

Special Education Cooperatives

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Special Education Cooperatives

This presentation is intended to help directors, superintendents and other school administrators understand the nature and structure of special education cooperatives. The following topics will be reviewed:

- Differences and similarities between full service education cooperatives and special education cooperatives - Frank
- Administrative Rules of Montana as they relate to special education cooperatives - Dick
- Process of terminating membership in a special education cooperative – Verne, Frank, and Dick

Topics, continued

- Maximizing cooperative revenue
- Managing cooperative costs to ensure efficiency (staffing)
- Options – scope of services, adjusting cooperative boundaries, shared administrative and/or clerk services
- Organization to positively effect the next legislative session

Education Cooperatives Statues

- 20-7-451 Authorization to create full service education cooperatives
- 20-7-452 Detailed contents of cooperative contract/agreement
- 20-7-454 Final approval and filing
- 20-7-455 Authorization to fund full service education cooperatives

Special Education Cooperatives Statutes

- 20.7.456 Teacher Tenure
- 20-7-457 Funding special education cooperatives
- 20-7-431 Special education allowable costs

Administrative Rules of Montana

- 10-16-3181 Local educational agency federal funds application
- 10-16-3809 Cooperative boundaries
- 10.16.3901 Duration of Cooperative
- 10.16.3902 Management Board
- 10.16.3903 Nonparticipating districts
- 10.16.3904 Procedures for approval

Termination Process

- Recent examples – Bitterroot Coop (Hamilton), Great Divide Coop (Twin Bridges, Sheridan, Deer Lodge Elementary, Lima)
- IDEA Part B & PK Revenue – follows district leaving the Coop, carryover remains with the Coop
- State Revenue – follows the district leaving the Coop, reserves remain with the Coop
- Medicaid – District bills separately, reserves remain with the Coop

Termination Process, Continued

Interlocal Agreement/MCA/ARM

- Duration of agreement – contract language
- Notification date(s)
 1. Coop – October (typically October 1st)
 2. OPI – January (notice directing which entity to which OPI is to make IDEA and State payments)

Termination Process, Continued

Additional effects of termination membership

District

1. Staffing
2. Issues related to employment contract (seniority, salary schedule, tenure, etc.)
3. Program Narrative
4. Sped Handbook
5. Child Find

Termination Process, Continued

Additional effects of termination membership

Coop

1. Staffing – reduction in force
2. Program Narrative – specific to that Coop's specific agreement
3. Child Find

Financial Considerations

District

- IDEA Part B & PK
- Quality Educator
- Administration Entitlement
- Travel Entitlement
- Instructional Block Grant
- Related Services Block Grant
- Medicaid

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Cooperative

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Maximizing Revenue

- IDEA Child Count
- Quality Educator
- Retirement Fund – (Medicaid paid salaries)
- SB 191 – Tuition Fund (Districts only)
- Medicaid – staff assignments, billing
- Using free professional development – CSPD, OPI Autism Project, donation apps such as “donors choose”
- Local sponsors – Elks Club, Rotary, Community trusts
- CSCT Services

Managing Costs

- Staffing – case loads, assignments, travel time
- Medical vs school based service model
- Grouping vs individual therapy
- Appropriate assignment of paraeducators
- Role of school psychologist (scope of services)
- Evaluation of staff – expectations of the Coop
- Using MTSS/RTI to reduce referrals

For Consideration

- Adjust Cooperative boundaries
- Create 23rd Coop
- Create a non-special education full service Coop to provide services other than special education
- Combine/share services between Coops – Director and/or Clerk services
- Distance services – Director/Clerk
- Legislative process – SAM, MTSBA, Governor's Office, State Superintendent, individual legislators to ensure Coop funding is a priority for State funding

Closing

- Questions
- Discussion