

## 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 the IDEA Part B requirements are met (e.g., integrated monitoring activities; data on processes and results; the SPP/APR; fiscal management; policies, procedures, and practices resulting in effective implementation; and improvement, correction, incentives, and sanctions). Include a description of all the mechanisms the State uses to identify and verify correction of noncompliance and improve results. This should include, but not be limited to, State monitoring, State database/data system, dispute resolution, fiscal management systems as well as other mechanisms through which the State is able to determine compliance and/or issue written findings of noncompliance. The State should include the following elements:**

**Describe the process the State uses to select LEAs for monitoring, the schedule, and number of LEAs monitored per year.**

At a minimum, once every five years all LEAs and every three years for State Operated programs (i.e. Montana School for the Deaf and Blind, Department of Corrections) or State Supported programs (i.e. Residential treatment facilities, Day Treatment facilities), participate in an Integrated Monitoring System (IMS) review. The IMS schedule for local education agencies (LEAs) is based upon a balanced distribution of districts across the state and Child Count data. Each year approximately 75-80 LEAs are monitored and 1-3 State Operated programs or State Supported programs are monitored. The cycle is dispersed over a 3- or 5-year period and ensures a review of all entities in a timely manner. The IMS schedule is posted on the Montana Office of Public Instruction (OPI) School Improvement website

(<https://opi.mt.gov/Portals/182/Page%20Files/Special%20Education/School%20improvement/MonitoringCycle.pdf?ver=2024-09-06-092406-013>).

Approximately 12 months prior to participation in a cyclical monitoring, the administration at the LEAs, State Operated and State Supported programs (henceforth referred to as entity) will receive both written and verbal notification. Administration and the State Education Agency (SEA) staff then work together to determine a date for the active monitoring review. An optional pre-monitoring training is offered and consists of outlining the IMS overall; what is required for compliance; providing details of proper documentation; and recommendations for best practices.

The SEA assigns a lead monitor acting as the primary point of contact with LEA superintendents and special education directors. When an LEA is a member of a special education cooperative, each of the LEA's superintendents and the cooperative director will receive written and verbal notification. When an LEA is participating in a consortium, each of the LEA's superintendents and the consortium director overseeing the consortium receive written and verbal notification.

If the SEA receives information of a credible allegation that suggests a district may not be meeting all the requirements of the IDEA regulations and Montana Administrative Rules, SEA must conduct due diligence in a timely manner to address the allegation. One way of doing this is to conduct a full or limited off cycle monitoring, referred to as a Field Issues Process (FIP). Examples of information that would be of concern would be findings from a due process or state complaint, fiscal concerns (high-risk status, concerns regarding unallowable costs, etc.), multiple stakeholder calls, media reports, or very poor student performance data.

#### IDEA Fiscal

The cyclical monitoring and the number of LEAs monitored for fiscal are the same as the ones outlined above in the programmatic monitoring.

As the primary recipient of IDEA Part B federal grants, the OPI is responsible for monitoring the activities of its subrecipients to ensure the subaward is used for authorized purposes and is in compliance with federal and state statutes, regulations, and the terms and conditions of the grant. 2 CFR § 200.332 The monitoring system includes three tiers of compliance: Tier I is universal monitoring that every LEA will complete annually, regardless of the previous year's findings. Tier II is Targeted monitoring which includes the LEAs on the cyclical monitoring schedule. Tier III is Intensive monitoring for which LEAs are selected as result of concerns brought to attention from the risk assessment or alternative methods. Note that Tier III monitoring may be in addition to an LEAs cyclical monitoring (Tier II).

Fiscal Monitoring Selection Process Subrecipients of IDEA federal funds are selected for the fiscal monitoring as follows:

- Cyclical Monitoring – Cohort list (five-year rotation)
- Risk Assessment – LEAs complete risk assessment yearly
- Other – Area(s) of concern identified by the OPI special education fiscal team

#### Cyclical Monitoring

The cyclical monitoring method will ensure that the OPI monitors all LEAs and subrecipients receiving IDEA Part B 611 and 619 funds at any given point of time in a five-year cycle at a minimum. Within this cyclical monitoring, the OPI special education fiscal team will determine whether the subrecipients are assigned Tier II or Tier III monitoring in addition to the annual Tier I risk assessment. The factors used in making this determination are:

- Risk assessment
- Amount of award (combined 611 & 619)
- Maintenance of Effort
- CCEIS status
- Single audit findings
- Tier I findings
- External considerations brought to the attention of the OPI

All grantees classified as "high risk" in the annual risk assessment will automatically be placed in Tier III monitoring.

