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Dear Colleagues,

The Education for All Handicapped Children Act (EAHCA), Public Law (PL) 94-142, was signed into law on November 29, 1975, by then President Gerald Ford. It required that all students with disabilities receive a free appropriate public education (FAPE) and provided funding to help schools defray some of the costs. The EAHCA has been reauthorized many times and is now known as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, PL 108-446.

This landmark legislation has resulted in early intervention programs and services for infants and toddlers, and special education and related services for children and youth with disabilities. Millions of children formerly excluded from the public schools due to their disabilities now attend school, in most instances, in neighborhood schools and with non-disabled peers.

The 35th Anniversary of EAHCA will be celebrated by disability organizations across the nation. LDA state and local affiliates are urged to celebrate this momentous event as part of a community-wide or collaborative effort, or as a separate LDA event. Some posters, a bit of publicity with your local media, a few well-chosen remarks by LDA leadership, a local politician or a representative from a public school, college or university, Voc Rehab or a state Human Services organization, plus some refreshments (an Anniversary cake), a little music, and you've got an event.

Have fun as you celebrate and reflect on what so many within LDA advocated or fought for in the '60s and '70s so that our children could receive FAPE. Dr. Samuel Kirk, regarded as "the Father of Learning Disabilities," admonished in one of his last appearances at an LDA of Arizona conference in the late '80s: *Parents must remain eternally vigilant to safeguard the rights of their children.*

LDA Talking Points will be sent to you in the next several days to assist you in your PR efforts. In the meantime, you may visit www2.ed.gov/about/reports/annual/osep/2000/preface.pdf for some background and history on the EAHCA. After the event, please send a brief memo on your activities to Mary-Clare Reynolds, Interim Executive Director, mcreynolds@ldaamerica.org, and any PR that you may have generated in your community in recognition of the anniversary of the EAHCA.

If you have any questions, please contact Shirley Hilts-Adams, Co-Chairman, Public Policy/ Advocacy Committee, at shadams10@roadrunner.com.

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