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Stimulus Package Includes Increased Spending on Programs for People With Special Needs

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President Obama recently signed the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, better known as the second economic stimulus plan, into law. While not as far-reaching as the original House stimulus plan, the law does significantly increase federal spending across a wide range of initiatives, including many programs that help people with special needs. Some of the affected programs include:

\$12.2 billion to increase funding for Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) grants. These are used to fund special education programs on a state level. The increase in grants raises the federal government's share of special education costs (with the rest assumed by the states).

\$500 million for the IDEA Infants and Toddlers program. This program funds state initiatives designed to assist families of children with special needs who are under 2 years of age.

\$400 million for IDEA preschool grants. The grants fund educational programs that help preschool aged children with special needs.

One-time payments to Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and Social Security Disability Income (SSDI) recipients. This provision distributes an additional \$250 per person one-time SSI or SSDI "bonus" payment, much like last year's economic stimulus payment. The Social Security Administration (SSA) has indicated that this payment will not count as income in the month it is received, although any funds retained by the beneficiary will count as a resource in the month following the distribution, much like a typical SSI payment.

\$500 million to help the SSA speed up "processing disability and retirement workloads." Up to \$40 million is also made available to help the agency utilize electronic medical records for disability claims.

\$500 million in state formula grants. The grants are designed to update and repair job training facilities for people requiring vocational rehabilitation.

\$87.5 million in funding for the creation and repair of independent living facilities.

Click [here](#) to read the full text of the new law.