

# Special Education 2015 Legislative Update

Courtney Salas-Ford, Attorney  
Program Administrator  
Special Education / Dispute Resolution  
Arkansas Department of Education

# Acts 410 and 931

- ▶ Building Better Futures Program
- ▶ Building Better Futures High School Program
  - For students with intellectual disabilities – “a condition characterized by significant limitations in both intellectual functioning and in adaptive behavior: (A) As defined by the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders published by the American Psychiatric Association; and (B) Diagnosed by a physician, psychologist, or other individuals qualified by license or statute to diagnose.”
  - Will be established for 2015–2016 school year.

# Act 839

- ▶ Legislative Task Force on Best Practices for Special Education
  - Will consist of 22 members who shall study and research ways to improve special education and how special education can positively impact student education and achievement outcomes.
  - Preliminary report due February 1, 2016
  - Final report due September 1, 2016

# Act 1178

- ▶ Succeed Scholarship Program for Students with Disabilities
  - The program will begin awarding scholarships during the 2016–2017 school year.
  - Eligible students must:
    - be currently enrolled in a public school and have attended public school for at least one (1) full academic year
    - have an IEP
    - be accepted into an approved private school
    - have notified district 60 days before first scholarship payment

# Att’y Gen. Op. 2015-027

- ▶ Issued June 11, 2015
- ▶ Ark. Code Ann. 6-41-203: “A child with a disability” means a person between three (3) and twenty-one (21) years of age (. . .).”
- ▶ Response: “In my opinion, existing law is equivocal on the question, but the Arkansas Department of Education may continue to apply the law as if it reads “3 to 21”.”



# ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Special Education Unit

1401 West Capitol Ave., Suite 450  
Little Rock, AR 72201  
(501) 682-4221

[Courtney.Salas-Ford@arkansas.gov](mailto:Courtney.Salas-Ford@arkansas.gov)