



# Illinois State Board of Education

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**James T. Meeks**  
*Chairman*

**Tony Smith, Ph.D.**  
*State Superintendent of Education*

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Dear CPS Staff, Parents and Families:

We hope that the first two months of the school year have been successful in your homes and classrooms, and that you have settled into your back-to-school routine. We wanted to take this opportunity to share the findings of an investigation that the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) conducted into the special education policies and practices of Chicago Public Schools, and the corrective action that ISBE will be putting into place over the next three school years.

## **The Public Inquiry**

The investigation referenced above was called the Public Inquiry into Special Education Practices at CPS, and it was conducted by a team of three special education attorneys. All information regarding the Public Inquiry can be found on the ISBE [website](#). The Public Inquiry Team found that CPS engaged in policies, procedures, or practices that were inconsistent with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2001 (IDEA), the federal law that governs special education and provides protections to students with disabilities. As a result, an 11-page [Corrective Action Report](#) was adopted by ISBE in May of 2018. The Corrective Action Report describes ISBE's findings that CPS violated the law by implementing policies and procedures related to special education budgeting, the computerized IEP system, and data collection requirements. As a result of these violations, families may have been improperly denied transportation, paraprofessional (SECA / special education classroom assistant) support, therapeutic day school placements, extended school year (ESY / summer school for students with disabilities), eligibility for a specific learning disability, or other educational services.

## **The ISBE Appointed CPS Monitor**

The Corrective Action Plan requires that ISBE assign a Monitor to oversee the Corrective Action Report and serve as a liaison between ISBE and CPS regarding special education. Both parents and CPS staff can reach out to the ISBE Monitor by email: [isbemonitor@isbe.net](mailto:isbemonitor@isbe.net) or by visiting the Monitor's website at <https://www.isbe.net/Pages/ISBE-Monitor.aspx>. The Monitor can answer questions for parents and staff and investigate concerns. However, parents who have disputes with CPS regarding their child's IEP should follow ISBE's dispute resolution procedures, such as filing due process or filing a complaint. Information regarding dispute resolution can be found [here](#). Nothing the Monitor does will change or interfere with a [Parent's Procedural Safeguards](#). ISBE strongly encourages the CPS community to contact the ISBE Monitor when concerns arise. Neither CPS nor ISBE can address concerns unless we know about them.

Per the Corrective Action Plan, this school year will include the following action items, events, and resources:

## Staff Training

ISBE began training staff regarding the Public Inquiry at the beginning of the school year. More training will occur in November. The materials for the staff training can be found at <https://www.isbe.net/Documents/ISBE-CPS-Teacher-Training-201808.pdf>.

## Parent Resources

1. **ISBE Parent Guide.** ISBE's Parent Guide, "[Educational Rights and Responsibilities: Understanding Special Education in Illinois](#)," is currently being revised to reflect the most up-to-date legal guidance and best practices in Illinois, but it remains accessible via the ISBE website during the revision process. Additionally, ISBE publishes a list of low-cost legal providers to assist parents in navigating the legal process. That can be found [here](#) and is attached to this email.
2. **Updated Procedural Manual.** An important part of the Corrective Action has been for CPS to update its ODLSS Procedural Manual to align with current and corrected ODLSS policies and procedures and the CPS electronic IEP system. The 2018-19 ODLSS Procedural Manual is finalized and can be accessed [here](#). ISBE and ODLSS are also partnering to develop a more parent-friendly Procedural Manual reference sheet, such as a Parent FAQ document, which will be forthcoming.
3. **Parent Trainings.** CPS and ISBE have scheduled several parent trainings for the upcoming year. There is more information about those trainings in the attached fliers. The materials for the first training session can be found at <https://www.isbe.net/Documents/Parents-Rights-Training-ISBE.pdf>.

## Student Specific Corrective Action Per the Public Inquiry

Since the Public Inquiry reviewed and found that there were problems occurring throughout the *system* of special education at CPS, the focus now in the Corrective Action Plan requires a closer look at exactly which students were harmed by CPS' system and determine how to make these students whole. ISBE is partnering with CPS and Parent Advocacy organizations to develop a way to identify students who may be eligible for Student Specific Corrective Action. We will distribute more information to the CPS community when that system is developed. In the meantime, if you believe that your child was harmed by the systemic violations identified in the Public Inquiry, you may have the right to file for due process or file a complaint with ISBE's special education division.

The findings of the Public Inquiry provide an opportunity to partner with CPS to ensure that students with disabilities receive a high-quality education tailored to their individual needs. The Corrective Action Plan has identified many changes that are needed for that to happen. We recognize that change does not happen overnight. For that reason, ISBE is committed to remaining involved at CPS for at least the next three school years. We hope our involvement will assist CPS in developing a system of special education that meets the high expectations of the state and the CPS community.

Sincerely,



Stephanie E. Jones  
General Counsel



Laura Boedeker  
Assistant General Counsel and ISBE Monitor