

Introduction

Instructions

Provide sufficient detail to ensure that the Secretary and the public are informed of and understand the State's systems designed to drive improved results for students with disabilities and to ensure that the State Educational Agency (SEA) and Local Educational Agencies (LEAs) meet the requirements of IDEA Part B. This introduction must include descriptions of the State's General Supervision System, Technical Assistance System, Professional Development System, Stakeholder Involvement, and Reporting to the Public.

Intro - Indicator Data

Executive Summary

Additional information related to data collection and reporting

Number of Districts in your State/Territory during reporting year

399

General Supervision System:

The systems that are in place to ensure that IDEA Part B requirements are met, e.g., monitoring, dispute resolution, etc.

The Montana comprehensive system of general supervision includes multiple components: A review of each Individual with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Part B applicant's policies and procedures; the application, allocation, distribution, fiscal risk assessment, and accountability of special education funds; formal complaints, due process hearings, mediation, and an Early Assistance Program. The special education and legal units track data to ensure required compliance and/or corrections are made. Continuous improvement, based on each Local Education Agency's (LEA) five-year comprehensive plan, is reported by LEAs annually and tracked through the Accreditation Unit.

Compliance Monitoring

The Office of Public Instruction (OPI) reviews individual student records to verify processes and procedures meet IDEA and Montana requirements. Compliance monitoring activities consist of: review of individual student records; review of district policy, practices, and procedures; virtual records review and/or site visits, when appropriate; and communication with teachers and specialists.

All identified noncompliance is recorded, verified, and accounted for through a process of notification of all identified noncompliance; required correction of all identified noncompliance within the 1 year timeline; district submission of up-dated data verifying 100 percent post-monitoring compliance; and review of district practices, and procedures; timely issuance of findings; completion of required technical assistance and professional development activities; and the issuance of a final report to the district upon completion of all required compliance monitoring requirements.

Each LEA is monitored on a five-year cycle. State Operated or State Funded programs are monitored on a three-year cycle. Records for review are selected and a standard record review protocol is used. If an LEA completes the correction of each instance of noncompliance and provides the OPI with sufficient additional records to verify ongoing evidence of compliance, no finding is issued. This practice is based on guidance provided by OSEP in the FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS REGARDING IDENTIFICATION AND CORRECTION OF NONCOMPLIANCE AND REPORTING ON CORRECTION IN THE STATE PERFORMANCE PLAN (SPP)/ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT (APR) document. In the process for determination of findings, the OPI considers the following: (1) if the noncompliance was systemic or found in only a small percentage of files; (2) if the noncompliance showed a denial of a basic right under the IDEA; and (3) if the noncompliance represents an isolated incident or reflects a long-standing failure to meet requirements (systemic). When data indicates evidence of sustained post-monitoring compliance is necessary, the OPI requires the district to obtain additional training and/or submit additional evidence of sustained compliance. The same verification procedures are used for all noncompliance.

During the last LEA monitoring cycle, the state identified 76 instances of non-compliance that were not related to any of the SPP/APR indicators. These instances were verified using both prongs of the verification process described in the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) 09-02 Memorandum and subsequent OSEP guidance. Of the 76 instances, 37 of them were corrected within the one-year timeline.

Due to the impact of COVID upon SEA staff, it was determined at the onset of the 2021-22 Monitoring Cycle the SEA monitoring team consisted of two people expected to carry out the traditional monitoring protocol for the entire state. After much deliberation, it was determined that for the SEA to maintain its obligation to review districts and to provide adequate supports or technical assistance, adjusting the total number of files to review due to staffing restraints was necessary. It was determined the optimum strategy was to reduce the number of files reviewed with the understanding that additional files could be reviewed as needed. Ultimately the modification to the overall process consisted of reducing files to be reviewed from 2 to 1 file per case manager. In addition, 12 districts were not monitored due to the modifications of the monitoring. This was due to factors beyond the agencies control.

