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SERVICES, INC.

September 23, 2026

Zachary Rogers
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Ave SW
Washington, DC 20202

**RE: Proposed Rule on Education Department General Administrative Regulations (EDGAR),
Docket No. ED-2026-OPEPD-2542**

Dear Mr. Rogers:

On behalf of the American Psychological Association (APA) and the American Psychological Association Services, Inc. (APA Services), I am writing to offer public comments to the Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM) titled *Education Department General Administrative Regulations*, published on August 24, 2026, Docket No. ED-2026-OPEPD-2542. APA Services is the companion organization of APA, which is the nation's largest scientific and professional nonprofit organization representing the discipline and profession of psychology, as well as over 190,000 members and affiliates who are clinicians, researchers, educators, consultants, and students of psychological science.

As psychological science and research contribute to effective learning and development, children's well-being, school climate, teacher preparation, and the science of instruction, APA/APA Services welcomes the opportunity to comment on the Department's proposed changes to its grant administration regulations. While we generally support the Department's stated interest in streamlining grant administration and reducing administrative costs, APA/APA Services is concerned that the proposed changes could introduce significant instability into federal grant programs, creating unnecessary barriers for applicants, disrupting ongoing education, educational research, training, teacher preparation, and service programs, and reducing access to supports for students and communities that rely most heavily on federal investment. The proposed changes would fall hardest on students and school districts that disproportionately depend on federally funded programs, including students with disabilities, and rural and frontier communities.

Our comments focus on the proposed authority to terminate discretionary grants "for convenience," threats to grant stability, changes to termination authority, limitations on appeal processes, and changes to continuation funding and indirect costs. **Unless significant changes are made, APA/APA Services urges the Department to withdraw the proposed rule** as it could undermine predictable grant administration and create uncertainty for applicants and grantees whose work contributes to the nation's vital educational and behavioral health workforce needs.

The Department of Education administers programs that advance educational innovation, workforce development, research, educational opportunity, and student success nationwide. These investments support a wide range of initiatives, including K-12 education, school improvement efforts, college access and success programs, educator preparation, graduate education, research training, and workforce development. Programs such as Title IV-A Student Support and Academic Enrichment grants, Full-Service Community Schools, TRIO, Graduate Assistance in Areas of National Need (GAANN), and numerous discretionary grant programs help schools, institutions of higher education, and community partners expand educational opportunities and strengthen outcomes for students and families.

These investments are also critically important for psychology education and training, including graduate education, school-based mental health initiatives, and interprofessional education. Collectively, these

programs are not simply educational opportunities for students and trainees. They are investments in the nation's educational and workforce infrastructure that help prepare the next generation of educators, psychologists, researchers, and behavioral health professionals while strengthening services in schools and communities across the country.

Psychological and behavioral science also contributes directly to the Department's broader educational mission. Psychological research has helped shape evidence-based approaches to teaching and learning, child and adolescent development, literacy, educational technology, student motivation and engagement, school climate, educator preparation, assessment, special education, disability identification and support services, and mental and behavioral health supports in educational settings. Department-funded education research, innovation, and demonstration programs frequently draw upon psychological science to improve educational outcomes and help schools identify, evaluate, and implement effective practices. As a result, stable and predictable grant administration is important not only for training future psychologists, but also for advancing the scientific knowledge that informs educational policy and practice nationwide.

Sustained federal support is essential to ensuring that students, educators, institutions, and communities can plan for and benefit from these investments over time. This is particularly important in rural and frontier communities and other under-resourced areas, where educator shortages, limited training opportunities, transportation barriers, broadband gaps, and fewer institutional resources can make federal support especially consequential. Predictable grant administration enables schools, colleges, universities, and community partners to plan effectively, maintain critical partnerships, strengthen workforce development pipelines, and maximize the impact of federal investments.

These proposed regulatory changes should also be evaluated within the landscape of ongoing efforts that have substantially reduced the Department's capacity to administer and oversee federal education programs. Over the past two years, significant reductions in force, organizational restructuring, withholding or delayed release of congressionally appropriated funds, and transfer of responsibilities through interagency arrangements have weakened the Department's ability to carry out core functions and have created uncertainty and confusion for grant recipients and the communities they serve. These actions have already disrupted planning, staffing, program implementation, and oversight across the education sector. APA/APA Services is concerned that the proposed rule would compound these challenges by further reducing predictability, transparency, and accountability in federal grant administration, thereby increasing risks for institutions, students, trainees, educators, and communities that rely on stable federal investments.

