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Individuals with Disabilities Education Act: Standards Needed to Improve Identification of Racial and Ethnic Overrepresentation in Special Education

Concerned that certain racial and ethnic groups were overrepresented in special education, Congress, in the 2004 reauthorization of Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, required that school districts take certain actions to address this problem. Specifically, districts identified with “significant disproportionality” based on race and ethnicity must spend 15 percent of their IDEA funds to provide early intervention services to school age children who need additional academic and behavioral support. This examination by the GAO reviews its findings as well as recommendations to improve and standardize states’ identification of racial and ethnic overrepresentation.

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