

# 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

398

#### 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).**

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 the Early Assistance Program (EAP). The special education and legal units track data to ensure required compliance and/or corrections are made.

The State Education Agency (SEA) is transitioning from a compliance monitoring system to an Integrated Monitoring System (IMS) to conduct its General Supervision obligations. Under the former, the SEA compliance monitoring process consisted of the: review of individual student records; review of district policy, practices, and procedures; virtual records review and/or site visits; and communication with teachers and specialists.

With the incorporation of the IMS the SEA, in addition to the above actions, is reviewing the following in more depth:

- The provision of FAPE in the least restrictive environment (LRE);
- General supervision, including effective monitoring;
- A system of transition services;
- The use of resolution meetings including mediation; and
- Disproportionate representation of racial and ethnic groups in special education and related services, to the extent the representation is the result of inappropriate identification.

All identified noncompliance is recorded, verified, and accounted for through a process of:

- 1) Notification of all identified noncompliance;
- 2) Required correction of all identified noncompliance with the one-year timeline;
- 3) District submission of updated data, verifying 100 percent post-monitoring compliance;
- 4) Review of district practices and procedures;
- 5) Completion of required technical assistance and professional development; and
- 6) 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. The State Operated or State Funded programs are monitored on a three-year cycle. A standard protocol is used to select records to review.

If a LEA completes the correction of each instance of noncompliance and provides the SEA with additional records as requested, to verify ongoing evidence of compliance, no finding is issued. 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).

In addition to requesting additional records to show ongoing evidence of compliance, the SEA may require the district to also receive additional training or technical assistance.

During the last LEA monitoring cycle, the SEA identified 126 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 memo 23-01 guidance. All 126 instances of noncompliance were corrected within the one-year timeline.

#### IDEA Part B Program - Fiscal

The special education unit oversees the application, allocation, and distribution of approximately \$46 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, approves the applications for the IDEA funds, and determines if expenditures are allowable. 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 (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.

#### IDEA Part B Program - 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.

#### **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. IDEA Part B does include data and accountability as well as early childhood.

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 major training initiatives for the OPI 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 member also collaborates 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 third 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.

Montana currently works with several federal Technical Assistance centers including the following: National Center for Systemic Improvement (NCSI), the Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS), Early Childhood Technical Assistance (ECTA), the Center for IDEA Fiscal Reporting (CIFR), the IDEA Data Center (IDC), and the Center for IDEA Early Childhood Data Systems (DaSy). These centers provide the SEA insight into what other states are doing, provide general and intensive technical assistance, as well as supporting what the SEA is currently doing.

Working with the Technical Assistance for Excellence in Special Education (TAESE) staff, the SEA has facilitated the Montana Higher Education Consortium (HEC). The HEC provides a mechanism for collaboration, networking, discussion, and advising of critical issues among Montana Institutes of Higher Education. The consortium works towards encouraging a more seamless educational system and merging general and special education into one unified system; understanding and promoting the use of

evidence-based academic and behavioral strategies; and closely linking Montana teacher training and educational leadership programs to early childhood programs, K-12 education, and the SEA.

The TAESE center also provides technical assistance to the state through facilitating the SEA's annual 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, 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 SEA 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 SEA. These major initiatives were all developed under planning, research, stakeholder involvement, and based on known evidence-based practices that produce positive results.

#### **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 offerings (Regional CSPD), the State Personnel Development Grant (SPDG), the Montana Autism Education Project (MAEP), Higher Education Consortium (HEC), the Montana Teacher Learning Hub, Pre-Monitoring training, and additional training at conferences. Special Education staff have a lead role in the SEA 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 in the regular classroom.

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 regional coordinators meet monthly as part of the statewide CSPD council. The SEA provides reports to the councils with indicator data, trends in monitoring, and evaluations. The councils analyze the data to align their activities to the APR indicators. This process directs professional development toward improving student outcomes for each indicator. Continuing for 2022-23 was the statewide priority area of the "Science of Reading." In 2022-23, CSPD regions delivered 127 training events with 1,934 attendees in total.

Montana continued efforts for our 2020 SPDG: Montana's Tiered System of Supports. The SPDG provides training and coaching support to districts for building capacity to implement a systems-level problem-solving approach to facilitate the adoption of evidence-based academic and behavioral practices to improve student outcomes. MT's SPDG provides autonomy to districts allowing them select professional development based on individual needs. The focus in 2022-23 was developing modules for district and building level teams, training Systems coaches, and supporting 10 pilot districts through the developed modules from Regions 1, 2, and 3. Six districts from Regions 4 & 5 joined in spring 2023. All materials developed are available on the MTSS training site. Our SPDG partnership with the MT Empowerment Center (MEC) provided public service announcements and MTSS resources for parents.

Special Education staff collaborate with the Indian Education for All (IEFA) and Tribal Student Achievement, Relations, and Resiliency (TSARR) Units on the development and delivery of professional development to meet the unique needs of Montana's American Indian students. The IEFA and TSARR Unit staff are partners on the SEA's SI and HS Forum providing relevant sessions to ensure the SEA addresses culturally and linguistically responsiveness.