APA/APA Services is further concerned that aspects of this NPRM appear designed to align Department regulations with the Office of Management and Budget's (OMB) proposed government-wide rule on federal financial assistance (Docket No. OMB-2026-0034), despite the fact that OMB's proposal has not been finalized and remains the subject of significant stakeholder concern. Congress recently included language in the fiscal year 2027 continuing resolution temporarily preventing implementation of the OMB proposal, underscoring ongoing questions regarding the policy and legal implications of those changes. Adopting parallel requirements through this rulemaking before the OMB rule is finalized would effectively pre-judge the outcome of an ongoing regulatory process. The Department should instead allow the OMB rulemaking to conclude before pursuing Department-specific changes that rely upon or mirror those proposed policies.

Access to Quality Education and Behavioral Health Services

Many Department of Education grants support services and initiatives that promote student well-being, including school-based mental health services, student support programs, educator training, after-school and enrichment opportunities, and partnerships between schools and community organizations. At a time

when youth mental health challenges continue to impact educational engagement, attendance, academic achievement, and school climate, these investments are more important than ever. Recent data from CDC's 2025 Youth Risk Behavior Survey provides encouraging evidence that federal investment in youth mental health can have a positive impact. Between 2023 and 2025, the percentage of high school students reporting persistent feelings of sadness or hopelessness, poor mental health, suicidal ideation, suicide planning, and suicide attempts all declined.ⁱ These improvements suggest that recent investments in student supports and school-based mental health services may be beginning to yield results, but sustaining long-term progress will require continued support rather than disrupting programs just as they are showing signs of success.

The U.S. also continues to face serious behavioral health workforce shortages and uneven access to mental health and substance use services. It is estimated that 158 million U.S. residents, nearly half the population, live in a mental health workforce shortage area.ⁱⁱ According to national workforce projections, even under current policy, the U.S. will meet only 48 percent of the need for psychologists by 2038.ⁱⁱⁱ These workforce challenges have important implications for education as well as health care. Students cannot fully benefit from educational opportunities when schools lack adequate access to mental and behavioral health supports, and schools, colleges, and universities depend on a strong pipeline of trained professionals to support student learning, well-being, and academic success.

These investments are also important for students with disabilities, who often rely on specialized educational, psychological, and related services supported in part by federally funded programs, research, and workforce development initiatives. Today, about one in six U.S. students requires support under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act.^{iv} Students with disabilities thrive, socially, psychologically, and academically, when they are taught alongside their peers and are given access to individualized support.

These realities make Department of Education grants particularly important, especially for underserved populations. APA/APA Services is concerned that uncertainty in grantmaking processes, restrictions on appeal processes, and reduced transparency surrounding grant competitions could especially burden smaller colleges, rural educational institutions and school districts, and community-based organizations, which may be less able to absorb disruptions associated with grant termination, funding uncertainty, or changing administrative and compliance requirements. Even modest uncertainty regarding award continuation, grant termination, or evolving administrative requirements can discourage participation in federal grant programs, delay hiring and enrollment decisions, weaken community partnerships, and reduce the capacity of schools and institutions to support students and workforce development initiatives.

For example, the School-Based Mental Health Services and Mental Health Service Professionals Demonstration grant programs provide support to 333 grantees in over 170 state and local educational agencies across 48 states. These programs allow districts and states to make locally based decisions about how to address the mental and behavioral health needs of their students and are projected to add nearly 20,000 school-based mental health professionals to the workforce nationwide. Increases in mental health professional support are crucial to address the rising reports of youth mental health issues, ensuring that students receive the necessary care and interventions to thrive academically and personally.^v

However, in April 2025 the Department of Education unilaterally discontinued hundreds of these grants, mid-cycle, just as progress was beginning to be made, disrupting the education and training of future school-based mental health providers and making it difficult for low-income school districts to retain critically needed professionals—even as large majorities of parents across the country support further public investment in school-based mental health services.^{vi} Furthermore, this action was inconsistent with the administration's own stated priorities of addressing youth mental health and the root causes of chronic conditions.