## Risk Based Monitoring

IDEA Part B administrators perform an annual risk assessment of all LEAs and subrecipients receiving IDEA Part B 611 & 619 funds using the Risk Assessment Tool and rubric (See Appendix B) Risk ratings are established as follows:

Risk Range Level of Monitoring

Low potential of risk 0 – 13 Tier I – Universal

Moderate potential of risk 14 – 30 Tier II – Targeted

High potential of risk 31+ Tier III - Intensive

Any LEA in the cyclical monitoring cycle will receive at least a Tier II monitoring regardless of the results of the risk assessment. The OPI special education fiscal team reserves the right to monitor any LEA at any time for reasons other than those identified in cyclical or risk-based monitoring. Any subrecipient may be scheduled for Tier II or Tier III monitoring based on external findings.

## Levels of Monitoring

There are three levels of fiscal monitoring:

- Tier I – Universal Monitoring: Fiscal compliance audit
- Tier II – Targeted Monitoring: Fiscal compliance and process audit
- Tier III – Fiscal compliance, process audit, and on-site or virtual audit

All subrecipients of IDEA federal funds participate in Tier I monitoring annually.

## Early Assistance Program (EAP)

Early Assistance Program (EAP) The 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 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.

**Describe how student files are chosen, including the number of student files that are selected, as part of the State's process for determining an LEA's compliance with IDEA requirements and verifying the LEA's correction of any identified compliance.**

For all monitoring activities, including the SPP/APR indicators and verification of correction of identified non-compliance, the following process is used:

The SEA will generate a random sample of individual student special education records based on the most recent December 1 special education child count data submitted by the entity. For an entity with a child count greater than 21, the number of files will be 10% of the total special education count. If the child count is less than 20, no fewer than 2 files will be selected. The SEA reserves the right to review additional records as needed.

Files will be selected by considering the following:

- To the maximum extent possible, files will be chosen from different IDEA eligibility categories
- Grade levels
- Placement (i.e., general education, self-contained, home bound)
- Initial evaluations within the past 24 months
- Evaluation process of students through the Response to Intervention (RtI)
- IEPs developed in the past 12 months
- Extended School Year (ESY)
- Alternative Statewide Assessment
- Secondary Transition IEPs
- Transportation

Additional files will be reviewed for Students With Unique Concerns (SWUCs). SWUCs include students with disabilities who, during the current school year, met one of the areas listed below:

- Transfers
- Surrogate parents
- Parentally placed private school students
- Aversive treatment plans
- Manifestation determination
- Graduated
- Exited
- Not eligible
- Revocation of Consent
- Day Treatment

**Describe the data system(s) the State uses to collect monitoring and SPP/APR data, and the period from which records are reviewed.**

Data used for Indicators 1, 2, 4, 6, 7, 9, 10, and 17 comes from Montana's Student Information System (SIS), Achievement in Montana (AIM). This system allows school districts to submit required staff, student, and course information electronically. The SIS provides the SEA, the State of Montana, federal entities, and the education community, with timely accurate data used for state and federal reporting. Indicator data from 1, 2, 4, and 17 are lag data and come from the 2022/2023 school year. Indicators 6, 7, 9, and 10 data are from the 2023/2024 school year.

Indicator 3 data come from our vendors (Smarter Balanced, Cognia for the Multi-State Alternate Assessment (MSAA), American College Testing (ACT), and soon to be New Meridian for our new statewide assessment, Montana Aligned to Standards Through-Year (MAST). The data comes from the 2023/2024 school year.

Data for Indicators 5, 11, 12, 13, and 14 comes from the Special Education Applications Portal. This is an internal monitoring and special education data certification application. The data for these indicators from the 2023/2024 school year.

Indicator 8 data come from Data Driven Enterprises. Data Driven Enterprises is a research and professional development organization that provides program evaluation, statistical analysis, and data trainings to schools, districts, and state departments of education. The data for this indicator is from the 2023/2024 school year.