The primary number of compliance infractions beyond the one-year timeline involved a small number of school districts. These districts are all on the Fort Peck Indian Reservation which saw a greater impact from the COVID-19 Pandemic compared to other non-reservation districts. As a result of this, these districts were seeing the negative results of the COVID-19 Pandemic impacting their ability to hire and retain staff. The SEA leadership met to discuss and agreed to a 30-day extension for the involved districts. Additionally, the SEA has been hosting monthly meetings in support of the districts providing technical assistance, professional development, and on-going support. This will be implemented for at least a year or until the SEA is satisfied with the district's overall progress.

IDEA Part B Program - Fiscal

The special education unit oversees the application, allocation, and distribution of approximately \$43 million of federal special education funds, ensures the accountability for the use of those funds, and oversees all related IDEA grant reporting and requirements. The fiscal manager reviews and approves the applications for the IDEA funds, determines if expenditures are allowable. A district's eligibility for funds is determined through state and federal fiscal effort maintenance requirements. This unit oversees the distribution of IDEA discretionary funds to support programs that are a specific area of need as identified in the APR.

Early Assistance Program

The Early Assistance Program (EAP) provides technical assistance to help parents, adult students, guardians, school district staff, advocates and other

members of the special education community understand the requirements of IDEA or implementing Montana laws. The EAP provides informal dispute resolution for special education issues relating to a student's free and appropriate public education, any violation of Part B of the IDEA or implementing Montana laws. The intention is to resolve special education disagreements amicably, with the lowest level of third-party involvement as possible. In addition to the EAP, there are several other dispute resolution options available under the IDEA, including: Individualized Education Program (IEP) facilitation, mediation, state administrative complaints, due process hearings, and expedited due process hearings. These options are administered and overseen by the EAP staff in collaboration with special education staff.

Data and Accountability

The Data and Accountability staff oversee the collection, analysis and reporting of all special education data required for federal and state reporting purposes. The staff provides technical assistance and support to local district staff in the management of student data related to special education. The staff also provide technical assistance to LEAs for the Special Education module of our statewide student information system and works with the system vendor to ensure compliance with state and federal regulations. The SEA has entered into contractual relationships with technical assistance centers to increase technical support in improving performance.

Technical Assistance System:

The mechanisms that the State has in place to ensure the timely delivery of high quality, evidenced based technical assistance and support to LEAs.

The Special Education Unit is organized into five work units that have specific functions and provide technical assistance related to those functions. These units include School Improvement, Continuing Education and Technical Assistance, Data and Accountability, IDEA Part B, and Early Learning.

The School Improvement/compliance monitoring unit provides both broad and specific technical assistance and training related to all aspects of the special education process, proper use and documentation of records, and student specific issues. General technical assistance training is regularly scheduled, and specific LEA technical assistance is provided whenever requested or required. Annually, trainings are provided across the state for teachers on compliance and the implementation of IDEA, as well as training on current hot topics. Topics are determined based on monitoring data, frequently asked questions from the field, and anything the state special education director feels is a hot topic (nationally or locally).

Technical assistance is also provided to ensure timely correction of all identified noncompliance and training is given related to such non-compliance.

The Continuing Education and Technical Assistance (CETA) unit is responsible for implementing several major training initiatives for the OPI that focus on instructional practices and interventions. The CETA unit activities are expanded upon in the Professional Development section.

The Data and Accountability unit provides LEA's technical assistance for all data entry and reporting for required state and federal special education reporting purposes. Training is conducted via phone, Zoom, TEAMS and in person for each data collection, depending on the needs of the LEAs. Again, technical assistance training is regularly scheduled, and specific LEA technical assistance is provided whenever requested.

The IDEA Part B Program unit provides technical assistance to LEA's in applying for, using, and accounting of federal special education funds. Assistance is also provided in developing and implementing program narratives, interlocal agreements, and special education procedures.

Technical assistance and updates are regularly provided to directors of special education at conferences and regional Montana Council of Administrators of Special Education (MCASE) meetings. In addition, OPI professional staff have areas of professional expertise that is available to LEA's, at request, for technical assistance and/or training. Such expertise includes former special education teachers with knowledge from preschool classrooms, special education classrooms and inclusion, former Speech/Language Pathologists, and former classroom teachers. In addition, the OPI hires local LEA staff as short-term workers to provide training as needed. Starting in the fall of 2020, the special education staff provides monthly special education Community of Practice on various topics and hold monthly director calls to discuss current issues in special education & state updates.

