

### **ED GEPA427 Form**

All activities under the Vermont PDG-Expansion grant will conform to relevant state and federal regulatory requirements, and local, state and federal rulemaking, that ensure equitable access to, and participation in, programs for students, teachers and other program beneficiaries with special needs. This will include all six types of barriers highlighted in the General Provisions Education Act (GEPA): gender, race, national origin, color, disability and age. It will also include sexual orientation.

All Vermont state agencies are committed to a policy of equal opportunity employment. Policies and practices prohibit discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, sex, sexual orientation (as provided by 21 V.S.A. .495), place of birth, age, or physical or mental condition (a person with a qualifying disability) in all employment practices. In recruiting project staff and participating teachers, every effort will be made to encourage employment of people traditionally underrepresented.

In Vermont, more than 73% of preschool children with disabilities participate in inclusive early learning and development programs with typically developing peers. The Vermont Agency of Education Part B Annual Performance Report (2012) states that 73.68% - or 1,349 of the total population of 1,831 children age three to five with IEPs in Vermont - attended a regular early childhood program and received the majority of special education and related services in the regular early childhood program. This is a 2.10% increase from 2011, and exceeds Vermont's target for this indicator of 71.78%. Only 4.81% - or 88 of the total population of 1,831 children age three to five with IEPs - attended a separate special education class, separate school or residential facility. This is a 1.58% decrease from 2011 and exceeds Vermont's target for this indicator of 6.19%.

Vermont has a variety of programs and structures in place that provide culturally and linguistically appropriate outreach and communication related to early learning and development programs.

The Vermont Early Childhood Action Plan, in Result #3, targets cultural and linguistic competence as a key goal. It articulates a variety of specific action steps to build increased cultural and linguistic competency into workforce development activities.

In rural communities, neighbors and local service providers know where isolated families live. Vermont will ensure outreach to isolated or hard-to-reach families through its extensive network of local partners including LEAs and Head Start programs.

Vermont received a LAUNCH (Linking Actions for Unmet Needs in Children's Health) grant from the federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) in 2012. A collaboration between Vermont Department of Health and the Building Bright Futures Council to enhance the quality and availability of existing programs and services for children birth through eight, Vermont's Project LAUNCH is being piloted in Chittenden County, which includes Vermont's most concentrated areas of diversity. The project has built a strong partnership among community partners in the Chittenden region working together to employ innovative cross sector strategies to engage and support families that are New Americans and others of diverse cultural backgrounds.

Vermont's LEAs – supervisory unions and supervisory districts – and Head Start programs are subgrantees under this application. Public schools provide outreach and services to linguistically and culturally diverse children and families, including in our state preschool program. Examples include the provision of licensed ESL (English as a Second Language) teachers, translators and culturally sensitive and responsible curricula. Targeted family engagement activities and community events are provided to culturally and linguistically diverse families. These activities are in addition to the daily check-ins and regular meetings scheduled with all families of children enrolled in the public school based PreK classes.

In a rural state like Vermont, local community partners are critical to disseminating information and outreach for new and existing initiatives. All of these partners provide services in culturally and linguistically appropriate manner, or assure appropriate referrals.

Vermont has seven federally funded Head Start programs serving children and families living in poverty across the state. All seven Head Start programs will be subgrantees under the PDG-Expansion grant. All seven Head Start programs engage parents in governance decisions through parental participation on Policy Councils. This includes cultural and linguistic competence.

At least ten percent (10%) of the total number of children actually enroll by each Head Start grantee must consist of children with disabilities who are determined to be eligible for special education and related services.

As part of their activities in Professional Learning Communities, subgrantees will be encouraged to create diverse leadership and will also be encouraged to identify and work with local stakeholders who have expertise in the cultural strengths, challenges, and needs in their communities. This would include, among others, military families, refugees from a variety of countries, migrant families, LGBTQ families and youth, and rural youth.