Sending on behalf of Heather Calomese, Executive Director for Special Education.

Special Education Services recently notified districts/cooperatives that effective July 1, 2019 IDEA allocations will be sent directly to school districts – a change from the current procedure of flowing those funds through special education cooperatives. As promised, ISBE will provide technical assistance, clarification and guidance with the process and in support of questions received from the field. ISBE seeks to build trust with the stakeholders so that we can effectively partner in serving children, as such, it is important that we address inaccurate information that may be circulating at this time. The only goal of this change is to comply with OSEP’s longstanding interpretation of IDEA regulations which was discussed during the federal audit in 2016 and to also avoid future issues of noncompliance related to that interpretation.

We believe that everyone in the districts and cooperatives are doing their best for the students of Illinois. It is important to preserve the relationships and mechanisms currently being utilized to provide the exemplary education and supports to students. It is expected that the procedural change in funding distribution would result in districts contracting with cooperatives to provide services to students and districts administration in very similar ways as before the procedural change. Please be assured that ISBE will facilitate this process through technical assistance for districts and cooperatives e.g. basic IDEA application completion, IDEA expenditure reports, contractual agreements, TRS rates, and more. ISBE is continuing to engage with external stakeholders and will be holding our second meeting in the next week. We are looking forward to further collaboration with district and cooperatives that can serve as models for this work.

The July 31, 2018 memorandum and supporting documents emphasized a review of current Articles of Joint Agreement. This procedural change may not require all cooperatives needing to change the language included in the Articles of Joint Agreements with member districts. Whether Articles of Joint Agreement are amended or new contractual procedures are developed, Special Education Services must receive and file copies of the final agreements.

Please submit by June 1, 2019:

- the amendment to the Articles of Joint Agreement,
- a statement from the Director of Special Education of the cooperative explaining that an amendment was not needed

The documents may be sent to Tammy Greco at our Springfield address or via email tgreco@isbe.net.

Thank you for your continued cooperation as we put this procedural change in place. Please direct questions to your grant coordinator Zach Allen (zallen@isbe.net), Tammy Greco (tgreco@isbe.net), Felicia Malloy (fmalloy@isbe.net) or Todd Williams (towilli@isbe.net) (217) 782-5589.