



**Request for Applications:
Special Education Professional
Development and Support for
Direct Services**

April 29, 2022




TABLE OF CONTENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS	1
STATEMENT OF PURPOSE	2
STATEMENT OF NEED	2
DESCRIPTION OF NEED	2
Professional Development for Specialized Support	2
Direct Services	3
Certified Providers for Students with Disabilities	3
Professional Development to Support Delivery of Direct Services	3
APPLICATION PROCESS	4
Phase I: Initial Screening (Spring/Summer 2022)	4
Phase II: Review (Early Fall 2022)	4
Phase III: Publication (Fall 2022)	4
APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS	4
Section I: Application Cover Sheet	5
Section II: Professional Development for Specialized Support	6
Section III: Direct Services - Certified Providers for Students with Disabilities	7
Section IV: Direct Services - Professional Development to Support Delivery of Direct Services	8
ATTACHMENTS	9
Attachment A-1: Areas of Specialized Support Definitions	9
Attachment B-1: Evaluation Criteria for Application Submissions	11

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

Every day in Louisiana, educators are committed to ensuring that every child has the opportunity to grow and thrive. To support educators, the Department has issued vendor guides, such as the [Louisiana PD Vendor Guide](#) and the [English Learner \(EL\) Professional Development Guide](#), to facilitate partnerships between school systems and vetted organizations. Students with disabilities often present unique needs that are not academic in nature and arise due to their disabilities. These needs are not always addressed through universal support alone.

To address the unique needs that students with disabilities often encounter, the Department developed the [Partnerships for Success Guide](#). The Partnerships for Success Guide provides school systems and early childhood community networks with a list of organizations that can deliver high-quality professional development in the area of specialized support, organizations to provide direct services, and professional development to school-based direct service providers to continue service delivery during times of distance learning.

STATEMENT OF NEED

The Department releases an annual Request for Applications for local and national organizations to apply as potential participants in our Partnerships for Success guide. Organizations in the Partnerships for Success guide collaborate with Louisiana schools and early childhood community networks to support the complex learning needs of students with disabilities. Partnership applications are being accepted and evaluated in one or both of the following areas:

1. **Professional development in areas of specialized support** that provides strategies and tools, to be implemented by all educators, that remove barriers ensuring students, including young children, with disabilities spend the majority of time reading, speaking, writing and solving curriculum based tasks.
2. **Direct services** to support school systems in providing the direct services required to implement a student's individualized educational program, through one or both of the following:
 - a. **Certified Providers** that use alternative and innovative methods to deliver direct services.
 - b. **Professional Development to Support Delivery of Direct Services** that improves the capacity of school system-based direct service providers to deliver direct services through alternate (e.g. distance learning) delivery methods.

DESCRIPTION OF NEED

Professional Development for Specialized Support

All children should spend the majority of their time reading, speaking, writing and solving curriculum-based tasks. However, students with disabilities often face additional challenges because their success depends on educators who can deliver specialized support in the areas of communication, assistive technology, functional skills, sensory and environment, and executive functioning (additional details in application attachment A-1). In Louisiana, over sixty percent of individual educational programs for students with disabilities identify needs in one or more areas of specialized support. Without educators implementing such support, students with disabilities are unable to meaningfully engage in the classroom each day.

The ability of educators to effectively deliver specialized support is critical to improving outcomes for students with disabilities. To provide specialized support, educators need targeted professional development. This need was expressed

during the 2021-2022 [School System Planning Process](#), where over 100 school systems requested additional professional development for specialized support from organizations in the Partnerships for Success Guide. When educators are equipped with knowledge and strategies in these areas of specialized support, they can more adequately address the unique needs of students with disabilities and ensure meaningful engagement in the classroom every day. Organizations in the Partnerships for Success Guide are critical partners in supporting school systems and early childhood centers with equipping educators with the ability to deliver specialized support.

Direct Services

Certified Providers for Students with Disabilities

Nearly forty percent of students with disabilities in Louisiana receive direct services from a certified provider as part of their individualized education program. Ninety percent of the services needed by these students fall under speech therapy, occupational therapy and adapted physical education. These direct services assist students with disabilities in engaging in the classroom every day. While these services are critical in both protecting students' civil rights and ensuring they can grow and thrive, special education leaders across Louisiana express problems with hiring and retaining certified direct service providers. To assist school systems in overcoming this challenge, the Department developed the Partnerships for Success Guide, an informal inventory of organizations staffed with certified providers that utilize alternative and innovative methods to deliver Direct services to students with disabilities.

