EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
DIVISION OF STUDENT AND FIELD SERVICES
OFFICE OF STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES
CONTRACTED HOME INSTRUCTION SERVICES

We found that overall contracted home instruction services were in compliance with existing laws and regulations. However, we noted that districts are contracting with unapproved companies and are not requiring documentation of the requisite professional certifications and background checks. We also noted inaccuracies with reported home instruction expenditures on districts’ annual financial reports and Audit Summary application.

AUDIT HIGHLIGHTS

- New Jersey Administrative Code states that districts are responsible for the costs of providing home instruction services directly, through online services, or through contract with another board of education, educational services commission, jointure commission, or approved clinic or agency. Our survey of 37 school districts and three field visits, disclosed 23 districts contracted with 31 New Jersey companies that did not fall under any of these categories. In most cases, the students were in a medical or treatment facility which generally contract with companies or employ instructors for home instruction services that may not fall under the authorized categories.

- Pursuant to New Jersey Statutes, any person employed as a teaching staff member shall hold a valid and appropriate certificate. In addition, statutes require criminal history background checks be obtained for persons serving in a position which involves regular contact with students. The results of these checks are approved by the Department of Education’s Criminal History Review Unit. Our visits to three districts noted none of these districts have documentation to show that the individuals who are providing home instruction to their students have professional certifications or have had criminal history background checks.

- New Jersey Administrative Code requires school districts follow the Department of Education’s Chart of Accounts (COA) when classifying expenditures. We selected a random sample of 50 districts with home instruction expenditures reported in the Audit Summary application (AUDSUM) for fiscal year 2012 and compared them with the districts’ Comprehensive Annual Financial Reports (CAFRs) and found that home instruction expenditures in AUDSUM were overstated by $2 million (26%). In addition, we selected a sample of 42 districts to determine the reliability of the information presented in their CAFRs for fiscal year 2013. Home instruction data received from 37 of these districts identified six which are not following the COA.

AUDITEE RESPONSE

The department generally concurs with our findings and recommendations.

For the complete audit report, click here.