The data for indicators 15 and 16 is collected from the SY 2023-2024 reporting year (July 1, 2023, to June 30, 2024). For Indicator 15, when the SEA receives a Request for Due Process Hearing, the SEA issues a Notice of Filing that in part notifies the parties of the requirements around resolution meetings and the resolution period. The Notice of Filing includes a Due Process Resolution Tracking Form that the public agency is required to fill out. This form tracks whether a resolution meeting was held and if so, the outcome of the resolution meeting and whether it resulted in a written settlement agreement. For Indicator 16, SEA's mediators are required to complete a SEA Mediator Report Form at the conclusion of the mediation. The Mediator Report Form tracks the outcome of the mediation and whether it resulted in a written agreement. For Indicators 15 and 16, the data is collected on an ongoing basis after receipt of one of the aforementioned forms and entered into a table that tracks all of the IDEA required dispute resolution data. The SEA has minimal (less than 10) due processes or mediations each year.

**Describe how the State issues findings: by number of instances or by LEAs.**

Findings of noncompliance determined through state monitoring systems, dispute resolution systems, and fiscal monitoring systems are issued at the LEA level. For SPP/APR compliance indicators, the findings of noncompliance are currently issued at the instance level.

**If applicable, describe the adopted procedures that permit its LEAs to correct noncompliance prior to the State's issuance of a finding (i.e., pre-finding correction).**

While allowed in prior years, the SEA no longer allows for pre-finding correction for LEAs.

**Describe the State's system of graduated and progressive sanctions to ensure the correction of identified noncompliance and to address areas in need of improvement, used as necessary and consistent with IDEA Part B's enforcement provisions, the OMB Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards (Uniform Guidance), and State rules.**

The SEA may take enforcement actions as part of a corrective action or for noncompliance with a previous corrective action. The Uniform Grant Guidance 2 CFR§200.339 authorizes the SEA to use enforcement mechanisms that may include but are not limited to the following:

- Temporarily withhold cash payments pending correction of the deficiency or more severe enforcement action.
- Disallow all or part of the cost of the activity or action not in compliance.
- Wholly or partly suspend or terminate the federal award.
- Initiate suspension or debarment proceedings.
- Withhold further federal awards for the grant.
- Take other remedies that may be legally available.
- The SEA may deny a grant application for federal funding as an enforcement action.

**Describe how the State makes annual determinations of LEA performance, including the criteria the State uses and the schedule for notifying LEAs of their determinations. If the determinations are made public, include a web link for the most recent determinations.**

The SEA uses the following data points and information to make annual determinations of LEA performance:

- SPP/APR compliance indicators (4B, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13)
- Timely, complete, and accurate data (based on LEA data submissions and data requests made to LEAs)
- Timely correction of findings of noncompliance (correction of findings of noncompliance within one year of notification)
- Audit findings

The SEA issues annual determinations of performance in four categories using the following criteria:

**Meets Requirements**

- Substantial compliance on all compliance indicators;
- Data submissions and data requests made to LEAs were timely, complete, and accurate 100% of the time
- Any findings of noncompliance were verified as corrected within one year of notification 100% of the time; AND
- No audit findings

Note: If an LEA does not meet 100% compliance on only one of these Indicators, the SEA will consider the LEA to be "Meet Requirements" if demonstrating a high level of compliance (90% or better).

**Needs Assistance**

- Compliance percentages of between 75%-89% compliance for one or more of the following components: compliance Indicators 11, 12, and 13; timely, complete, and accurate data; and/or timely correction of findings of noncompliance OR
- Identified as having significant discrepancy that is the result of inappropriate policies, procedures, and practices (Indicator 4B) and /or disproportionate representation that is the result of inappropriate identification (Indicators 9 and 10) OR
- One or more findings of noncompliance not corrected within one year OR
- Identified as high-risk on audit findings

Note: If an LEA is Needs Assistance for two or more consecutive years, the SEA will take one or more of the following actions: advise the LEA of technical assistance that will help the LEA address its areas of need, direct the use of LEA-level funds under Part B on the area(s) where assistance is needed, and identify the LEA as a high-risk grantee and impose special conditions on the LEA's IDEA consolidated grant.