Similarly, the Department's FY 2027 budget request proposes to consolidate eighteen currently funded formula and competitive grant programs into a single block grant, reducing total funding for these programs by nearly 70 percent. This includes Title IV-A, the Student Support and Academic Enrichment Program, which is working to improve students' academic achievement through well-rounded education, by improving school conditions and climate through enhanced mental health services, and by providing access to educational technology. Title IV-A has long enjoyed bipartisan support due to the flexibility it gives states and school districts on how to apply and utilize the funding, to best address their individual needs. This has also made the program highly impactful for state and district education leaders throughout the country. Rather than eliminating it, Title IV-A is exactly the type of federal program that the Department should be utilizing as an example of success.

Grant Stability and Termination Authority

The proposed expansion of the Department's authority to terminate discretionary grants "for convenience" and to suspend awards temporarily (*Section 75.901*) raises significant concerns. While federal agencies require mechanisms to address waste, fraud, abuse, noncompliance, or changed programmatic circumstances, broad termination authority could undermine the stability and predictability that grantees rely on to successfully administer federally funded programs.

This concern is particularly significant for education grants that depend on stable, multi-year funding commitments. Schools, school districts, institutions of higher education, and community partners often use federal grants to support educators, school-based mental health professionals, support personnel, researchers, trainees, student services, curriculum development, academic enrichment programs, and partnerships that require long-term planning and implementation. Increased uncertainty regarding the continuation of grants could disrupt hiring decisions, delay student services, undermine community partnerships, reduce opportunities for educator and workforce training, and weaken the capacity of institutions to sustain programs that students and families rely upon. These risks may be especially acute for rural and frontier communities and other under-resourced areas that have fewer alternative funding sources and limited administrative capacity to absorb sudden changes in federal support.

A stable grantmaking system encourages long-term planning, strengthens participation in federal funding opportunities, and maximizes taxpayer investments. Stability is especially important as academic institutions face challenges sustaining graduate education and research training pipelines. Recent reporting indicates that PhD admissions at 55 leading research universities declined by 15 percent over the past year, with some institutions reporting decreases of up to 40 percent; a figure largely influenced by the unreliable nature of funding in recent years.^{vii} If implemented as written, the proposed rule could worsen these trends and have long-term consequences for scientific discovery and the behavioral health workforce.

Grant stability is also important for educational innovation and emerging fields of research, including the responsible development and evaluation of artificial intelligence (AI) technologies. Universities and other grantees often make multi-year investments in personnel, computing infrastructure, data resources, curriculum development, and research partnerships to support technology-related education and research initiatives. Increased uncertainty regarding award continuation or termination could discourage institutions from pursuing innovative projects that depend on predictable federal support and long-term planning.

Further, the proposed rule could undermine the Department's stated priority of the development of responsible classroom technology use, as outlined in its August 2026 Dear Colleague Letter.^{viii} AI tools are increasingly being developed for tutoring, assessment, classroom feedback, early-warning systems,

special education supports, teacher coaching, and administrative decision-making. As outlined in APA's 2026 report on education technology, before such tools are widely adopted, they must be rigorously evaluated for effectiveness, accessibility, privacy, bias, transparency, and impact on student learning and well-being.^{ix} AI research in education requires stable multi-year funding, sustained partnerships with schools and districts, secure data infrastructure, interdisciplinary expertise, and clear standards for evidence. As AI and other education technologies become more prevalent in schools, federal research policy should strengthen, not weaken, the evidence base needed to guide safe, effective, transparent, and student-centered use of technology in classrooms.

High-quality education, workforce development, and research programs are not built through individual awards alone. They depend on stable training pathways, community partnerships, student supports, and long-term institutional investments. Abrupt changes in award status can waste federal investments already made, disrupt student and trainee pathways, weaken community partnerships, and reduce the effectiveness of programs designed to prepare the nation's future workforce. The Department should avoid regulations that allow awards to be terminated or reduced because approved activities later become viewed as inconsistent with shifting agency priorities rather than because of grantee noncompliance or failure to meet lawful program requirements.

