

Trump Administration Yanks Funds From Dozens Of Special Education Programs

by Michelle Diamant | September 11, 2025

The U.S. Department of Education is canceling millions of dollars in grants for special education teacher training, parent resource centers and more saying that they don't align with Trump administration priorities.

The agency's Office of Special Education Programs terminated grants for 25 programs funded under Part D of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. The money, totaling more than \$14.8 million, was for the fiscal year beginning Oct. 1 and was expected by state education departments, nonprofits, universities and other entities across 16 states.

The Education Department's Rehabilitation Services Administration also ended another nine grants for disability-focused initiatives worth over \$3.5 million.

Notifications about the canceled grants cited language in the funding applications referencing diversity, equity, inclusion, racism and similar.

"The department has undertaken a review of grants and determined that the grant specified above provides funding for programs that reflect the prior administration's priorities and policy preferences and conflict with those of the current administration," notices sent in late August and early September state.

One program was cited for indicating that staff would be trained to "improve the degree to which we offer culturally-competent, anti-racist services." Another said it would ensure that activities "emphasize cross-cultural and linguistic and cultural competence."

“The Trump administration is no longer allowing taxpayer dollars to go out the door on autopilot — we are evaluating every federal grant to ensure they are in line with the administration’s policy of prioritizing merit, fairness and excellence in education. The department re-awarded over 500 IDEA Part D grants and non-continued fewer than 35 grants that do not align with the administration’s priorities,” said Savannah Newhouse, Education Department press secretary. “The non-continued grant funds are not being cut; they are being re-invested immediately into high quality programs that better serve special needs students.”

Education Department officials did not respond to questions about how the funds are being reallocated.

Disability advocates warned last month that the Education Department could be preparing to terminate hundreds of IDEA Part D grants.

“We were anticipating hundreds of cuts and it appears as though our advocacy was able to push back on a lot of those,” said Carrie Woodcock, executive director of the Maine Parent Federation, a parent training and information center that receives Part D funding.

However, Woodcock said she and others have been told that cancellations will be “an annual occurrence.”

Stephanie Smith Lee, who served as director of the Office of Special Education Programs under President George W. Bush, said there is “simply no precedent” for any administration canceling so many IDEA Part D grants all at once in the middle of a grant cycle.

In many cases, the language that the Education Department cited in the grant applications was required by IDEA or expected under the Biden administration, said Lee who is now co-director of policy and advocacy at the National Down Syndrome Congress.

“These cuts touch every corner of the special education system — parent centers, personnel development, doctoral training and teacher training,” she said, noting that some terminations affected organizations with decades of expertise. “Losing those resources doesn’t just hurt institutions, it directly hurts students with disabilities and the families who rely on them.”

The canceled grants include funding for community parent resource centers, preparing special education teachers and related service providers, Braille and interpreter training and programs supporting those who are deafblind, among other initiatives.

In Wisconsin, for example, the state’s Department of Public Instruction learned late last week that two grants would be canceled, one for personnel development and another to serve 170 students who have both vision and hearing loss. The grants were both in the middle of a five-year grant cycle.

“Make no mistake, losing these funds will directly impact our ability to serve some of our most vulnerable kids,” said State Superintendent Jill Underly. “Wisconsin had planned work with these funds that includes direct support for deafblind learners and their families and efforts to recruit and retain new special education teachers. We are asking for a reconsideration to protect these valuable projects.”

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