

Handout 2

Congressional Findings: Excerpts from IDEA 2004's Statute



When Congress passed the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 (IDEA 2004), it began with “findings”—many of which express concerns over disproportionality in special education. This handout shares excerpts from those findings.

“(c) FINDINGS.—Congress finds the following...

“(10)(A) The Federal Government must be responsive to the growing needs of an increasingly diverse society.

“(B) America’s ethnic profile is rapidly changing. In 2000, 1 of every 3 persons in the United States was a member of a minority group or was limited English proficient.

“(C) Minority children comprise an increasing percentage of public school students.

“(D) With such changing demographics, recruitment efforts for special education personnel should focus on increasing the participation of minorities in the teaching profession in order to provide appropriate role models with sufficient knowledge to address the special education needs of these students.

“(11)(A) The limited English proficient population is the fastest growing in our Nation, and the growth is occurring in many parts of our Nation.

“(B) Studies have documented apparent discrepancies in the levels of referral and placement of limited English proficient children in special education.

“(C) Such discrepancies pose a special challenge for special education in the referral of, assessment of, and provision of services for, our Nation’s students from non-English language backgrounds.

“(12)(A) Greater efforts are needed to prevent the intensification of problems connected with mislabeling and high dropout rates among minority children with disabilities.

“(B) More minority children continue to be served in special education than would be expected from the percentage of minority students in the general school population.

“(C) African-American children are identified as having mental retardation and emotional disturbance at rates greater than their White counterparts.

“(D) In the 1998–1999 school year, African-American children represented just 14.8 percent of the population aged 6 through 21, but comprised 20.2 percent of all children with disabilities.

“(E) Studies have found that schools with predominately White students and teachers have placed disproportionately high numbers of their minority students into special education.”