Professional Development to Support Delivery of Direct Services

Special education leaders also face the challenge of navigating the delivery of direct services for students with disabilities across complex and individualized student needs. Consistent delivery of direct services can be challenging year-round and is especially complicated during emergency situations that lead to extended school closure. The Department provides guidance for direct service delivery such as the [Continuous Education for Students with Disabilities Direct Services Guide](#). Nonetheless, school systems need organizations that can provide direct service providers with the training and technical assistance they need to effectively deliver direct services across alternate (e.g. distance learning) delivery methods. The Direct Services section of the Partnerships for Success Guide lists vetted organizations that can assist school systems and community networks in managing the delivery of these services to best support the needs of students with disabilities.

APPLICATION PROCESS

Phase I: Initial Screening (Spring/Summer 2022)

The Department accepts applications from organizations and conducts an initial screening to ensure submissions align to our description of need.

Phase II: Review (Early Fall 2022)

The Department will review applications to ensure they meet criteria for inclusion into the Partnerships for Success Guide. Organizations that do not meet eligibility criteria will be notified.

Phase III: Publication (Fall 2022)

Organizations that meet established criteria will be notified through email that their application has been approved and they are eligible to be included in the Partnerships for Success Guide. School systems will be provided with assistance from the Department to effectively utilize the Partnerships for Success Guide.

APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS

Applicants interested in being included in the Louisiana Partnerships for Success Guide must submit an application for quality review and approval. All applicants must complete section one of the application. In addition:

- Applicants applying in the area of **Professional Development for Specialized Support** must complete and submit section two of the application.
- Applicants applying in the area of **Direct Services - Certified Providers for Students with Disabilities** must complete and submit section three of the application.
- Applicants applying in the area of **Direct Services - Professional Development to Support Delivery of Direct Services** must complete and submit section four of the application.
- Applicants interested in applying to **all areas** must complete and submit the entire application, sections one through four.

All completed applications should be submitted through the Google form: [Request for Applications: Special Education Professional Development and Direct Services](#). For your convenience, provided here is a [PDF copy of the Google form](#) used for submission. While we encourage and prefer early submissions the application will close **Friday, July 1, 2022**. If you need assistance, or would like to discuss the application and application process in greater detail please contact specialeducation@la.gov.

Section I: Application Cover Sheet

This section of the application is intended to provide a brief overview of your organization and the types of services your organization can provide to support students with disabilities in Louisiana.

Organization Name:

Organization Contact Person:

Email:

Phone:

Brief Vendor Description: (No more than 4-5 sentences)

Identify the areas of specialized support for which your organization provides **professional development**. More details regarding areas of specialized support can be found in application attachment A-1. (select any or all that apply)

- Communication
- Assistive Technology
- Functional Skills
- Sensory Environment
- Executive Functioning and Self Regulation

Identify the areas in which your organization can provide **direct services**. (select any or all that apply)

- Speech Language Pathology Services
- Occupational Therapy
- Physical Therapy
- Adapted Physical Education
- Social Work Services
- Counseling Services
- School Psychological Services
- School Health Services

Identify the areas in which your organization can provide **professional development** to support the delivery of direct services through distance learning platforms. (select any or all that apply)

- Speech Language Pathology Services
- Occupational Therapy
- Physical Therapy
- Adapted Physical Education
- Social Work Services
- Counseling Services
- School Psychological Services
- School Health Services

Indicate any proprietary or publicly available virtual platforms your organization's **professional development** addresses to support the delivery of direct services during periods of distance learning.

Section II: Professional Development for Specialized Support

The Department would like to ensure school systems and early childhood community networks have access to partnership services that can provide high-quality professional development to equip educators with strategies and tools to provide specialized support to students, including young children, with disabilities. Outline the types of professional development your organization can provide to educators by responding to the following prompts for up to five unique professional development services your organization can provide to school systems.

- Title of service provided
- Description of services provided
- Areas of specialized support addressed (see application attachment A-1 for further details)
- Grade band supported
 - K-12
 - Early Childhood
- Method of delivery
 - Face to face, virtual, blended, coaching, etc.
- Type of support (Initial or ongoing)
- Maximum number of participants
- Cost

Describe your current experience providing high-quality professional development, based on professional learning standards, to school systems to support students in areas of specialized support. Be sure to include all elements bulleted below. (No more than one page.)