Educating students with autism 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 through in-person training, interactive video training, on-site 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 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 the SEA. During the 2022-23 school year, the MAEP provided 58 different trainings, for a total of 93 trainings. These trainings were attended by 1,480 Montana educators, parents, and others who have an interest in autism and behavior management for a total of 6,650 hours of training completed. Topics included the identification of students with autism, compliance with the rule on the use of aversive treatment procedures, data collection, writing IEP goals, behavior management, addressing executive functioning needs for

students with autism, autism and girls, evidence-based practices, safety skills, communication needs and systems, using assistive technology for behavior support, principals of reinforcement, and iPad usage.

With the assistance of the TAESE at the Utah State University, the SEA 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 since 1999 to discuss critical issues and share ideas. The meetings have created a strong partnership and collaboration between faculty members of the teacher training programs and the SEA. The HEC met twice in 2022-23, with guided discussions and presentations in the fall on teacher recruitment and retention programs and building relationships and resilience with MentorMT. The spring meeting included a discussion on CAEP accreditation, a presentation on new Montana accreditation standards, and efforts to expand opportunities for native educators and partnerships with tribal colleges.

The Montana Teacher Learning Hub is committed to providing active learning, high quality content, and relevant topics through an accessible, free online learning system. This past year the Special Education Unit supported eight Hub Courses for improving skills for teachers of students with disabilities. These included a four-part SpEd Series: Special Education Overview for all School Staff; Referrals, Evaluations and Eligibility; Writing Compliant IEPs; and Writing Transition IEPs; and four introductory courses: General Education Teacher Role in SPED, 2E: Twice Exceptional, A Bit about Braille, and Practical Strategies for Using Technology to Assist Notetaking. These eight courses for educators had a total of 458 participants for 2022-23. Through the Hub, the Special Education unit transitioned three previously facilitated paraeducator courses to self-paced courses: Orientation to Special Education for Paraprofessionals (V2), Instructional Strategies for Paraeducators (V2), and Instructional Teamwork for Paraeducators (V2) which increased participation to 46 in 2022-23, from only four participants in 2021-22. The hub also supports two MTSS Courses and one on high leverage practices from CEEDAR.

During the 2022-23 school year the monitoring team provided optional Pre-monitoring professional development for LEA's/Coops/State supported programs scheduled for comprehensive monitoring during the 2023-24 year. Professional Development (PD) was provided to Special Education case-managers and administration in both the virtual/onsite formats. Pre-Monitoring Trainings were provided to 12/14 districts and/or cooperatives.

The SEA SI and HS Forum events provided professional development to general and special education faculty. A one-day HS Forum was held in November 2022 promoting the use of the MTSS framework for academics, behavior, and mental health in a secondary environment with 160 attendees. The SEA SI provided five-days of PD in June 2023 with a focus on Special Education, MTSS, evidence-based practices, PBIS, IEFA, and mental health. Many other SEA Units provided sessions at all tiers to meet the needs of all students, including students with disabilities and tribal students. The 2023 SI event included over 150 sessions and 577 attendees. The SEA 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 multiple 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.**

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:

- 1) 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.
- 2) The State Education Agency (SEA) staff has developed strong working relationships with other Montana agencies that serve youth and adults with disabilities. The SEA staff participate as members of advisory councils for early childhood, vocational rehabilitation, low incidence disabilities, developmental disabilities, and the state independent living council. This has strengthened the commitments of the agencies working with Montana's youth to facilitate smooth transitions from birth to adulthood.
- 3) Working with the Technical Assistance for Excellence in Special Education (TAESE) staff, the SEA has facilitated the Montana Higher Education Consortium (HEC). The HEC provides a mechanism for collaboration, networking, discussion, and advising of critical issues among Montana Institutes of Higher Education. The consortium works towards encouraging a more seamless educational system and merging general and special education into one unified system; understanding and promoting the use of evidence-based academic and behavioral strategies; and closely linking Montana teacher training and educational leadership programs to early childhood programs, K-12 education, and the SEA.
- 4) The SEA staff is engaged with the Schools Administrators of Montana (SAM) which include affiliates for Superintendents, Principals, Special Education Administrators, and Information Technology (IT) Directors. This partnership gives the SEA the opportunity to develop collaborative partnerships with the Local Education Agencies (LEAs). The SEA also provides 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.
- 5) Annually, the SEA brings together representatives from various stakeholder groups for a joint meeting facilitated by TAESE. This meeting brings stakeholders together to share up-dates and gather input from each other. There is a comprehensive representation of the Montana disability community, families and parents of children and students with and without disabilities.

During the FFY22 reporting period, the Student Support Services Senior Manager met with the parents and community members of

the Montana School for the Deaf & Blind (MSDB) to start creating a graduate profile. In addition, our Early Assistance Program (EAP) Director presented to the parents of MSDB on the IDEA Framework (state purposes), general supervisory responsibilities and OPI's role as an SEA. The EAP Director also provided information on dispute resolution options and where at the OPI parents could go for technical assistance.