Montana currently works with several federal Technical Assistance providers and participates in federal grants which include: National Center for Systemic Improvement (NCSI), the Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS), Early Childhood Technical Assistance (ECTA), the Center for the Integration of IDEA Data (CIID), the Center for IDEA Fiscal Reporting (CIFR), the IDEA Data Center (IDC), and the Center for IDEA Early Childhood Data Systems (DaSy).

Working with staff from the Technical Assistance for Excellence in Special Education (TAESE), the OPI has facilitated the Montana Higher Education Consortium (HEC) for twenty years. The HEC continues to bring together faculty from each of the colleges and universities in Montana with teacher preparation programs to learn, discuss, and stay abreast of special education topics and issues across the state. This group has worked to provide greater standardization of the teacher training programs in Montana and has worked together to improve pre-service training programs. This group is also analyzing dispositions of teacher candidates and how to support them, resulting in better prepared educators.

The TAESE also provides technical assistance to the state through facilitating a large stakeholder meeting, conducting stakeholder input activities, and compiling and analyzing input. In addition, TAESE provides specific orientation training to Montana's State Special Education Advisory Panel, special education data collection and analysis of Indicator 8, Comprehensive System of Personnel Development (CSPD), TASK12 Educational Interpreters Performance Assessment (EIPA), Dispute Resolution in Special Education (DRSE) workgroups, Northern Plains Law Conference, Jobs Alike Work Groups (monitoring and low incidence disabilities) and other technical assistance as needed.

Montana has been a member of the Results-Based Accountability Cross-State Learning Collaborative through NCSI. Based on the state's general supervision responsibilities, we are evaluating our monitoring process and data to improve our assessment of special education program effectiveness at the LEA level. This, then, will drive not only the focus of our program reviews and monitoring, but also the scope of those activities. The purpose of this work is to better identify and meet the individual unique needs of each Montana LEA as they work to improve the outcomes for students with disabilities.

All initiatives across the OPI have been developed to include evidence-based practices. Montana's Multi-Tiered Systems of Supports (MTSS) initiative, for example, is based on the research and program developed by the Center on PBIS, an OSEP Technical Assistance Center. Montana's model for our State Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP) implementation is premised on the commitment to target and focus on existing supports already in place throughout the State Education Agency (SEA). These major initiatives were all developed under strict planning, research, stakeholder involvement, and based on known evidence-based practices that produce positive results.

The division's 619 Coordinator worked with the ECTA center. The 619 Coordinator also participates in monthly 619 calls and, along with the Part B Data Manager, in the 619 Data Quality Peer to Peer group run by IDC.

The Part B Data Manager continues working with IDC, DaSy, and CIID. The data manager participates in various Data Quality Peer to Peer groups to continue to increase capacity of understanding of IDEA data and to learn new ways to work with LEAs to better understand and report the data appropriately.

Professional Development System:

The mechanisms the State has in place to ensure that service providers have the skills to effectively provide services that improve results for children with disabilities.

Professional development is provided through multiple areas in the Special Education department. The Continuing Education and Technical Assistance (CETA) and the School Improvement Units have integrated responsibilities.

Montana's Statewide Comprehensive System of Personnel Development (CSPD) is comprised of regional professional development offerings (Regional CSPD), the State Personnel Development Grant (SPDG), the Montana Autism Education Project (MAEP), Higher Education Consortium (HEC), courses available through the Montana Teacher Learning Hub (<https://opi.mt.gov/Educators/Teaching-Learning/Teacher-Learning-Hub>), and additional training at conferences. Training for general education personnel is supported by the projects above and IDEA funds to increase skills to respond to the needs of students with disabilities in the regular classroom. Special Education staff have a lead role in the annual OPI Summer Institute and High School Forum.

The Regional CSPD structure includes five councils, each led by a regional coordinator, who provide free training for parents, special educators, general educators, and paraprofessionals. The OPI provides reports to the councils that include indicator data, trends in monitoring findings, evaluation data for CSPD and Special Education trainings statewide, and ESSA identifications. The councils analyze the data and align their activities to the APR indicators. This process directs professional development toward improving student outcomes for each indicator. New for 2021-22 was the statewide priority area of "The Science of Reading." In 2021-22, CSPD regions delivered 110 training events with 2,386 attendees. The regional coordinators meet monthly as part of the statewide CSPD council.

