

**NOTICE TO ALL APPLICANTS:
EQUITY FOR STUDENTS, EDUCATORS, AND OTHER PROGRAM
BENEFICIARIES**

Section 427 of the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA) ([20 U.S.C. 1228a](#)) applies to applicants for grant awards under this program.

ALL APPLICANTS FOR NEW GRANT AWARDS MUST INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION IN THEIR APPLICATIONS TO ADDRESS THIS PROVISION IN ORDER TO RECEIVE FUNDING UNDER THIS PROGRAM.

Please respond to the following requests for information:

1. Describe how your entity's existing mission, policies, or commitments ensure equitable access to, and equitable participation in, the proposed project or activity.

Georgia's Part C Lead Agency's mission is to identify and provide services to all young children in Georgia who may be at risk for developmental delays or disabilities, in order to promote their healthy growth and development. To ensure equitable access and participation in the program, several policies and procedures are in place including:

Accessibility: The Part C Lead Agency ensures that services are accessible to all families, regardless of their background, identity, or geographic location. This includes using Georgia's demographic information to confirm that the Part C program is inclusive to all families. To address accessibility, the program offers promotional materials in the most common languages found in Georgia (i.e. Spanish and Korean), and ensures that facilities are physically accessible.

Equity: The Part C Lead Agency prioritizes equitable access to services, particularly for under-served and marginalized communities. The Part C Lead Agency conducts outreach to ensure that families in these communities are aware of the program and its services, and that they have the resources and support necessary to participate fully. The Part C Lead Agency's child find activities target under-served groups across the state of Georgia including groups such as migrant populations. Additionally, the program offers services to all families at no cost, specifically services related to the eligibility/determination process.

Professional development: The Part C Lead Agency ensures that its staff members receive ongoing professional development that includes training on equity, diversity, and inclusion.

Evaluation and continuous improvement: The Part C Lead Agency continues to partner with Georgia's State Interagency Coordinating Council (SICC) and other stakeholders to research and address any potential biases or barriers for families receiving services from the Part C Program.

2. Based on your proposed project or activity, what barriers may impede equitable access and participation of students, educators, or other beneficiaries?

The Part C Lead Agency consulted with our stakeholder group in March 2023 and identified barriers that impact the equitable access to our program. The barriers identified are explained below in detail.

- In our state's rural and mountainous areas, our program has difficulty providing services recommended by the IFSP team due to the lack of providers in those areas. Although our metro areas struggle with lack of providers as well, the Part C Lead Agency has identified that the need is greater in the rural and mountainous areas.
- Another barrier that was identified involved the Part C Lead Agency's lack of brochures/pamphlets in a family's native language, specifically the lessor known languages. The Part C Lead Agency does have programmatic information available in some of the more common languages in Georgia; however, it is more challenging to develop information in those languages that are not as common in the state.
- The Part C Lead Agency has also identified both the personnel and provider shortage as a barrier. Across the state, the Local Part C Program staff and the contracted provider network is experiencing a shortage that directly impacts the timeliness and consistency of the services that are provided to families.
- Socio economic status was another barrier identified. The Part C Lead Agency discovered that some families have difficulty securing a safe space within their natural environment to receive services.
- The Part C Lead Agency also has identified barriers within its partnership with the Care Management Organization (CMO) and Medicaid. The Part C Lead Agency continues to collaborate with the Department of Community Health (DCH) to strategize ways to decrease these barriers and support contract providers.
- The information that family's sometimes receive from local medical offices and/or pediatrician offices has also been identified as a barrier by the Part C Lead Agency. Misinformation such as medical professionals not understanding the Part C Program, available services, and/or the benefits of services from the Part C Program often delays the supports and services that families could receive.

3. Based on the barriers identified, what steps will you take to address such barriers to equitable access and participation in the proposed project or activity?

The Part C Lead Agency, along with our stakeholder group, has developed steps to address all barriers related to families ability to receive recommended services and/or support from the Part C Program. Those steps are explained below in detail.

