

## 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

N/A

#### Additional information related to data collection and reporting.

N/A

#### 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). 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, the 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 SEA 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 SEA special education fiscal team

#### Cyclical Monitoring

The cyclical monitoring method will ensure that the SEA 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 SEA 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 SEA

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 SEA 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 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 noncompliance.**

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 2023-24 school year. Indicators 6, 7, 9, and 10 data are from the 2024-2025 school year.

Indicator 3 data come from our vendors (Cognia for the Multi-State Alternate Assessment (MSAA), American College Testing (ACT), and Montana Aligned to Standards Through-Year (MAST). The data comes from the 2024-25 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 2024-25 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 2024-25 school year.

The data for indicators 15 and 16 is collected from the SY 2024-25 reporting year (July 1, 2024, to June 30, 2025). 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).**

No pre-finding correction is permitted.

**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 but no inappropriate policies, procedures, and practices contributing to the significant discrepancy (Indicator 4B) OR
- Identified as having disproportionate representation but that is not the result of inappropriate identification (Indicators 9 and 10) OR
- One finding of noncompliance not corrected within one year OR
- Identified as high-risk on audit findings for one year

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 OR
- Identified as having significant discrepancy that is the result of inappropriate policies, procedures, and practices (Indicator 4B) OR
- Identified as having disproportionate representation that is the result of inappropriate identification (Indicators 9 and 10) OR
- Failure to demonstrate timely correction of two or more previous findings of noncompliance OR
- Continues to be identified as a high-risk district based on audit findings for two or more consecutive years

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, staff present at the Montana Council of Administrators of Special Education (MCASE), the Montana Council for Exceptional Children (MCEC), and the fall School Administrators of Montana (SAM) conference. Topics may be 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. 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 Comprehensive System of Personnel Development (CSPD) is comprised of pre-monitoring training, regional training opportunities (Regional CSPD), MT Autism Education Project (MAEP), Higher Education Consortium (HEC), Para Pathways Project and stipend programs, State Personnel Development Grant (SPDG), online professional development, and training at conferences. Special Education coordinated the Summer Institute (SI), High School (HS) Forum, and a Special Education Law Conference. 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 2024-25 school year the monitoring team offered pre-monitoring professional development for LEAs/cooperatives/state-supported programs scheduled for comprehensive monitoring the following school year. PD was provided to special education case-managers, specialists, and administration in both the virtual/onsite formats.

The Regional CSPD structure includes five councils, each led by a regional coordinator, which provide free PD for parents, special and 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 PD toward improving student outcomes. The statewide priority training topic this year was mathematics. In 2024-25, Regional CSPDs hosted 124 in-person and virtual training events with 3245 attendees.

Educating students with autism and related disabilities requires specific skills and knowledge. The goals of the SEA's Montana Autism Education Project (MAEP) are to: 1) Increase district-level capacity to educate neurodiverse learners through training, consultation and coaching, peer-to-peer collaboration, and a virtual library with resources, research, and field tools for educators; 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 consultations for public school students who qualify for services under the IDEA. Board certified behavior analysts and speech-language pathologists (SLP) are among the part-time consultants at the SEA. During the 2024-25 school year, the MAEP provided 57 unique training opportunities, 7 scholarship opportunities, and 4 lectures with the MT University systems, for a total of 68 professional development offerings. These trainings were attended by 1,014 Montana educators, parents, and others who have an interest in autism, neurodiverse learning, and behavior management. Topics included assessment, data collection and conceptualization, behavior management, augmentative and alternative communication, and effective systems of intervention.

The SEA meets with representatives of all Montana educator preparation programs to improve preservice instruction through our Higher Education Consortium (HEC). The HEC meets twice annually to discuss critical issues and collaborate. The meetings create a strong partnership between faculty members and the SEA. The fall 2024 meeting had presentations and guided discussion on indigenous ways of knowing, literacy, and an innovative educator preparation charter school model. The spring 2025 meeting included presentations/discussions on early childhood, assessment, dual enrollment and 2+2 grow your own teacher preparation programs, and resources from the National Native Children's Trauma Center.

After collaborations at HEC, we launched the Para Pathways Project in early 2025, with access for both paraeducators and licensed educators to take modules in special education online through LRP Direct Step. Special Education paraeducators are incentivized to take 40 modules for PPP Level 1. PPP Level 2, which began fall 2025, provides tuition support for paras in 4 college courses in education.

The OPI Teacher Learning Hub provides free, accessible, high-quality online learning. Special Education offered 17 courses on the Hub in 2024-25 on topics such as transitions, instruction, compliance, deafblindness, twice exceptional, braille, assistive technology, MTSS, high leverage practices, and 3 courses designed for paraeducators. There is also a 9-hour series on Dyslexia.

This was MT's fifth year of the 2020 SPDG: Montana's Tiered System of Supports. The SPDG provides coaching support to increase district capacity to implement a system-level problem-solving approach. The 2024-2025 school year focused on completing all 11 Building Implementation Team (BIT) online modules and intensively supporting 16 districts. We also added a targeted coaching pilot that supported 7 combined District/Building Implementation Teams in CSPD Region III. All 21 SPDG modules are complete with coaching guides. Our new 2025 SPDG will continue to support Integrated MTSS, provide training in Data-Based Individualization, and provide stipends to paras to become fully certified special education teachers for PPP Level 3.