The Montana Empowerment Center and the OPI conducted various virtual presentations for parents of students with disabilities birth through age 21 and LEA staff. During the reporting period, the OPI presented on Present Levels of Academic Achievement Functional Performance (PLAAFPs), Measurable Annual Goals (MAGs), Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS), transitions, early childhood, and extended school year. Superintendent Arntzen hosted multiple community events in four geographically diverse cities across the state in December of 2022. Parents listened to the goals of legislators for education and then had the opportunity to ask questions of the legislators. Throughout the reporting period, OPI provided numerous virtual trainings for parents regarding student and school safety and supporting youth with ASD and other developmental disorders.

Annually, the OPI assists with the Montana Youth Transitions (MYT) Conference. The OPI team works in conjunction with MYT to present, coach, and mentor educators, parents, and students. This conference brings together the transition team of youth, parents, and professionals to learn strategies and resources to build a seamless transition plan from high school to the adult world. One parent stated the following, "This was my first time at the conference, and I had no idea there were so many things out there to help my son. The sessions on parenting techniques and educational tools were eye-opening, and I feel more equipped to support my child's learning journey."

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

YES

#### **Number of Parent Members:**

10

#### **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. The Panel meets 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 the meeting minutes can be found on the Advisory Panel webpage (<https://opi.mt.gov/Educators/School-Climate-Student-Wellness/Special-Education/Special-Education-Advisory-Panel>). This information can also be found 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 throughout 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 whom have children with disabilities, and representatives from Disability Rights Montana (DRM) and the Montana Empowerment Center (MEC), the state's Parent Training and Information (PTI) center. During the advisory panel meetings, members provided input on targets and feedback on improvement strategies related to each indicator.

In January 2023, the APR, was reviewed with the panel members. The panel members provided feedback specific to Indicator 8. It was decided by the Panel that the SEA would move from a paper/pencil parent survey to a fully electronic survey.

#### **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 2023. At that meeting, the Panel was asked to provide feedback on the activities currently being conducted by the SEA and to provide suggestions about additional activities the SEA 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 SEA 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 2021 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 2021 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 2021 APR in 2023, is available.**

The February 1, 2024, 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 SEA 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 SEA 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 SEA Web site (<https://gems.opi.mt.gov/school-district-data>) no later than July 1, 2024. The SEA 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.

The MT OPI State Director of Special Education worked with the agency partners to resolve the access to Growth and Enhancement of Montana Students (GEMS).

Note:

\* When reviewing an Elementary district, Indicators 1 & 2 will not be populated and when reviewing the high school district, Indicators 6 & 7 will not be populated, but place holders may still be there and show NA.

\* In the GEMS system, NA can mean an indicator is not applicable, the count of the students in this group is 0, or the district was not monitored the year in which the data is reported. An asterisk notes the cell size is less than 10.

## Intro - Prior FFY 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.

### Response to actions required in FFY 2021 SPP/APR

Technical Assistance Sources the SEA received assistance.

Montana currently works with several federal Technical Assistance centers including the following: National Center for Systemic Improvement (NCSI), the Early Childhood Technical Assistance (ECTA), the Center for IDEA Fiscal Reporting (CIFR), the IDEA Data Center (IDC), and the Center for IDEA Early Childhood Data Systems (DaSy).

Actions taken as result of that technical assistance.

- 1) NCSI has provided the SEA with improvement strategies on how to align the work in special education with the work in general education. This has created more collaboration, meetings, and conversations across the SEA divisions. The SEA has also taken a look at the general supervision requirements and has started to focus on areas of improvement such as fiscal and programmatic monitoring. This will also include what other units are doing so as not to duplicate efforts. Work has begun on moving the Special Education unit towards incorporating all data together for a more seamless report for our LEAs.
- 2) CIFR (and NCSI) have been providing intensive technical assistance since June of 2023. The four areas chosen to improve on over the course of the next several years include: written procedures and protocols for LEA Fiscal Monitoring; put our process of reallocation into writing aside from just the business protocols; create written procedures for LEAs explaining the CEIS process; and explore the requirements and process of creating a high-cost fund. In addition to improving on the four areas, the SEA continues to be a part of the Community of Practice (CoPs) & TA calls offered by CIFR.
- 3) IDC has provided the Part B data manager, reporting manager, and the 619 Coordinator with Data Quality Peer to Peer

group calls to increase the capacity of understanding of IDEA data. IDC continues to hold monthly calls with the data and reporting manager to provide any guidance on concerns the SEA may have. IDC was also utilized to help the SEA to better analyze the data for the SPP/APR during the reporting period. Intensive TA was provided for Indicator 14 as the SEA helped to pilot IDC's non-response bias tool.

4) The 619 Coordinator joins monthly calls ECTA continues to provide. The coordinator was able to attend multiple in-person conferences with ECTA staff and meet one to one as needed. There has also been discussion on how to improve our preschool outcome measures. Work continues to be done in this area.

## Intro - OSEP Response

The State's determinations for both 2022 and 2023 were Needs Assistance. Pursuant to Section 616(e)(1) of the IDEA and 34 C.F.R. § 300.604(a), OSEP's June 23, 2023 determination letter informed the State that it 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. The State provided the required information.

## Intro - 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.