

Special Education

The Division of Special Education is responsible for ensuring that the 17,000 plus students with disabilities, ages 3 through 18, are provided a free appropriate public education (FAPE) in accordance with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and state laws. Montana's special education programs have received national recognition for excellence.

The Special Education Division:

- Allocates over \$43 million in state special education funds to districts and special education cooperatives for support of special education and related services to more than 17,000 students with disabilities.
- Distributes over \$200,000 per biennium to schools to assist in meeting the special education obligations of students with significant needs – funds that are remaining in the allocation for educational services in the residential treatment facilities noted in the next bullet. Access to these funds is not based on disability but needs that are beyond a district's capability to meet appropriately.
- Oversees contracts with Shodair Children's Hospital, Acadia Residential Treatment Center, Intermountain Children's Home and Yellowstone Boys and Girls Ranch for the purpose of providing education services to Montana children and youth who are in residence at each of the facilities. The biennial allocation is \$830,000.
- Assists schools with understanding their responsibilities under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act as they relate to providing access to school services for students with physical and mental impairments. The OPI does not have monitoring responsibilities for these services and provides guidance to schools and parents as a collateral benefit.