UPDATE: Safety Net Survey

2012–13

Authorizing legislation: RCW 28A.150.392 (3)

Special Programs and Federal Accountability
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Executive Summary

Safety net funding is available to school districts with a need for special education funding in excess of state and federal funding. The Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) explains how to apply for these funds in an annual bulletin. The Individualized Education Program (IEP) Review Form is a tool provided by OSPI to help districts ensure their IEPs are properly formulated. Properly formulated IEPs are a condition for safety net funding.

In 2012–13, the state Safety Net committee approved Safety Net awards for 106 districts. The committee awarded 1,865 high need individual student applications and six community impact applications for a total of $31,333,668.

The Legislature requires OSPI to annually survey school districts about improving the special education Safety Net process. In September 2013, an electronic survey was distributed to districts that participated in the Safety Net program during 2012–13.

Overall, districts that received funding through Safety Net were supportive of the process. Districts that did not receive funding through Safety Net were less supportive. Survey comments indicated that limiting Safety Net application opportunities to once per year is a disadvantage because it does not allow districts to resubmit “corrected” applications later in the year. Respondents also said that the process could be improved by:

- Releasing the Safety Net bulletin and providing training earlier.
- Providing data to districts on errors from prior years.
- Providing online submission for some portion of the application.
- Providing bulleted lists of what is needed in an application.

Most respondents were positive about the support they received in their applications and the training available to them. They also reported that the Safety Net process improved Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) at the district level.
Survey Results
Eighty-six people completed the survey. Over 60% were special education administrators and almost one quarter were business managers or administrators.

A significant majority of responses (at least 80%):

- Thought the Safety Net Bulletin was clear and the OSPI staff, trainings and website were helpful.
- Believed that the process was fair, the review committee was representative of the state, and that they received good feedback if their application was not selected.
- Thought the IEP tool was helpful and found that their IEPs improved because of the Safety Net process.
- Liked the idea of an online application for the Safety Net.

Complete survey results are available online.

Conclusion and Next Steps
Safety Net Survey results will be used to improve the Safety Net process for the 2013–14 school year. OSPI will continue to streamline and simplify the Safety Net process.

The bulletin, forms, and training are not dependent on a rule revision this year, so these items are now available. All changes to the process are outlined in the 2013–14 Safety Net Bulletin from November 6, 2013. Training for 2013–14 has been scheduled for most of the ESDs and began with ESD 171 on November 20, 2013.
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