**Needs Intervention**

- Compliance percentages below 75% compliance for one or more of the following components: compliance Indicators 11, 12, and 13; timely, complete, and accurate data; and/or timely correction of findings of noncompliance and failed to make progress from the prior year OR
- Identified as having significant discrepancy that is the result of inappropriate policies, procedures, and practices (Indicator 4B) and/or disproportionate representation that is the result of inappropriate identification (Indicators 9 and 10) and has not made significant progress in correcting the noncompliance OR
- Failure to demonstrate timely correction of previous findings of noncompliance and has not made significant progress in correcting the noncompliance OR
- Continues to be identified as a high-risk district based on audit findings and has not made significant progress in correcting the identified audit findings

Note: If the LEA is identified as Needs Intervention for three consecutive years or more, the SEA shall take one or more of the actions required under 34 CFR 300.604(b): require the LEA to develop a corrective action plan or improvement plan if the SEA determines the LEA should correct the problem in one year; seek to recover funds; withhold, in part or whole, any further payments under Part B of the IDEA; and refer the matter for appropriate enforcement action.

**Needs Substantial Intervention**

- The failure to substantially comply significantly affects the core requirements of the IDEA, such as the delivery of services to children with disabilities or state exercise of general supervision AND/OR
- The LEA has informed the SEA it is unwilling to comply verbally or through actions or inactions OR
- The LEA has been determined through audit findings to have misspent funds

Note: When the SEA determines that the district needs Substantial Intervention, the SEA shall provide written notice to the Superintendent of Public

Instruction of the LEA's failure to comply and take one or more of the following enforcement actions, consistent with 34 CFR 300.604(c): recover funds; withhold, in part or whole, any further payments under Part B of the IDEA; and refer the matter for appropriate enforcement action consistent with state administrative rules and IDEA requirements.

Annual LEA performance determinations are issued in the spring of each school year.

**Provide the web link to information about the State's general supervision policies, procedures, and process that is made available to the public.**

Integrated Monitoring System:

<https://opi.mt.gov/Portals/182/Page%20Files/Special%20Education/School%20Improvement/OPI.IMS%20FINAL.pdf?ver=2024-08-16-180528-947>

Montana Fiscal:

<https://opi.mt.gov/Educators/School-Climate-Student-Wellness/Special-Education#10963313030-idea-fiscal>

Dispute Resolution:

<https://opi.mt.gov/Educators/School-Climate-Student-Wellness/Special-Education/Dispute-Resolution>

**Technical Assistance System:**

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

The Special Education Unit is organized into three sub-units that have specific functions and provide technical assistance related to those functions. These units include School Improvement, Continuing Education and Technical Assistance (CETA), and IDEA Part B.

The School Improvement 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 and specific LEA technical assistance is provided as requested or required. Annually, training is provided across the state for teachers on compliance and the implementation of IDEA, as well as training on current updates. Topics are determined based on monitoring data, frequently asked questions from the field, questions to the Early Assistance Program (EAP), and special education updates, both nationally and locally.

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

The CETA unit is responsible for implementing several training initiatives for the SEA that focus on instructional practices and interventions. The activities are expanded upon in the Professional Development section.

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. Data and Accountability staff provide LEAs with technical assistance for all data entry and reporting for required state and federal special education reporting purposes. The early childhood staff collaborate with Part C staff and provide technical assistance as requested on transition from IDEA Part C to IDEA Part B. The staff also collaborate with other units within the SEA to provide support in early literacy and the Jump Start program. Training is conducted via phone, Zoom, TEAMS and/or in-person, depending on the needs of the LEA.

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, the SEA staff have areas of expertise that are available to LEA's, as requested for technical assistance and/or training. Such expertise includes former special education teachers with knowledge from preschool classrooms, special education classrooms and inclusion, Speech/Language Pathologists, and former classroom teachers. The SEA is in its fourth year of providing several monthly Community of Practice (CoP) calls through zoom. In addition, the SEA continues to hold monthly special education director calls to provide updates and to discuss current issues related to special education.