- The Provider Relations Manager and the Early Intervention Training Coordinator from the Part C Lead Agency are collaborating to develop and implement a provider recruitment plan to address our state's provider shortage. Input from the State Interagency Coordinating Council (SICC) and other stakeholders will be requested and included in the development of the recruitment plan. This plan will focus on both the recruitment of new providers and the retention of providers that are currently contracted with the Part C Lead Agency. In October 2020, the Part C Lead Agency partnered with the Georgia Department of Education (DOE) for the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) 325P Recruitment and Retention grant. The Part C Lead Agency uses the funds from this grant to provide additional professional development trainings for all providers contracted with the Part C Lead Agency.
- The Part C Lead Agency continues to implement a hybrid version of teleintervention. Teleintervention supports all of our families who are in demographic areas with very few or no available providers to conduct eligibility evaluations and/or provide the services recommended on their Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP).
- The Part C Lead Agency continues to communicate and collaborate with the Department of Community Health (DCH) to determine best practices to address all Care Management Organization (CMO) and Medicaid related concerns. The Part C Lead Agency and DCH has ongoing scheduled meetings to discuss these concerns.
- In collaboration with the University of Georgia (UGA), the Part C Lead Agency is conducting an environmental scan to gain a better understanding of the population the Part C Program services.
- With support from our stakeholder group, the Part C Lead Agency is developing a process to support our Local Part C Program's ability to provide community outreach and education resources to local medical practices. In December 2022, the Part C Lead Agency provided the Local Part C Programs additional funding to increase family and community awareness of the Part C Program.
- The Part C Lead Agency is researching options for families to receive their recommended services in a safe space by collaborating with Local Part C programs and other sites within the family's community to coordinate a family's ability to utilize available space.
- The Part C Lead Agency is researching and developing a plan to create and distribute programmatic information (i.e., Part C Program brochures, pamphlets, and booklets) in languages outside of the most common languages in Georgia. Communication between the Part C Lead Agency and the Department of Public Health (DPH) Communications team will determine next steps on how to address this barrier.

4. What is your timeline, including targeted milestones, for addressing these identified barriers?

The Part C Lead Agency is currently working on steps to address all identified barriers related to families ability to receive recommended services and/or support from the Part C Program. In the process of identifying, addressing, and setting targeted milestones, the Part C Lead Agency found that barriers that involve outside agencies/organizations are taking longer to resolve than those barriers that the Part C Lead Agency can address independently. The targeted milestones developed by the Part C Lead Agency are explained below in detail.

- The Part C Lead Agency is currently engaging and implementing teleintervention, which supports families in demographics that have very few and/or no contract providers available to deliver recommended services.
- The continued collaboration between the Part C Lead Agency and the Department of Community Health (DCH), assists the Part C Lead Agency in addressing the barriers with the Care Management Organization (CMO) and Medicaid. The Part C Lead Agency has identified this barrier as being a long-term and ongoing goal of the Part C Program.
- The targeted timeline for the development and availability of programmatic communication (i.e., Part C Program brochures, pamphlets, and booklets) in languages outside of the most common languages in Georgia is Summer 2024.
- The Part C Lead Agency's targeted timeline for supporting families with identifying safe spaces to receive services is Winter 2023.
- With assistance from our stakeholder group, the Part C Lead Agency has set October 2023 as the targeted timeline to address the barrier related to misinformation families receive from medical professionals.
- The Part C Lead Agency in collaboration with the University of Georgia (UGA) has begun its research and implementation of the Part C Program's environmental scan. The targeted timeline for the Local Part C Lead Agency to receive the results from the environmental scan is December 2023.
- The continued collaboration between the Part C Lead Agency's Provider Relations Manager and Early Intervention Training Coordinator as well as the support from the State Interagency Coordinating Council (SICC) and other stakeholders assists the Part C Lead Agency in addressing the provider shortage barrier. The Part C Lead Agency has identified this barrier as being a long-term and ongoing goal of the Part C Program.

Notes:

1. Applicants are not required to have mission statements or policies that align with equity in order to submit an application.
2. Applicants may identify any barriers that may impede equitable access and participation in the proposed project or activity, including, but not limited to, barriers based on economic disadvantage, gender, race, ethnicity, color, national origin, disability, age, language, migrant status, rural status, homeless status or housing insecurity, pregnancy, parenting, or caregiving status, and sexual orientation.
3. Applicants may have already included some or all of this required information in the narrative sections of their applications or their State Plans. In responding to this requirement, for each question, applicants may provide a cross-reference to the section(s) and page number(s) in their applications or State Plans that includes the information responsive to that question on this form or may restate that information on this form.

Paperwork Burden Statement

According to the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, no persons are required to respond to a collection of information unless such collection displays a valid OMB control number. The valid OMB control number for this information collection is 1894-0005. Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 3 hours per response, including time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering, and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. The obligation to respond to this collection is required to obtain or retain a benefit. If you have any comments concerning the accuracy of the time estimate or suggestions for improving this individual collection, send your comments to ICDocketMgr@ed.gov and reference OMB Control Number 1894-0005. All other comments or concerns regarding the status of your individual form may be addressed to either (a) the person listed in the FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT section in the competition Notice Inviting Applications, or (b) your assigned program officer.