We have already seen the consequences of funding uncertainty play out in real time. In July 2025, the Department of Education withheld approximately \$6.9 billion in congressionally appropriated funding for several education programs, including Title IV-A Student Support and Academic Enrichment Grants, 21st Century Community Learning Centers, English Language Acquisition Grants, and Title II-A Supporting Effective Instruction State Grants. This delay forced schools, districts, and community-based providers to lay off staff, cancel programs, terminate contracts, and revise budgets while preparing for the academic year. Even if funds are later released, the damage caused by uncertainty cannot be fully reversed. Districts may lose staff, universities may pause admissions or training placements, community partners may terminate contracts, and students may experience interruptions in services that cannot simply be restarted once funding becomes available. Expanding the Department's authority to terminate or suspend grants could create similar instability, making it more difficult for recipients to make long-term investments in personnel, training, student supports, and community partnerships.

Impacts on Educational Research

This rule is detrimental to research supported by Institute for Education Sciences (IES), particularly psychological and behavioral science research that advances understanding of learning, development, school mental health, motivation, behavior, assessment, disability, teacher practice, and evidence-based interventions in educational settings. IES helps ensure that education funding is spent wisely. Policymakers, at the local, state, and federal levels, use IES research to understand what works, what does not, and how to get the best results from federal investment in public education. This research depends on stable multi-year funding, transparent scientific review, adequate institutional infrastructure, methodological independence, and the ability to study all student populations in a real-world educational context. Several provisions in the proposed rule could undermine these conditions and, if finalized without substantial revision, could weaken the evidence base available to educators and policymakers.

Proposed revisions to the general selection criteria (*Section 75.210*) could narrow the Department's understanding of research significance, participant populations, evaluation quality, and scalability. References to "underrepresented population" and substitution of broader "target population" language could make it harder for applicants to explain why psychological research must examine developmental, social, cultural, disability-related, and contextual factors that shape educational outcomes. Regulations should preserve review criteria that recognize the public value of research designed to improve outcomes for students and communities that have been underserved by existing systems.

The Department should preserve clear, peer-reviewed, discipline-appropriate standards for evidence (*Section 75.210(h)*). Psychological research in education often uses randomized controlled trials, quasi-experimental designs, longitudinal studies, and studies of mediators and moderations of intervention effects. The Department should explain how any new evidence framework will be developed, reviewed, updated, and applied, and ensure that research proposals are evaluated by reviewers with relevant methodological and subject-matter expertise.

School-based psychological interventions are rarely one-size fits all. Proposed changes to scale-up criteria (*Section 75.201(i)*) may reduce attention to the people, settings, and partners necessary to bring evidence-based practices into schools and communities. The Department must make clear that responsible scaling requires evidence of feasibility, fidelity, acceptability, adaptation, and effectiveness in settings and populations where an intervention will be used.

It remains critical that the Department consult independent experts in educational research, psychology, statistics, measurement, implementation science, disability research, prevention science, and school-based intervention research when considering changes to definitions of experimental study, evidence levels, and evidence framework. Methodological rigor, transparency, independent peer reviews, and appropriate recognition of research designs must all remain hallmarks of sound educational research policies.

Continuation Funding and Indirect Costs

Proposed changes to continuation awards (*Section 75.253*) and indirect costs (*Section 75.228*) present additional risks to schools, institutions, and students. Multi-year grants depend on continuation funding to sustain personnel, student supports, training placements, research activities, and community partnerships. They also support educator preparation, school improvement efforts, after-school and enrichment programs, school-based services, and other long-term initiatives that require stable funding and predictable implementation timelines. If continuation funding can be reduced or denied without meaningful review, recipients may face uncertainty even after successfully competing for an award and meeting program expectations. This provision could also undermine the reliability of multi-year research awards and other multi-year education and workforce development investments. It is important that the Department preserve strong protections for continuation awards and limit any authority to reduce, suspend, or terminate grants to clearly defined circumstances grounded in objective criteria.

Preferences for lower or zero indirect costs could disadvantage institutions that cannot absorb legitimate administrative, compliance, facilities, technology, and student support costs. Smaller school districts, small colleges, rural institutions, community-based providers, and emerging training programs may be least able to subsidize these costs, narrowing participation in federal grant programs and reducing opportunities for those that serve high-need communities and populations. This provision could shift costs to schools, school districts, institutions of higher education, and community-based organizations and make grant competitiveness depend partly on an ability to absorb unrecovered costs rather than on the merit of the grant proposal, feasibility, or public benefit. That structure risks privileging large, well-resourced institutions while discouraging participation by smaller colleges, rural districts, community based providers, and emerging training programs that may have strong proposals but limited ability to absorb unrecovered costs. Over time, this could reduce participation in federal grant programs, limit innovation, and disadvantage applicants serving students and communities with the greatest needs but the fewest available resources.