**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 pre-monitoring training, regional training opportunities (Regional CSPD), State Personnel Development Grant (SPDG), Montana Autism Education Project (MAEP), Higher Education Consortium (HEC), Montana Teacher Learning Hub, and training at events. Special education coordinates the Summer Institute (SI) and High School (HS) Forum. Training for general education personnel is supported by the projects above to increase skills to respond to the needs of students with disabilities. During the 2023-24 school year the monitoring team provided optional pre-monitoring professional development for LEAs/cooperatives/state-supported programs scheduled for comprehensive monitoring the following school year. Professional Development (PD) was provided to special education case-managers, specialists, and administration in both the virtual/onsite formats. Pre-monitoring trainings were provided to 16 of 18 districts and/or cooperatives.

The Regional CSPD structure includes five councils, each led by a regional coordinator, which provide free training for parents, special educators, general educators, and paraprofessionals. The regional coordinators meet monthly with the SEA as the statewide CSPD council. The SEA provides an annual report to each council with indicator data, trends in monitoring, and evaluation data for all Regional CSPD training. The councils analyze the data to align their activities to the APR indicators and direct professional development toward improving student outcomes. The Regional CSPD hosted 153 in-person and virtual training events in 2023-24 with 2821 attendees. The statewide priority training topic this year was mathematics. Montana continued our 2020 SPDG: Montana's Tiered System of Supports. The SPDG provides coaching support to districts to increase capacity to implement a system-level problem-solving approach to facilitate the adoption of evidence-based academic and behavioral practices to improve student outcomes. MT's SPDG provides coaching support through online MTSS modules while providing autonomy to districts to select professional development based on individual needs. The focus in year 4 was on creating Building Implementation Team (BIT) modules and supporting 16 districts from all 5 CSPD regions. Ten districts from CSPD Region III began a targeted coaching pilot in Spring 2024, increasing the districts supported by the project to 26. All SPDG materials are available on a MTSS training site. Our SPDG partnership with the MT Empowerment Center (MEC) provided public service announcements and resources for parents.

Educating students with autism and related disabilities requires specific skills and knowledge beyond what is acquired through teacher preservice programs. The goals of the SEA's Montana Autism Education Project (MAEP) are to: 1) Increase district-level knowledge of how to educate students

with autism and related disabilities through in-person training, interactive video training, onsite technical assistance, and peer-to-peer collaboration; and 2) Develop interagency collaboration between the SEA, 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 for public school students who qualify for special education services under the IDEA. Board certified behavior analysts, speech-language pathologists, psychologists, and experienced educators are among the part-time consultants at the SEA. During the 2023-24 school year, the MAEP provided 34 unique training opportunities, including scholarships for partner events, for a total of 93 MAEP professional development sessions statewide. These trainings were attended by 1,068 Montana educators, parents, and others who have an interest in autism, neurodiverse learning, and behavior management for a total of 377.5 hours of training offered. Topics included autism assessment, compliance with the rule on the use of aversive treatment procedures, data collection, writing IEP goals, behavior management, executive function, sensory needs, social skills, augmentative and alternative communication, foundations of autism, classroom management, and effective learning systems.

With the assistance of the TAESE center at Utah State University, the SEA meets 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 since 1999 to discuss critical issues and share ideas. The meetings create a strong collaborative partnership between faculty members and the SEA. The fall 2023 HEC meeting had presentations and guided discussion on strengthening tribal partnerships, tribal approaches, and proficiency-based education. The spring 2024 meeting included presentations and discussions on strategies for supporting faculty and student mental health, including a review of data, K-12 perspectives, and stress management.

The Montana Teacher Learning Hub provides free, accessible, high-quality content and online active learning throughout Montana. Three new Special Education courses were published this year, including two courses in the series Making Transitions Matter: Becoming an Adult and Community Resources and The Impact of Deafblindness on Learning and Development, in collaboration with Montana's DeafBlind Project. The special education team supported 8 existing courses targeted for teachers of students with disabilities, including a 4-part series: Special Education Overview for all School Staff; Referrals, Evaluations and Eligibility; Writing Compliant IEPs; and Writing Transition IEPs; and 4 introductory courses: General Education Teacher Role in SPED; 2E: Twice Exceptional; A Bit about Braille; and Practical Strategies for Using Technology to Assist Notetaking. The 11 Special Education courses for educators had 562 participants for 2023-24. We also supported 3 self-paced paraeducator courses: Orientation to Special Education for Paraprofessionals (V2), Instructional Strategies for Paraeducators (V2), and Instructional Teamwork for Paraeducators (V2) which had 226 total participants in 2023-24. The SPDG team supported two MTSS Hub courses and one on high leverage practices. In May 2024, the Hub added a 9-hour professional development series on Dyslexia.

