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Budget Cuts Threaten Special Education Services, Survey Shows

Special education coalition calls on Congress to invest in students with disabilities

Arlington, Va., Dec. 3, 2013 — Recent budget cuts at the federal, state and local levels are threatening the availability of special education and related services for students with disabilities, according to a new survey conducted by the **National Coalition on Personnel Shortages in Special Education and Related Services (NCPSSERS)**.

More than 1,000 special education professionals, including special education teachers, special education administrators, and specialized instructional support personnel from all 50 states, reported that funding cuts have impacted their ability to provide services mandated by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), services that must be provided even when states and school districts face economic difficulties.

In 2013, sequestration eliminated more than \$2 billion from the U.S. Department of Education's budget, and cut more than \$600 million from federal special education programs. Some 94 percent of respondents stated that their school district has been impacted by budget cuts over the last year, and an alarming 83 percent of respondents stated that budget cuts have already impacted the delivery of special education services.

“Students with disabilities thrive when they have full access to professionals who have the necessary expertise to address their complex academic, developmental and behavioral needs. With nearly every state already reporting a shortage of special education professionals, recent budget cuts will only threaten the legal and moral right of students with disabilities to receive special education and related services,” stated Kim Hymes, Co-Chair of NCPSSERS and Senior Director for Policy at the Council for Exceptional Children.

The impact of federal, state and local budget cuts on special education is most evident in an increase in caseload; lack of funding to purchase resources such as assistive technology; an increase in class size; and reduced professional development opportunities. In addition, budget cuts have resulted in layoffs and unfilled vacancies, with more than 80 percent of respondents reporting they have “too few personnel to meet the needs of students with disabilities.”

The NCPSSERS survey shows that:

- 94% of respondents state that their school district has been impacted by budget cuts over the last year.
- 83% of respondents state that budget cuts have already impacted the delivery of special education services.
- 78% of respondents state that budget cuts have resulted in an increase in caseload.

National Coalition on Personnel Shortages in Special Education & Related Services
Co-Chairs:

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Sasha Pudelski, AASA, The School Superintendents Association
www.specialedshortages.org

- 61% of respondents state that budget cuts have resulted in an increase in class size.
- 82% of respondents state that there are ‘too few personnel to meet the needs of students with disabilities’ in their school district.
- 61% of respondents state that they work in a high-poverty school/district receiving Title I assistance;
- 30% of respondents state that budget cuts over the last year have been as a result of sequestration.
- 43% of respondents state that budget cuts over the last year have been a combination of sequestration and state/local funding cuts.

With Congress now determining future funding levels and how to address the continued cuts imposed by sequestration, special educators are especially concerned about any further decreases that would continue to threaten services for students with disabilities.

“As a Coalition representing over 30 national organizations, we are calling on Congress to reject any proposal that does not invest in education,” said Sasha Pudelski, Co-Chair of NCPSSERS and Assistant Director for Policy and Advocacy at AASA, The School Superintendents Association. “Any further cuts would have a devastating impact on students and their families who rely on special education and related services.”

For more information about NCPSSERS visit: www.specialedshortages.org

The National Coalition for Personnel Shortages in Special Education and Related Services (NCPSSERS) is a group of more than 30 national organizations committed to sustaining a discussion among all stakeholders on the need for and value of special education, related services, and early intervention; and to identify, disseminate, and support implementation of national, state, and local strategies to remedy personnel shortages and persistent vacancies for the benefit of all children and youth.

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