Fair Appeal Processes

Meaningful appeal rights are essential when recipients face adverse grant decisions (*Section 75.901*). Strong procedural protections promote fairness, accountability, and confidence in federal grant administration. Without meaningful opportunities for review, recipients may lack an adequate mechanism to correct errors, challenge erroneous decisions, or protect students, trainees, patients, and community partners who depend on continued program operations.

Robust review processes are particularly important in education and workforce development programs, where funding decisions can impact faculty positions, student enrollment, community partnerships, and services in underserved areas. We encourage the Department to preserve meaningful opportunities for grantees to object, appeal, or otherwise seek review of significant adverse funding decisions. Maintaining transparent and accessible review procedures is essential to ensuring confidence in the fairness, consistency, and integrity of the federal grantmaking process.

Conclusion

Thank you for the opportunity to provide public comments. APA/APA Services shares the commitment to ensuring that federal financial assistance is administered responsibly, transparently, efficiently, and in accordance with the law. This objective, however, must be pursued in a manner that preserves the conditions necessary for high-quality education, effective workforce development, sound research and training infrastructure, and continued access to essential services.

We support meaningful efforts to reduce administrative burden, including clearer notices of funding opportunities, more consistent agency guidance, streamlined reporting, and predictable award administration. At the same time, reforms should not come at the expense of transparency, stability, due process, and fairness. Changes that expand grant termination authority, limit review and appeal rights, reduce continuation funding protections, incentivize unrecoverable indirect cost reductions, or reduce public visibility into funding opportunities risk creating uncertainty for institutions, educators, researchers, trainees, school districts, and community partners. These challenges are often borne most heavily by smaller grant recipients, rural grantees, and organizations with limited administrative capacity.

For these and other reasons stated in these public comments, absent significant alterations as outlined in these comments, **APA/APA Services urges the Department to withdraw the proposed rule.**

Sincerely,



Katherine B. McGuire
Chief Advocacy Officer

ⁱ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2025). *Youth health in focus: Findings from the National Youth Risk Behavior Survey, 2015-2025*. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. <https://www.cdc.gov/yrb/yhif/files/2025/YHIF-2015-2025-Final-508.pdf>

ⁱⁱ KFF. (2024). Mental Health Care Professional Shortage Areas (HPSAs). <https://www.kff.org/other/state-indicator/mental-health-care-health-professional-shortage-areas-hpsas/>

ⁱⁱⁱ Health Resources and Services Administration. (n.d.). Workforce Projections. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. <https://data.hrsa.gov/topics/health-workforce/workforce-projections>

^{iv} U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights. (2024). *Profile of students with disabilities in U.S. public schools during the 2020-21 school year: Civil Rights Data Collection data snapshot*. <https://www.ed.gov/>

^v Henderson J, Szatmari P, Cleverley K, et al. Integrated Collaborative Care for Youths With Mental Health and Substance Use Challenges: A Randomized Clinical Trial. *JAMA Netw Open*. 2025;8(5):e259565. doi:10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2025.9565

^{vi} National Parents Union: Families Support a Strong a Strong Department of Education. (May 2025). National Parents Union. https://nationalparentsunion.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/ParentsSupportaStrongED_May2025.pdf

^{vii} Patel, V. (2026, July 6). *Research universities are admitting fewer Ph.D. students in science*. The New York Times. <https://www.nytimes.com/2026/07/06/us/research-universities-fewer-phds-science.html>

^{viii} U.S. Department of Education. (2026, August 20). *U.S. Department of Education releases guidance on responsible use of education technology in the classroom* [Press release]. <https://www.ed.gov/about/news/press-release/us-department-of-education-releases-guidance-responsible-use-of-education-technology-classroom>

^{ix} American Psychological Association. (2026, September). *Children's and adolescents' learning with educational technology*. American Psychological Association. <https://www.apa.org/pubs/reports/childrens-adolescents-learning-educational-technology.pdf>