The Summer Institute (SI) and High School (HS) Forum events provided professional development to general and special education faculty. Sessions were targeted at all tiers to meet the needs of all students, including students with disabilities and tribal students. A 2-day HS Forum was held in November 2023 promoting the use of the MTSS framework for academics, behavior, and mental health in a secondary environment with 99 attendees in 19 sessions. The SI provided 4 days of PD in June 2024 with a focus on special education, MTSS, evidence-based practices, PBIS, IEFA, and mental health. The 2024 SI event included over 124 sessions and 523 attendees.

Special education staff collaborate with the Indian Education for All (IEFA) and Tribal Student Achievement and Relations (TSAR) units on the development and delivery of professional development to meet the unique needs of Montana's American Indian students. The IEFA and TSAR unit staff are partners on SI, HS Forum, and HEC providing relevant sessions to ensure the SEA addresses cultural and linguistic responsiveness and tribal student achievement.

Special education staff presented at the Montana Council for Exceptional Children (MCEC) and Montana Council for Administrators of Special Education (MCASE) Conferences, as well as other events.

#### **Stakeholder Engagement:**

**The mechanisms for broad stakeholder engagement, including activities carried out to obtain input from, and build the capacity of, a diverse group of parents to support the implementation activities designed to improve outcomes, including target setting and any subsequent revisions to targets, analyzing data, developing improvement strategies, and evaluating progress.**

The Special Education Advisory Panel (SEAP) in Montana has been in existence since 2013. The SEAP is made up of 17 members, nine of whom are parents of students with disabilities. The panel is fully vested and broadly representative of Montana. Many of the panel members serve in other agency or organization leadership positions or on advisory councils as the voice of students with disabilities. This enables the SEA to draw insight and advice from a diverse group of stakeholders with an understanding of Montana's unique needs and strengths.

In the 2023/2024 school year, the SEA asked for input on Indicators 8 and 14 from the SEAP, the Special Education Directors, Educational Advocates, and the Weekly Superintendent's Hour. The SEA presented information on Indicator 8 regarding moving from a paper and pencil, sample, 23 question survey to an electronic, census, 10 question survey. All four entities agreed with the SEA's proposal.

The SEA asked the SEAP and Special Education Directors to weigh in on Indicator 14. The SEA proposed changing two questions and set new targets. Based on the information provided from stakeholders, the SEA did change the two questions and set new targets for Indicator 14.

In the spring of every school year, the SEA brings together parents, Montana's Parent Training and Information center the Montana Empowerment Center (MEC), the SEAP, and other state agencies for a joint stakeholder meeting. During this meeting the SEA reviews the APR submitted in February. The SEA asks for suggestions on how to potentially improve the outcomes of the indicators along with doing a data drill down of the state data and district level data.

In addition to the above-mentioned stakeholders, the SEA worked with many other stakeholder groups that support students with disabilities. Those groups include but are not limited to:

Montana Council for Exceptional Children (MCEC) – presented on updates at the SEA, national level, and writing compliant special education paperwork  
Vocational Rehabilitation and Blind Services – strengthening our secondary transition  
Education Advocates – presented Indicator 8 changes & new monitoring process

Summer Institute

Montana Council of Administrators of Special Education (MCASE)

Higher Education Consortium (HEC)

Great Divide Special Education Cooperative board meeting

Dawson Community College – assisting in setting up the ParaPathways Program

Weekly Superintendent's Hour – Indicator 8

CSPD Regional Directors

Montana Empowerment Center – IEP Boot Camps

Disability Rights Montana

University of Montana – Mental Health Professional Development Grant for the Rural and Indigenous School-based Mental Health and Empowerment (RAISE) initiative

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

YES

**Number of Parent Members:**

9

**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 from across the state. The panel meets four times a year. These meetings include opportunities for engagement in reviewing and setting (if applicable) targets, analyzing data at the state level, and developing improvement strategies and recommendations for the State Superintendent. During the 2023/2024 school year, the SEA met on a quarterly basis with Disability Rights Montana (DRM), and monthly with the parent training and information center, MEC.

