

Indicator 6: Preschool Environments

Instructions and Measurement

Monitoring Priority: FAPE in the LRE

Results indicator: Percent of children with IEPs aged 3, 4, and aged 5 who are enrolled in a preschool program attending a:

- A. Regular early childhood program and receiving the majority of special education and related services in the regular early childhood program; and
- B. Separate special education class, separate school, or residential facility.
- C. Receiving special education and related services in the home.

(20 U.S.C. 1416(a)(3)(A))

Data Source

Same data as used for reporting to the Department under section 618 of the IDEA, using the definitions in ED*Facts* file specification FS089.

Measurement

- A. Percent = [(# of children ages 3, 4, and 5 with IEPs attending a regular early childhood program and receiving the majority of special education and related services in the regular early childhood program) divided by the (total # of children ages 3, 4, and 5 with IEPs)] times 100.
- B. Percent = [(# of children ages 3, 4, and 5 with IEPs attending a separate special education class, separate school, or residential facility) divided by the (total # of children ages 3, 4, and 5 with IEPs)] times 100.
- C. Percent = [(# of children ages 3, 4, and 5 with IEPs receiving special education and related services in the home) divided by the (total # of children ages 3, 4, and 5 with IEPs)] times 100.

Instructions

Sampling from the State's 618 data is not allowed.

States must report five-year-old children with disabilities who are enrolled in preschool programs in this indicator. Five-year-old children with disabilities who are enrolled in kindergarten are included in Indicator 5.

States may choose to set one target that is inclusive of children ages 3, 4, and 5, or set individual targets for each age.

For Indicator 6C: States are not required to establish a baseline or targets if the number of children receiving special education and related services in the home is less than 10, regardless of whether the State chooses to set one target that is inclusive of children ages 3, 4, and 5, or set individual targets for each age. In a reporting period during which the number of children receiving special education and related services in the home reaches 10 or greater, States are required to develop baseline and targets and report on them in the corresponding SPP/APR.

For Indicator 6C: States may express their targets in a range (e.g., 75-85%).

Describe the results of the calculations and compare the results to the target.

If the data reported in this indicator are not the same as the State's data reported under IDEA section 618, explain.

6 - Indicator Data

Not Applicable

Select yes if this indicator is not applicable.

NO

Historical Data (Inclusive) – 6A, 6B, 6C

Part	FFY	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
A	Target >=		45.10%	45.20%	45.30%	45.50%
A	Data	29.99%	28.28%	30.01%	33.05%	33.16%
B	Target <=		27.50%	27.40%	27.30%	27.20%
B	Data	44.32%	48.05%	48.77%	43.54%	40.70%
C	Target <=					1.56%
C	Data		0.92%	0.65%	0.73%	1.56%

Targets: Description of Stakeholder Input

The Special Education Advisory Panel (SEAP) in Montana has been in existence since 2013. The SEAP is made up of 16 members, seven 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 2024-25 and 2025-26 school years, the SEA asked for input on Indicators 3, 4, 9, and 10 from the SEAP. The SEA presented information on the SPP/APR as a whole and then dug into the specific indicators for feedback on targets and proposed methodological changes. The SEAP agreed with the SEA's proposal. Meeting minutes from discussions with SEAP as well as presentation materials have been posted publicly for all stakeholder review and input on the state website for SEAP: <https://opi.mt.gov/Educators/School-Climate-Student-Wellness/Special-Education/Regulations-and-Guidance#10965413037-federal-requirements>.

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 partnership 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:

Monthly Special Education Director’s calls

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

Summer Institute

Montana Council of Administrators of Special Education (MCASE)

Higher Education Consortium (HEC)

Dawson Community College – assisted in setting up level 2 of the ParaPathways Program

CSPD Regional Directors

Montana Empowerment Center – Monthly meetings

Disability Rights Montana

Targets

Please select if the State wants to set baselines and targets based on individual age ranges (i.e., separate baseline and targets for each age), or inclusive of all children ages 3, 4, and 5.

Inclusive Targets

Please select if the State wants to use target ranges for 6C.

Target Range not used

Baselines for Inclusive Targets option (A, B, C)

Part	Baseline Year	Baseline Data
A	2019	29.99%
B	2019	44.32%
C	2023	1.56%

Inclusive Targets – 6A, 6B

FFY	2024	2025
Target A >=	45.50%	45.60%
Target B <=	27.10%	27.00%

Inclusive Targets – 6C

FFY	2024	2025
Target C <=	1.56%	1.56%

Prepopulated Data

Data Source:

SY 2024-25 Children with Disabilities (IDEA) Early Childhood (EDFacts file spec FS089; Data group 613)

Date:

07/30/2025

Description	3	4	5	3 through 5 - Total
Total number of children with IEPs	249	524	152	925
a1. Number of children attending a regular early childhood program and receiving the majority of special education and related services in the regular early childhood program	63	191	62	316
b1. Number of children attending separate special education class	118	202	55	375
b2. Number of children attending separate school	12	14	3	29
b3. Number of children attending residential facility	0	0	0	0
c1. Number of children receiving special education and related services in the home	1	0	1	2

Select yes if the data reported in this indicator are not the same as the State's data reported under section 618 of the IDEA.

NO

FFY 2024 SPP/APR Data - Aged 3 through 5

Preschool Environments	Number of children with IEPs aged 3 through 5 served	Total number of children with IEPs aged 3 through 5	FFY 2023 Data	FFY 2024 Target	FFY 2024 Data	Status	Slippage
A. A regular early childhood program and receiving the majority of special education and related services in the regular early childhood program	316	925	33.16%	45.50%	34.16%	Did not meet target	No Slippage
B. Separate special education class, separate school, or residential facility	404	925	40.70%	27.10%	43.68%	Did not meet target	Slippage
C. Home	2	925	1.56%	1.56%	0.22%	Met target	No Slippage

Provide reasons for slippage for Group B aged 3 through 5, if applicable

In the FFY 2024 reporting period, Indicator 6B saw slippage of 2.98 percentage points. The SEA analyzed the data to determine the reasons for the identified slippage. First, the state observed a notable increase in the number of preschool students with disabilities enrolled and receiving services from FFY 2023 to FFY 2024. The percent change from FFY 2023 to FFY 2024 in the total preschool students with disabilities population was 20.29%. This is a historically high number of preschool students with disabilities receiving special education and related services in the state. The increase in population of students in Indicator 6B, without a commensurate increase in regular early childhood programs and classroom seats, has led to students needing to be served in other locations outside of regular early childhood programs. In many cases, these regular early childhood programs lack the room or capacity to serve a large influx in student population. Accordingly, this increase in the population of preschool students with disabilities likely contributed to the increase in the percentage of preschool students with disabilities attending more restrictive settings like separate classes and separate schools (the state had no preschool students in a residential facility).

Additionally, the state investigated whether educational environment changes in particular LEAs may have contributed to the broader state data and slippage. Three of the largest LEAs in the state had substantial increases in the number of students reported in Indicator 6B. These LEAs accounted for 22.27% of the preschool students with disabilities captured in Indicator 6B for FFY 2024 and the population of students for Indicator 6B in these LEAs nearly doubled from FFY 2023 to FFY 2024 (had a percentage change of 80.70%). When excluding data for the three largest LEAs from analysis of Indicator 6B, the Indicator 6B percentage is 30.08%. As such, these three LEAs in which large population increases occurred for educational environments under Indicator 6B likely contributed to the overall state slippage for this indicator.

Provide additional information about this indicator (optional)

N/A

6 - Prior FFY Required Actions

None

6 - OSEP Response

6 - Required Actions