- Describe the number of school systems, including the geographic reach and school system type (traditional, charter) your organization has partnered with in the last three years.
- Provide evidence that your organization's professional development has improved outcomes for students with disabilities.
- Describe how the professional development provided by your organization is anchored in evidence-based adult learning strategies.
- Upload a small sample of materials used to deliver professional development which may include but is not limited to slide decks, accompanying handouts, and presenter notes.
- If your organization can support early childhood, upload a small sample of materials used to deliver professional development which may include but is not limited to slide decks, accompanying handouts, and presenter notes.
- Upload curricula vitae or resumes of key personnel responsible for development or delivery of professional development.

Section III: Direct Services - Certified Providers for Students with Disabilities

The Department seeks to ensure that all students, including young children, with disabilities receive the direct services they need to make progress in their education. With staffing trends across the country and Louisiana, many school systems have turned to partner organizations with innovative services delivery models, such as virtual service delivery, to provide some direct services. The Department collects and reviews this information to create an informal inventory of direct service providers. Below, please provide the information for *each* category of service your organization can provide to school systems in Louisiana.

- Category of services provided
- Description of organization's service delivery model, including details regarding staffing status, contractual conditions for services, and the settings in which you are able to provide services
- Method of delivery
 - Face to face, virtual, or both
- Type of support provided
 - Evaluations, direct student services, or both
- Information about your organization's area of impact
 - Statewide, regional, or both
 - Parishes supported (if regional)
- Evidence that service providers in your organization are properly certified or supervised by an appropriately certified provider for the services in which they deliver
- Hourly cost of services to school systems

Describe your current experience working with school systems to provide direct services to students with disabilities. Be sure to include all elements listed below. (No more than one page.)

- Describe the number of school systems, including the geographic reach and school system type (traditional, charter) your organization has partnered with in the last three years.
- Provide any relevant information to ensure you meet the minimum liability insurance requirements to conduct contractual work with Louisiana school systems.
- Provide evidence that your organization has improved outcomes for students with disabilities.
- Please provide documentation that providers within your organization are certified.
- Please provide references from three of the most recent schools/school systems with which you have contracted.

Section IV: Direct Services - Professional Development to Support Delivery of Direct Services

School systems and community networks face challenges when attempting to provide direct services to students, including young children, with disabilities across service delivery models. To support school and center-based direct service providers, school systems need organizations that can provide professional development and technical assistance to school system-based direct service providers to equip them to effectively deliver direct services across platforms and during periods of distance learning. The Department aims to provide school systems and community networks with a list of organizations that can build the capacity of direct service providers in delivering direct services to students with disabilities through traditional and alternate (e.g. distance learning) delivery methods.

- Indicate any proprietary or publicly available platforms that your organization’s PD supports
- Description of your organization’s support for delivery of direct services, including specific details regarding training and technical assistance offered
- Category of services supported (speech therapy, occupational therapy, etc)
- Grade bands supported
 - K-12
 - Early Childhood
- Type of support provided
 - Initial setup, ongoing, or both
- Method of delivery
 - Face to face, virtual, blended, coaching, etc.
- Maximum number of participants
- Cost

Describe your current experience providing high-quality professional development and technical assistance for direct service providers. Be sure to include all elements bulleted below. (No more than one page.)

- Describe the number of school systems, including the geographic reach and school system type (traditional, charter) your organization has partnered with in the last three years.
- Provide evidence of your organization’s expertise in elements of any supported delivery platforms, including any certifications.
- Describe how the training provided by your organization is anchored in evidence-based adult learning strategies.
- Upload a small sample of materials used to deliver training and technical assistance which may include, but is not limited to, slide decks, accompanying handouts, and presenter notes.
- If your organization can support early childhood, upload a small sample of materials used to deliver professional development which may include but is not limited to slide decks, accompanying handouts, and presenter notes.
- Upload curricula vitae or resumes of key personnel responsible for development or delivery of training and technical assistance.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A-1: Areas of Specialized Support Definitions

The Department has categorized areas of specialized support that are frequently required to support the unique needs of students with disabilities. Professional development for early childhood programs, school systems and educators may encompass more than one area of specialized support simultaneously. The descriptions provided for areas of specialized support are intended to provide potential partners and school systems a common understanding of the type of professional development a particular organization might provide as well as how they can support the unique needs of students with disabilities. If you have additional questions regarding how the support your organization provides would fit into any of the areas outlined below, reach out to specialeducation@la.gov for guidance.