**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.**

The SEA holds the SEAP four times a year. The final meeting of the year includes stakeholders from around the state including parents from MEC, other state agencies who work with children, students, and adults with disabilities. At the final meeting of the year, the stakeholders look at the data from the APR and Data Driven Enterprises does a state level drill down of the indicators to present. Once the data has been presented, the stakeholder have the opportunity to discuss the data with their table mates. They're asked to provide feedback, suggestions for improvement, and ask questions.

**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 2024. It was explained to the advisory panel that the SEA was presenting changes to Indicator 14. Those changes consisted of changing two of the questions asked and setting new targets. The panel agreed to the changes and set targets at this meeting. Throughout each school year, stakeholders and members of the public have the ability to provide input on SPP/APR targets, the analysis of the publicly shared data, suggested improvement strategies that will result in improved outcomes for students with disabilities and evaluation of state progress and LEA progress towards state targets.

**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 meeting minutes from the SEAP can be found here: <https://opi.mt.gov/Educators/School-Climate-Student-Wellness/Special-Education/Regulations-and-Guidance#10965413037-federal-requirements>. In March of every year, the SEA shares the data of the most recently submitted APR. This information is shared either in an in-person or virtual meeting depending on the weather.

**Reporting to the Public**

**How and where the State reported to the public on the FFY 2022 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 2022 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 revisions if the State has revised the targets that it submitted with its FFY 2022 APR in 2024, is available.**

A report of the FFY 2022 performance of each LEA on the targets for SPP/APR indicators can be accessed directly via the following link: <https://opi.mt.gov/Portals/182/Page%20Files/Special%20Education/IDEA%20Data/Public%20Reporting%20Suppressed.xlsx?ver=2024-08-13-080405-260>.

The FFY 2023 performance of each LEA on the targets for SPP/APR indicators will be posted within 120 days of the February 3, 2025, submission of the SPP/APR and will be available on the following website: <https://opi.mt.gov/Educators/School-Climate-Student-Wellness/Special-Education/Special-Education-Annual-Performance-Report#10963313031-idea-data>. To access the link, click on "IDEA Data" and find the link to the publicly reported data under the "Public Reporting of IDEA Data" header.

A complete copy of the state's SPP/APR will be posted on the state website via the following link: <https://opi.mt.gov/Educators/School-Climate-Student-Wellness/Special-Education/Regulations-and-Guidance#11191313088-annual-performance-report>.

**Intro - Prior FFY Required Actions**

The State's IDEA Part B determination for both 2023 and 2024 is Needs Assistance. In the State's 2024 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 2023 SPP/APR submission, due February 1, 2025, 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 2022 SPP/APR**

During the 2023/2024 school year, the SEA worked with several OSEP-funded technical assistance centers. The most notable centers that were worked with include NCSI, CIFR, DCASD, and IDC. These four centers worked the SEA to improve their general supervision responsibilities.

The SEA worked with NCSI to assist in developing our Integrated Monitoring System (IMS). They assisted the SEA in developing a new monitoring system, requirements, and a complete manual for this process. The development of the new monitoring system affects the following indicators: 4 and 9-13. The SEA worked with the center through in-person and zoom meetings.

CIFR assisted the SEA in creating a fiscal monitoring system and a manual for the LEAs and the agency on how to conduct a fiscal monitoring. This is a requirement of our general supervision responsibilities and has allowed the SEA to start implementing fiscal monitoring at a new level. The work in developing this document was done through zoom meetings.

DCASD is one of the newer OSEP-funded technical assistance centers the SEA has worked very closely with. The SEA had to start from scratch in creating an LEA and state level document around significant disproportionality. With the assistance of DCASD the SEA has developed a significant disproportionality manual to assist with consistency each year. We meet with DCASD on a weekly and eventually bi-weekly basis through zoom and in-person at a conference(s). The team also attended many of the calls and webinars DCASD had to offer.

The SEA used the IDC for work with Indicator 17 and by submitting our drafts for the SPP/APR for comment. With the feedback provided, the SEA was able to make their SPP/APR stronger and by utilizing language used by OSEP. Communication occurred through email, zoom meetings, and in-person conference(s).

## **Intro - OSEP Response**

## **Intro - Required Actions**