



**With New Assessment Flexibility, NCLD calls on States to Prioritize Equity,
Access & Achievement in 2020-2021 School Year**

WASHINGTON, DC – February 22, 2021 – The National Center for Learning Disabilities (NCLD) appreciates that today’s guidance from the U.S. Department of Education reiterates the value of statewide summative assessments while offering states some limited flexibility in administering the tests. The guidance rightly recognizes the challenges facing schools and families amidst the COVID-19 pandemic but holds strong to its commitment to equity, opportunity, and data transparency for all students.

As we emerge from the pandemic, it is more important than ever that we continue to collect data that illuminates the inequities in our system and pushes us to make change that will benefit our most vulnerable students. For the past 20 years, statewide assessments have provided the only data showing how students with disabilities are performing compared to their grade-level peers. Importantly, today’s guidance encourages states to meet their obligation under federal law and administer statewide summative tests as best they can during this time and offers support to those states who cannot do so.

To be clear: ED’s guidance does not allow states to replace statewide assessments with local assessments, nor should it be used as an opportunity to hold lower expectations for students with disabilities. NCLD is pleased to know that ED will closely monitor state requests for additional flexibility and provide clear guidance and technical assistance to ensure states are gathering high-quality data and holding all students to high expectations. As states and districts develop their assessment plans and consider taking advantage of the flexibility offered today by ED, NCLD urges states to prioritize equity and: (1) administer statewide assessments to the greatest extent possible this school year; (2) identify additional sources of available data that can inform parents, advocates, and policymakers about student engagement, access to resources, and academic achievement of student subgroups under ESSA; and (3) engage families and stakeholders in the planning process and account for the needs of our most systemically marginalized students.

###

ABOUT NCLD

The National Center for Learning Disabilities’ mission is to improve the lives of the 1 in 5 children and adults nationwide with learning and attention issues—by empowering parents and young adults, transforming schools and advocating for equal rights and opportunities.

For more information, please contact:

Meghan Whittaker, Director of Policy & Advocacy
mwhittaker@ncl.org