Communication

In Louisiana, about half of all students with disabilities have identified communication needs. Communication-focused professional development helps early childhood programs, school systems and educators address communication barriers that manifest because of a student's disability, whether it be the result of a hearing or visual impairment, limitations in verbal skills, or other significant impairments¹ in receptive or expressive communication. This enables students with disabilities to use their most effective modes of communication to express and receive information across environments and with varied communication partners.

Assistive Technology

Across Louisiana, about sixty percent of students with disabilities have assistive technology needs identified in their individualized education programs. Assistive technology-focused professional development supports early childhood programs, school systems and educators in identifying and implementing assistive technology services that will have meaningful application for the educational, social, and developmental experiences of students with disabilities. This can include technology, strategies, or other tools that increase a student's access and engagement with high-quality instructional materials.

Functional Skills

Approximately ten percent of students with disabilities have a significant disability impacting their ability to function independently. School systems and community networks must provide these students with the explicit support and instruction they need to become as independent as possible given their unique needs. Therefore, functional goals are often included in students' individualized education programs. Professional development that focuses on functional skills (ex: self-help, hygiene, community-based navigation, self-advocacy) support the independence of students both academically and beyond the school setting. Supporting functional skill development for students with disabilities can allow for independent living and meaningful participation in the community.

Sensory Environment

One in five students with disabilities, including students with autism and developmental disabilities, experience under- or overstimulation by sights, sounds, and smells in the school environment. Sensory-based professional development seeks to help school systems and community networks design environments that are responsive to controlling environmental factors and supporting individual students in interpreting and responding to environmental stimuli. This enables students

¹ This includes but is not limited to impairments in the areas of apraxia, articulation/phonology, fluency, pragmatics, or auditory processing.

with disabilities to experience, understand, and appropriately respond to the information they receive from their environment in a manner that facilitates engagement in high-quality instruction.

Executive Function and Self-Regulation

According to recent data, over seventy-five percent of students with disabilities need additional support in the area of managing and sustaining tasks. Executive functioning and self-regulation skills are the mental processes that enable students to plan, focus attention, remember instructions, and juggle multiple tasks successfully.² Students with disabilities often need explicit, systemized support to develop, practice, and then independently manage these skills. Professional development helps educators learn age-appropriate ways to support and strengthen the executive functioning and self-regulation skills of students with disabilities through structured interactions and practice.

² <https://developingchild.harvard.edu/science/key-concepts/executive-function/>

Attachment B-1: Evaluation Criteria for Application Submissions

To ensure school systems have access to high-quality organizations, the Department has established tentative criteria that must be met before providers can be included in our Partnerships for Success Guide. As vendors develop relationships with school systems additional assurances may be required. Outlined below are the criteria to which the Department will evaluate submissions.

Professional Development for Specialized Support will be evaluated by the following four components.

1. Demonstrated experience in providing professional development for specialized support to early childhood programs, school systems and educators.
2. Data that demonstrates that the organization's professional development has supported early childhood programs and school systems in improving outcomes for students with disabilities.
3. Professional development samples indicate that professional development is grounded in evidence-based adult learning strategies.
4. Provided resumes or curricula vitae indicate strong expertise and experience in designing and delivering special education specific professional development.

Direct Services: Certified Providers for Students with Disabilities will be evaluated by the following four components.

1. Demonstrated experience in providing direct services to support the needs of students with disabilities.
2. Data that the services rendered by your organization has led to improved outcomes for students with disabilities.
3. Evidence that providers within the organization are appropriately certified.
4. Proof that the organization holds the minimum required liability insurance to work with students in Louisiana schools.

Direct Service: Professional Development to Support Delivery of Direct Services will be evaluated by the following three components:

1. Demonstrated experience in providing robust, high quality professional development to direct service personnel.
2. Provided resumes or curricula vitae indicate strong expertise and knowledge of each cited service delivery platform and model.
3. Training samples indicate that professional development and technical assistance is grounded in evidence-based adult learning strategies.

The Department will evaluate organizations separately for each area to which they apply, using the criteria for the appropriate area.