The OPI completed the no cost extension year and final reporting in November 2021 for the 2015 SPDG which supported MTSS in schools across our state. MTSS work is strongly integrated into multiple areas of the OPI including ESSA, mental health, whole child supports, school climate, and literacy.

In 2020, Montana received a new 5-year SPDG for MTSS. The grant provides training and support to districts in building capacity to implement a systems-level problem-solving approach at the district, school, classroom, and individual student level to facilitate the adoption of evidence-based academic and behavioral practices. The grant provides autonomy to districts allowing them select professional development based on their individual needs. The focus for the 2021-22 school year was on developing modules for district teams, training MTSS Systems coaches, and supporting three pilot districts from CSPD Region 1. Materials and trainings developed are available on a MTSS training site. In Spring 2022, the SPDG accepted seven districts from CSPD Regions 2 & 3 and began initial grant onboarding with coaching support. Six districts from CSPD regions 4 & 5 will join in 2023-2024. Through the SPDG, our partnership with the MT Empowerment Center (MEC) provided MTSS parent training and resources.

The OPI Summer Institute and High School Forum provided professional development to general and special education faculty in 2021-22. A one-day High School Forum was held in November 2021 addressing the use of a MTSS framework around academics, behavior, school safety, and mental health with approximately 100 participants. The OPI Summer Institute returned to an in-person five-day institute in June 2022 with a focus on MTSS, best practices, positive behavior interventions and supports, mental health, and culturally and linguistically responsive classrooms. With the CETA Unit taking the lead, many other OPI Units collaborated to provide sessions at all tiers to meet the needs of all students, including students with disabilities. The 2022 event included over 140 sessions and 500 participants.

Special Education staff collaborates regularly with the Indian Education for All (IEFA) Unit, American Indian Student Achievement (AISA) Unit, and Tribal Relations and Resiliency Unit (TRRU) on the development and delivery of professional development to meet the unique needs of Montana's American Indian students. The IEFA, AISA, and TRRU Unit staff are the primary collaborators on Summer Institute and HS Forum providing relevant sessions to ensure the OPI addresses culturally and linguistically responsive components of MTSS.

Educating students with autism requires specific skills and knowledge beyond what is acquired through teacher preservice programs. The goals of the OPI Montana Autism Education Project (MAEP) are:

- to increase district-level knowledge of how to educate students with autism through in-person training, interactive video training, on-site technical assistance, and peer-to-peer collaboration; and
- to develop inter-agency collaboration between the OPI, school districts, Part C Agency providers, Department of Public Health and Human Services, the MEC, and Institutes of Higher Education (IHE).

The MAEP offers free autism and/or behavior consultations to public school students who qualify under the IDEA. Board Certified Behavior Analysts, Speech-Language Pathologists, and experienced educators are among the part-time consultants at OPI. During the 2021/22 school year, the MAEP provided 42 different trainings, for a total of 63 trainings. Over 1,300 Montana educators, parents, and others with an interest in autism and behavior management attended 6,372 hours of training. Training topics included: identifying students with autism, assistive technology, behavior management, brain differences in autism, executive functioning, life skills, self-advocacy, teaching communication and more.

The Montana Teacher Learning Hub is committed to provide active learning, high quality content, and relevant topics through an accessible, free online learning system. This past year the SPED Unit supported four Hub Courses specifically for improving skills for teachers of students with disabilities: The General Education Teacher Role in SPED, A Bit about Braille, Novice SPED Teacher Training, and Practical Strategies for Using Technology to Assist Notetaking with a total of 384 participants for 2021-22. The OPI revamped Novice SPED Teacher Training with a self-paced series which will have data in 2022-23. Three Courses in the series are: Special Education Overview for All School Staff, Referral, Evaluations, & Eligibility, and Writing Compliant IEPs. Through the Hub, the SPED unit also offered one online, facilitated course for paraeducators in 2021-22: Instructional Teamwork for Paraeducators with 4 participants. Other paraeducator facilitated courses were not available due to staff changes, and all paraeducator courses are being transitioned to self-paced courses to increase participation.

