

# FRCD Newsletter

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## CTA Rescue Package Gives Free Rides to Seniors Leaves Out Disabled Riders

The CTA rescue package approved by the Illinois General Assembly and the Governor on January 17, 2008, provides free rides to seniors 65 years of age and older—but provides no similar benefits to riders with disabilities. The surprise benefits are part of a CTA package which necessitates a \$530 million tax increase.

The Family Resource Center on Disabilities (FRCD) opposed the CTA rescue package at a public hearing conducted by Illinois House of Representative Julie Hamos, on January 17, 2008 - because, the CTA rescue did not include free rides for people with disabilities; 2) the free rides were available for all seniors regardless of income.

Provisions of the CTA Rescue Package include:

- **No service cuts or fare increases** at the CTA and Pace in 2008, although CTA officials have said a modest fare increase may be needed in 2009 to make up for revenue lost providing free rides to seniors.
- **Illinois seniors** 65 and up will be allowed to ride the CTA, Metra and Pace free of charge, but not immediately. The transit agencies have 60 days to implement the free rides.
- **One-quarter of 1 percentage point** increase in the regional RTA sales tax in Cook and the five collar counties.
- **An additional .25** percentage-point sales tax increase for the five collar counties to be used at each county's discretion for local transportation or public safety projects
- **40 percent** increase in Chicago's real estate transfer tax, if the City Council approves it.
- **Continued state funding** for Pace paratransit service for the disabled. However, the cost of an ADA Monthly Pass for Chicago paratransit users will double to \$150 beginning with sales of the February pass.
- **Pension and health care reforms** at the CTA that will save the agency about \$11 million a month.
- **\$27 million** in general revenue funds for Downstate transit agencies
- **Tighter oversight** by the Regional Transportation Authority over the CTA, Metra and Pace.

(Information from: Chicago Sun-Times and Chicago Tribune, 1/18/08)

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## Appropriations Bill Signed by President Bush Includes IDEA Reductions

President Bush signed the omnibus appropriations bill on December 26, 2007. Below is a summary of some of the changes in funding for Department of Education programs:

- IDEA Section 619 Preschool – reduced by \$6.65 million
- IDEA Part C Infants and Toddlers – reduced by \$746,000
- IDEA Part D:
  - Technical Assistance and Dissemination – reduced by \$854,000
  - Personnel Preparation – reduced by \$1.567 million
  - Parent Information Centers - \$824,000 increase

A full table outlining Department of Education appropriations is available online at:  
[http://www.ed.gov/about/overview/budget/budget08\\_/08action.pdf](http://www.ed.gov/about/overview/budget/budget08_/08action.pdf).

(Information from: National Coalition of Parent Center (NCPC E-News 1/08/08)).

Paid Position available at FRCD,  
see page 3

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## **AG Special Education Advisory Committee Requests Memorandum of Guidance on RTI**

The following letter dated December 12, 2007, was sent to ISBE State Superintendent of Education, Christopher Koch, on behalf of members the AG Advisory Committee on Special Education, by Matthew Cohen.

“This letter is on behalf of the members of the Advisory Committee on Special Education of the Illinois Attorney General’s office, a volunteer group that consists of individuals with a variety of personal and professional perspectives but a common interest improving special education services in Illinois and properly implementing state and federal special education laws. We are writing in our personal capacities, rather than as a formal communication from the Attorney General’s Office. For over twenty-five years, the Committee has advised the Attorney General on special education issues.

We write today to ask the Illinois State Board of Education to issue a memorandum of guidance on Response to Intervention (RTI). As RTI is being implemented in Illinois, a number of uncertainties have appeared, causing serious concerns among parents and professionals. There are many topics of concern that a memorandum of guidance should address. We believe that a guidance memorandum should clarify:

- (1) What are the criteria and process for when a student is referred to RTI? At what age are they covered?
- (2) Who is involved in the referral process? Do parents have any role, and if so, what is it?
- (3) What is the process for defining what is to be accomplished? How will the content of the intervention be defined?
- (4) What is the institutionalized process of data gathering for the RTI process?
- (5) What is the process of sharing data with parents and the RTI referral team? What is the content shared? How frequently is the data shared? Who will analyze the collected data?
- (6) What is the timeline for continuing to use the intervention before determining that a special education evaluation is needed? Is there a maximum time that a student can remain in RTI?
- (7) How does the RTI process affect the evaluation process?
- (8) After RTI interventions start, when does the timeline for the referral process begin and how are parents informed of their right to an evaluation? Will RTI be included in The Parent Guide?
- (9) If a student is found to need an evaluation, what are the types of evaluations used to address processing deficits? Is only the RTI data used, or is other testing included?
- (10) Are English language learners eligible to participate in RTI? If so eligible, how does their status affect participation in RTI?
- (11) How is it determined who will receive services under RTI?
- (12) What resources will ISBE employ to support public awareness, parent training and personnel training to implement services?

Guidance on these topics will be of great assistance to persons working in the schools who need to know more about how to implement RTI in an educationally effective manner and one that satisfies the standards of the Illinois State Board Education and all applicable laws. It will also be of critical importance to parents whose children may have disabilities that make them eligible for special education services.

Please inform us when the Illinois State Board of Education will be issuing a guidance memorandum that will respond to the concerns we have listed or, if the State Board will not issue such a memorandum, why it will not do so. We all look forward to hearing from you on this matter.”

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