OPI Special Education sponsors stipend programs to support public school districts and cooperatives to fill vacant special education and related services positions. OPI provides financial support to candidates admitted to the following stipend programs: SPED Endorsement Project, SLP Traineeship, School Psychology Traineeship, and the Occupational Therapist (OT) Traineeship. Candidates in the SPED Endorsement Project are hired under the Administrative Rules of Montana (A.R.M.) that allows for an educator holding a current MT educator license to be hired as a paid intern in Special Education. The paid intern enrolls at a MT IHE to obtain their Special Education endorsement within 3 years. The OPI provides supportive mentoring for the paid interns in the SPED Endorsement Project. This mentoring is ongoing and covers TA/PD in SPED topics and student/educator well-being. Candidates in the SLP, School Psych, and OT programs are university students attending courses full time and they do not hold jobs in public schools or cooperatives until licensed.

The Summer Institute (SI) and High School (HS) Forum events provided PD to general and special education faculty. Sessions are targeted at all tiers to meet the needs of all students, including SWD and tribal students. HS Forum was held in November 2024 promoting the use of MTSS for academics, behavior, and mental health at the secondary level with 123 attendees at 18 sessions. The SI provided 4 days of PD in June 2025 with a focus on PK-12 special education, MTSS, EBPs, PBIS, IEFA, and mental health. The 2025 SI included 131 sessions for 545 attendees. In September 2024, the OPI partnered with TAESE to host a 2-day regional special education Law Conference with 118 attendees.

Special education staff collaborate with the Indian Education for All (IEFA) unit on the development and delivery of professional development to meet the unique needs of Montana's American Indian students. The IEFA staff are partners on SI, HS Forum, and HEC providing relevant sessions to ensure the OPI 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. Additionally, our early childhood special education specialist provided multiple regional sessions in partnership with Part C and Head Start.

#### **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 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

**Apply stakeholder engagement 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 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 2024-25 school year, the SEA met on a monthly basis (to the best of ability), 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.

In addition, the SEA sends communications about the SPP/APR through a listserv and newsletter to make stakeholders aware of information and provide them with resources to increase their capacity. This allows them to provide informed input, feedback, and ask questions as needed. Also, the SEA posts the topics of discussion and meeting notes online, where the public, including parents, can access the information being provided in these meetings for more information.

**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 of 2025. It was explained to the advisory panel that the SEA was presenting changes to Indicators 3, 6C, 8, and 18. In late 2025, the SEA presented on the SPP/APR and sought specific input on processes, calculations, and targets for indicators 3, 4, 9, and 10. Details about the input received from the Advisory Panel are documented in the meeting minutes and materials posted on the state's Advisory Panel website. This panel's information can be found under the "Federal Requirements" section on the state website (<https://opi.mt.gov/Educators/School-Climate-Student-Wellness/Special-Education/Regulations-and-Guidance#11191313088-annual-performance-report>),

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. During the third quarter meeting with the SEAP, 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.

**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>. During the third quarter meeting with the SEAP, 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 2023 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 2023 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 2023 APR in 2025, is available.**

A report of the FFY 2023 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 2, 2026, 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 2024 and 2025 is Needs Assistance. In the State's 2025 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 2024 SPP/APR submission, due February 1, 2026, 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 2023 SPP/APR**

During the 2024-25 school year, the SEA worked with several OSEP-funded technical assistance centers including, DCASD, NCSI, IDC, CIFR, and NTACTION. These five centers worked with the SEA to improve their general supervision system, including IDEA data requirements, IDEA fiscal requirements, and IDEA programming.

The SEA worked with NCSI to assist in answering general supervision questions. They supported the SEA with improvements and revisions to the IMS process, based on feedback provided by LEAs. The action the SEA took based on this support from NCSI was editing and improving the state Integrated Monitoring System (IMS) manual.

CIFR assisted the SEA in improving the fiscal monitoring system put in place the 2024-25 school year. Changes were made to the system after receiving feedback from special education directors (stakeholders). CIFR also continued to support the SEA IDEA Fiscal Manager with fiscal questions through weekly and then bi-weekly zoom meetings. The action the SEA took based on this support from CIFR was to make changes to the fiscal monitoring process and manual.

For the last two years, DCASD supported the SEA in fleshing out processes and systems related to the significant disproportionality calculations and associated requirements (e.g., CCEIS, PPP reviews). In FFY 2024, they continued to assist the SEA with improving state and LEA manuals around significant disproportionality. DCASD met with the SEA bi-weekly and eventually monthly on manuals and significant disproportionality questions. The team also attended many of the calls and webinars DCASD had to offer. Several representatives from DCASD came to our Summer Institute in June of 2025 to present significant disproportionality in conjunction with other SEA staff. The action taken by the SEA was updating SEA and LEA manuals related to significant disproportionality. This has improved the SEA's communication with the LEAs on significant disproportionality.

The SEA continued work with IDC for data specific concerns as the IDEA Part B manager was relatively new. The state data manager also attended in-person conferences hosted by IDC to stay informed about IDEA data and reporting requirements. The action the SEA took was continued communication with IDC staff through email and zoom or teams and attendance at conferences and relevant webinars.

NTACT worked with the SEA's secondary transition coordinator to improve the SEA's transition binder and additional resources. The SEA had two special education staff part of the Capacity Building Institute (CBI) in addition to staff from the Department of Health and Human Services (DPHHS). Joint trainings with DPHHS were completed for LEAs.. This allowed the LEAs to see what was also available after high school and how and when to start incorporating these services early in the transition process. Staff attended all in-person conferences, zoom meetings. The action the SEA took was to continue to hold meetings with DPHHS regularly. This was to continue to work on improving the processes during and after high school along with resources available to the LEAs.

### **Intro - OSEP Response**

The State's determinations for both 2024 and 2025 were Needs Assistance. Pursuant to Section 616(e)(1) of the IDEA and 34 C.F.R. § 300.604(a), OSEP's June 20, 2025 determination letter informed the State that it must report with its FFY 2024 SPP/APR submission, due February 2, 2026, 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**