With the assistance of the Center for Technical Assistance for Excellence in Special Education (TAESE) at the Utah State University, the OPI continues to work with representatives of all Montana teacher preparation programs to improve preservice instruction through our Higher Education Consortium (HEC). The HEC has met twice a year for the past twenty years, in the spring and fall, to discuss critical issues and share ideas relating to teacher training programs. The focus of the HEC is to create a mechanism to foster greater involvement of the IHEs in important educational initiatives to ensure consistency between the message of the OPI and the IHEs. The meetings have created a strong partnership and collaboration between faculty members of the teacher training programs and the OPI.

The HEC met twice in 2021-2022, with guided discussions/presentations in the fall on Gifted and Talented, MTSS, the MAEP, and efforts to expand opportunities for Native Educators. The spring meeting included proficiency-based learning, review of teacher preparation program standards, and a presentation on Indian Education for All.

Broad Stakeholder Input:

The mechanisms for soliciting broad stakeholder input on the State's targets in the SPP/APR and any subsequent revisions that the State has made to those targets, and the development and implementation of Indicator 17, the State's Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP).

Discussions and Stakeholder input of the State's Performance Plan (SPP), Annual Performance Report (APR), State's Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP), and Results Driven Accountability (RDA)/Results Based Accountability (RBA) began in 2013 with our State Special Education Advisory Panel. The Panel is fully vested and broadly representative of Montana. Additionally, many of the panel members as well as SEA staff serve in other agency or organization leadership positions or on advisory groups in the disability community. This enables MT to draw insight and advice from a broad group of stakeholders with an understanding of Montana's unique needs, strengths, and potential weaknesses.

Other stakeholder groups we sponsor and/or engage include:

--Our Comprehensive System of Personnel Development (CSPD) includes both regional and state councils that regularly meet to assess APR data and to evaluate professional development priorities and results.

--The OPI staff has developed productive working relationships with other Montana agencies that serve youth and adults with disabilities. OPI staff participate as members of advisory councils for early childhood, vocational rehabilitation, juvenile justice, developmental disabilities, the state independent living council and the mental health divisions of the DPHHS. These connections have allowed the OPI staff to build strong working relationships with other agencies, which has resulted in multiple collaborative projects that have strengthened the commitments of all involved to working with Montana's youth to facilitate smooth transitions from birth to adulthood.

--Working with staff from TAESE, the OPI has facilitated the Montana Higher Education Consortium (HEC) for twenty years. The HEC continues to be a part of CSPD and brings together members of faculty from each of the colleges and universities teacher prep programs in Montana. Participation in the consortium is strong and includes faculty members from each of the public and private colleges in Montana. This group has worked to provide greater standardization of the teacher training programs in Montana and has worked together to improve pre-service training programs.

--The OPI staff is also engaged with the Schools Administrators of Montana (SAM) which include affiliates for Superintendents, Principals, Special Education Administrators, and Information Technology (IT) Directors. This partnership allows us to respond quickly to needs expressed in the field by school staff. We also provide SAM with a grant to help fund the Montana Recruitment Project. This program focuses on recruiting hard to fill positions such as speech/language pathologists, special education teachers, occupational therapists, and school psychologists for our districts throughout Montana.

Annually, the State Education Agency (SEA) brings together representatives from these stakeholder groups for a joint meeting facilitated by TAESE. This meeting gathers over 80 front-line stakeholders together to share up-dates of issues and gather input from a comprehensive representation of the Montana disability community, families and parents of children and students with and without disabilities. For the past seven years, the topic has been Montana's SSIP and activities have been conducted to solicit both general and specific stakeholder input. During the spring 2022 meeting, the state presented on using data within the state for Local Education Agencies (LEAs) to make decisions. This also included how to interpret the APR data.

Apply stakeholder involvement from introduction to all Part B results indicators (y/n)

YES

Number of Parent Members:

7

Parent Members Engagement:

Describe how the parent members of the State Advisory Panel, parent center staff, parents from local and statewide advocacy and advisory committees, and individual parents were engaged in setting targets, analyzing data, developing improvement strategies, and evaluating progress.

