

Valerie C. Williams, Director, Office of Special Education Programs, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services— Biography

Valerie C. Williams serves as the director in the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) within the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services at the U.S. Department of Education. In this role, she is responsible for overseeing administration of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), which authorizes formula grants to states under IDEA Part B and to lead agencies for the infants and families program under IDEA Part C. IDEA also authorizes discretionary grants under IDEA Part D to institutions of higher education and other non-profit organizations to support grants for state personnel development, technical assistance and dissemination, technology, and parent training and information centers.

Williams most recently served for six years as senior director of Government Relations and External Affairs at the National Association of State Directors of Special Education. She has decades of experience, which include supporting state-level special education leaders by overseeing federal government public policy activities, federal regulatory affairs, public relations, and key initiatives to promote equity and guide positive systemic change, thereby improving outcomes for students with disabilities. She also served as the Joseph P. Kennedy, Jr. Public Policy Fellow, on the U.S. Senate Health, Education, Labor & Pensions Committee advancing disability policy and civil rights. Prior to that, she managed the budgeting and finances for numerous multi-million-dollar programs within the Departments of the Navy and the Air Force, and the Nuclear Regulatory Commission.

Williams was born in White Sands, New Mexico, and raised in Prince George's County, Maryland. She holds a Bachelor of Arts in Political Economy of Industrial Societies from the University of California at Berkeley and a Master of Arts in Public Management from Johns Hopkins University. She has a unique perspective, having worked with members of Congress and staff on Capitol Hill, with advocacy organizations, supporting state special education leaders, and most importantly, being the parent of a son with Down syndrome