and how the program aligns with other institutional programs, and, more generally, about students with intellectual disabilities in higher education, you may consider contacting institutions following the receipt of the notification letter.

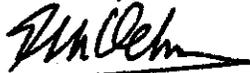
In addition to implementing these changes in the title IV, HEA programs, the Department recently funded 27 five-year discretionary model demonstration grants at institutions of higher education and one national center (Coordinating Center) under the Transition Programs for

Students with Intellectual Disabilities (TPSID). These projects are charged with building knowledge around CTP program components and developing CTP program standards. For more information about them, see <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/tpsid/index.html>. In the future, it is expected that the standards will guide program development and will inform program quality, and we plan to use the model demonstration network to provide support and technical assistance to institutions regarding the title IV process. We welcome your input as we build the knowledge base of CTP programs on topics related to accreditation.

We are planning a technical assistance call with accrediting agencies to provide further information regarding the CTP program. However, in the interim, if you have any questions about this work, please feel free to contact Kay Gilcher at [Kay.Gilcher@ed.gov](mailto:Kay.Gilcher@ed.gov).

Thank you for your participation in this important work.

Sincerely,



Eduardo M. Ochoa  
Assistant Secretary for  
Postsecondary Education