The State Advisory Panel has a diverse group of participants and parents from across the state of Montana. They meet four times a year, and each meeting includes an opportunity for engagement in setting targets, analyzing data, developing improvement strategies, and evaluating progress. The information presented and discussions can be found on the Advisory Panel webpage (<https://opi.mt.gov/Educators/School-Climate-Student-Wellness/Special-Education/Special-Education-Advisory-Panel>) in the Meeting Minutes for the individual meetings, or in the Annual Report which is a compilation of the minutes from each meeting and a description of the action items taken by the panel through the year.

Activities to Improve Outcomes for Children with Disabilities:

The activities conducted to increase the capacity of diverse groups of parents to support the development of implementation activities designed to improve outcomes for children with disabilities.

Throughout the reporting period, the Montana special education advisory panel met four times. The advisory panel consisted of 17 members, five of them who have children with varying disabilities. During the advisory panel meetings, members provided input on targets and feedback on improvement strategies related to each indicator.

In October 2021, the advisory panel members and a diverse set of stakeholders were asked to complete a survey to provide feedback on the 16 indicators. The OPI staff compiled the survey data and reviewed the feedback to inform target determinations.

In January 2022, the APR, with the adjustments to the indicator targets based on stakeholder feedback, was reviewed with the panel members. The panel members provided feedback specific to Indicators 6 and 13. They also prioritized the areas for improvement.

Based on a poll from the advisory panel in March 2022, secondary education, secondary transitions, and Part C to Part B transitions (Indicators 1, 2, 12, 13 & 14) were among the top three priorities. These priorities were set as the focus for the panel in the years to come.

Soliciting Public Input:

The mechanisms and timelines for soliciting public input for setting targets, analyzing data, developing improvement strategies, and evaluating progress.

The APR was presented to the Advisory Panel in January 2022. At that meeting, they were asked to provide feedback on the activities currently being conducted by the OPI (what was working, what was not), and to give ideas about other activities the OPI could engage in to improve outcomes for students with disabilities.

Making Results Available to the Public:

The mechanisms and timelines for making the results of the target setting, data analysis, development of the improvement strategies, and evaluation available to the public.

The APR will be posted to the OPI Website (<https://opi.mt.gov/Educators/School-Climate-Student-Wellness/Special-Education/Special-Education-Annual-Performance-Report>) as a part of the Annual Performance Report after the OPI receives its determination letter from OSEP.

Reporting to the Public

How and where the State reported to the public on the FFY 2020 performance of each LEA located in the State on the targets in the SPP/APR as soon as practicable, but no later than 120 days following the State's submission of its FFY 2020 APR, as required by 34 CFR §300.602(b)(1)(i)(A); and a description of where, on its Web site, a complete copy of the State's SPP/APR, including any revision if the State has revised the targets that it submitted with its FFY 2020 APR in 2022, is available.

The February 1, 2023, Montana Annual Performance Report will be made available to the public via the OPI Web site (<https://opi.mt.gov/Educators/School-Climate-Student-Wellness/Special-Education/Special-Education-Annual-Performance-Report>). An electronic announcement of the report with links to the Montana Annual Performance Report will be sent stakeholders through the OPI Compass Monthly Newsletter.

Reporting to the Public on the Performance of each LEA

In accordance with section 616(b)(2)(C)(ii)(I) of IDEA, the OPI will report annually to the public on the performance of each local educational agency (LEA) on the targets in the State Performance Plan. The report on performance of LEAs will be made available to the public on the OPI Web site (<https://gems.opi.mt.gov/school-district-data>) no later than June 1, 2023. The OPI will not report information on performance to the public that would result in the disclosure of personally identifiable information about individual children or data that is insufficient to yield statistically reliable information.

To access the reports from the link above:

1. Select the District Profile option.
2. Select a district from the list on the right side.
3. Click on the Program & Course Offerings tab above the district list.
4. Select the Special Education District Performance Report
5. When you select that button, you will be at the report, looking at the relevant district for the prior FY.
6. To review a different year, select the desired year from the drop down in the upper left of the screen.

Please note these reports may take a few minutes to load.

