



## Information for Arizona Families Regarding Changes at the U.S. Department of Education

### Recent and Relevant Changes

- September 26, 2024 – A group of 17 states sued the United States government, starting the lawsuit [\*Texas v. Becerra \(Kennedy\)\*](#), which threatens the continued existence of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act.
- March 11, 2025 – The U.S. Department of Education initiated a reduction in force, eliminating about half of the Department's staff.
- March 12, 2025 – The U.S. Department of Education confirmed it had closed seven of the twelve regional offices of the Office for Civil Rights. Arizona's regional office, which is in Denver, is still open, but has lost about a third of its staff and has had to absorb cases from the other regions where offices are closed.
- March 20, 2025 – President Trump signed an [executive order](#) to start dismantling the U.S. Department of Education. Legally, only Congress can shut down the Department or move key functions to other agencies.
- March 21, 2025 – President Trump made statements indicating plans to move programs and funds for students with disabilities and nutrition programs to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, but no formal action or announcement has been made regarding this.
- March 27, 2025 – The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services announced dramatic restructuring, including eliminating about 10,000 staff positions and reducing regional offices from ten to five.

- April 3, 2025 – The U.S. Department of Education sent a memo to State Education Agencies requiring them to certify their compliance with antidiscrimination obligations to continue receiving financial assistance, specifically citing the decision in *Student v. Harvard* and referencing Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) programs.
- April 23, 2025 – President Trump signed an [executive order](#) regarding discipline practices in schools, requiring the Secretary of Education and the Attorney General to issue new guidance to schools regarding their obligation not to engage in discriminatory school discipline, specifically referencing “discriminatory-equity-ideology-based school discipline.”

## What Hasn't Changed?

- The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), where IEPs come from, is still in force. Changing or eliminating this law would take an act of Congress or a judge finding it unconstitutional.
- Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, a civil rights law that protects students with IEPs and other students with disabilities from discrimination, is still in force. Changing or eliminating this law would take an act of Congress or a judge finding it unconstitutional.
- Funding for IDEA has not changed. Changing this would take an act of Congress.
- Arizona students with IEPs still have access to all state-level dispute resolution processes, including facilitated IEPs, mediation, state complaints, and due process complaints. Learn more about these options [here](#).

## What Has Happened In Response To These Changes?

- [Advocacy organizations](#) and [states](#) have filed lawsuits against the federal government asking judges to pause the mass firings and declare the dismantling of the Department to be illegal. At this time, no court orders have yet been issued in these cases.
- Arizona's Superintendent of Public Instruction Tom Horne has [stated](#) that he agrees with closing the U.S. Department of Education. Superintendent Horne believes eliminating the oversight the Department exercises over the state will save money that can go to things like increasing teacher pay.

- [Advocacy organizations](#) and [states](#) have filed lawsuits against the federal government asking judges to prevent the U.S. Department of Education from acting on its threat to withhold federal funding from schools that do not submit the form certifying compliance with antidiscrimination requirements. Judges in [New Hampshire](#), [Maryland](#), and [Washington, D.C.](#) blocked the anti-DEI guidance from taking effect on Thursday, April 24, 2025.

## What Does This Mean For My Child With A Disability?

- Students' IEPs and 504 Plans continue to be valid and enforceable via most existing dispute resolution processes (see below for information on changes to the OCR complaint option).
- Right now, schools continue to receive special education funding from the U.S. Department of Education.
- Although the U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights (OCR) still exists, its staff has been dramatically reduced. Parents who file complaints with OCR alleging a school has discriminated against their children on the basis of disability have historically faced long wait times due to understaffed/under-resourced OCR offices. Given the reduction in force that took place in March, parents should expect even longer wait times in the OCR complaint process going forward. Additionally, the current administration's priorities are likely to impact which complaints are investigated and the findings of investigations.

## What's Next?

- Monitor progress of the lawsuits aimed at preventing the closure of the Department of Education and eliminating Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act.
- Monitor attempts to move IDEA administration/funding to the Department of Health and Human Services.
- Look for Congressional action proposing to eliminate the Department of Education officially, move functions (such as IDEA administration) to other Departments, or to distribute funding to states via [block grants](#) (sending money to states without requiring any oversight or reporting of how the money is used).
- Learn your rights under IDEA and Section 504 by reviewing materials on [DRAZ's website](#).
- Follow DRAZ and ADDPC on social media for action alerts and updates.