The GEMS platform is built to be used with Safari, Firefox, Chrome, and Edge. It will not work with older versions of Internet Explorer as it is no longer supported by Microsoft. Occasionally, an error report is received that the PowerBI will not load. If that happens, wait a couple minutes and refresh the page.

Intro - Prior FFY Required Actions

The State's IDEA Part B determination for both 2021 and 2022 is Needs Assistance. In the State's 2022 determination letter, the Department advised the State of available sources of technical assistance, including OSEP-funded technical assistance centers, and required the State to work with appropriate entities. The Department directed the State to determine the results elements and/or compliance indicators, and improvement strategies, on which it will focus its use of available technical assistance, in order to improve its performance. The State must report, with its FFY 2021 SPP/APR submission, due February 1, 2023, on: (1) the technical assistance sources from which the State received assistance; and (2) the actions the State took as a result of that technical assistance.

Response to actions required in FFY 2020 SPP/APR

Montana engaged with numerous Technical Assistance (TA) centers through the FFY2021 year. Specifically, Montana:

- Worked with IDC to beta test the Non-Response Bias Tool. This work allowed Montana to better understand, report, and thoroughly explain response rates and non-response bias for indicators 8 and 14.
- Participated in the SSIP Data Quality Peer to Peer Group calls facilitated by IDC. As a result, the SSIP Coordinator was better equipped to engage and build the capacity of educators at target schools. The engagement opportunities and technical assistance in -turn provided by the SSIP Coordinator empowered educators to put programs into place that resulted in an increase in high school completion rate of American Indian students with disabilities.
- Participated in the SPP/APR Data Quality Peer to Peer Group calls facilitated by IDC. This TA resulted in the APR Coordinator and Data Manager being able to complete the APR in a more efficient and effective manner.
- Engaged in Significant Disproportionality Calls, which allowed the Data Manager to develop new business rules for significant disproportionality and work with the system developer to code and make the rules operational. By automating operational decisions and improving the ability to audit the data for compliance purposes, the quality and use of data is likely to improve. These calls also served as supplemental training for the Fiscal and Reporting Manager, which lead to the facilitation of data talks about Significant Disproportionality for various outcome data for children with disabilities.
- Participated in DMS calls by OSEP, CADRE, NCSI, IDC. These calls allowed (and continue to allow) OPI staff to be prepared for their upcoming DMS Visit in June 2023 and immediately improve processes and procedures. Actions taken based on these calls included completion of the protocols provided by OSEP, discussions among staff of current processes, and ideas for change to improve and better meet the requirements of general supervision.
- Engaged in RBAS calls with NCSI. These calls have allowed the School Improvement Unit manager to work with his team to begin developing an RBAS process for differentiated monitoring.

Intro - OSEP Response

The State did not describe the mechanisms for soliciting broad stakeholder input on the State's targets in the SPP/APR and subsequent revisions that the State made to those targets. Specifically, the State did not report a description of the activities conducted to increase the capacity of diverse groups of parents.

The State's determinations for both 2021 and 2022 were Needs Assistance. Pursuant to section 616(e)(1) of the IDEA and 34 C.F.R. § 300.604(a), OSEP's June 24, 2022 determination letter informed the State that it must report with its FFY 2021 SPP/APR submission, due February 1, 2023, on: (1)

the technical assistance sources from which the State received assistance; and (2) the actions the State took as a result of that technical assistance. The State provided the required information.

Intro - Required Actions

The State has not provided a description of the activities conducted to increase the capacity of diverse groups of parents. In its FFY 2022 SPP/APR, the State must provide the required information.

The State's IDEA Part B determination for both 2022 and 2023 is Needs Assistance. In the State's 2023 determination letter, the Department advised the State of available sources of technical assistance, including OSEP-funded technical assistance centers, and required the State to work with appropriate entities. The Department directed the State to determine the results elements and/or compliance indicators, and improvement strategies, on which it will focus its use of available technical assistance, in order to improve its performance. The State must report, with its FFY 2022 SPP/APR submission, due February 1, 2024, on: (1) the technical assistance sources from which the State received assistance; and (2) the actions the State took as a result of that technical assistance.