



Office of the State Superintendent of Education

SY 25-26 SPECIAL EDUCATION NEWSLETTER



August 19, 2025

The Office of the State Superintendent of Education's (OSSE's) Special Education Start of School Newsletter provides local education agency (LEA) leaders and special education points of contact (SPED POCs) with important information to plan and prepare for the upcoming 2025-26 school year. LEAs should use the information and resources provided to ensure LEAs, schools, and staff are prepared to serve students with disabilities by taking the following actions:

- **Designate** your LEA's SPED POC;
- **Read and share** new requirements and guidance;
- **Request and confirm** access to special education data systems;

- **Study** your LEA's 2025 Special Education Performance Report (SEPR);
- **Prepare** for annual special education monitoring activities; and
- **Consider** helpful reminders.



Roles and Responsibilities of Your LEA Special Education Point of Contact

The LEA SPED POC is the liaison between the LEA and OSSE for activities and responsibilities related to special education. This includes the following:

- Data and information management;
- Compliance activities; and
- Training and development coordination.

To ensure your designee(s) meets the responsibilities of this role, please refer to OSSE's full description of [The Role of the Local Education Agency \(LEA\) Special Education Point of Contact](#).

Staff serving in this role should work with the LEA's Data Manager to ensure that they are appropriately designated as an LEA SPED POC in OSSE's [All Staff Data Collection in the Integrated Data Submission \(IDS\) Tool](#) to facilitate appropriate access to data systems and to ensure they receive all official OSSE communications for this role.



Special Education Guidance

New Requirements, Guidance, and Resources

OSSE released an updated [Early Childhood Transition Policy](#) that clarifies requirements to ensure the smooth and effective transition of children with disabilities from early intervention services to school-based special education. LEAs play an important role at each stage of a child's transition. LEAs are encouraged to review the policy and ensure LEA policies and practices are updated accordingly.

In addition to an updated [Special Education Process Handbook \(coming soon\)](#), OSSE released guidance documents to support LEAs and individualized education program (IEP) teams in identifying and serving students with disabilities:

- [Effective Early Childhood Screening Practices Guidance \(July 2025\)](#) supports LEAs in establishing comprehensive and effective screening practices for early learners ages 3 through 5.
- [Appropriate Designation of Dedicated Aide Services Guidance \(August 2025\)](#) provides considerations and best practices for determining the necessity and services of a dedicated aide.

- [Strengthening Connections: Effective Communication Between Special Education Teams and Families Guidance \(July 2025\)](#) provides general best practices for IEP teams to build cooperative relationships with families.

These documents and all other guidance related to educating students with disabilities can be accessed on [OSSE's Special Education Guidance page](#).

For questions about special education requirements, please contact the special education policy team at OSSE.DSEpolicy@dc.gov.

Special Education Placement Resources

The [Least Restrictive Environment \(LRE\) Toolkit](#) is a comprehensive guide with information and best practices to provide DC LEAs and educators with a framework and tools to improve service delivery practices, effectively serve all students in their least restrictive environments, and build LEA's continuum of alternative placements.

The [LRE: Student and LEA Considerations Training](#) is a companion to the LRE Toolkit. This training provides DC LEAs and educators with practical resources for considering individual student placement, and an overview of LEA self-assessment activities to support implementation of a continuum of alternative placements.

For resources on submitting a change in placement or location case, please see the following resources:

- [Nonpublic Placement Information for LEAs](#)
- [Special Education: 5-A DCMR Chapter 30 Regulations](#)
- [New Special Education POC Webinar](#)

For questions or more information about the placement process, please see OSSE's Nonpublic Placement Information page or contact Katie Reda at Katie.Red@dc.gov.



Special Education Data Systems

LEAs must utilize a variety of data systems and platforms to appropriately document responsibilities related to the education of students with disabilities. LEAs should ensure staff are trained on and have access to necessary data systems and platforms, including the following:

- [Power School Special Programs*](#): used by all LEAs in the District to support the creation, documentation, and service delivery for students who are referred to or receive special education services.
- [District of Columbia Corrective Action Tracking System \(DCCATS\)](#): the official platform for IDEA monitoring and compliance activities. LEAs must review findings of noncompliance and submit documentation of the correction of noncompliance within DCCATS. Users can request a DCCATS account by visiting the [DCCATS Home Page](#).

- [OSSE's Learning Management System \(LMS\)](#)* organizes eLearning content in one centralized location, provides unlimited access to professional learning, and tracks and maintains each user's progress. This professional learning system enables all staff to access specialized content focused on special education.
- [Legal Research Publications' \(LRP\) Direct Specialized Training for Education Professionals \(STEP\)](#): a selection of self-paced eLearning courses focusing on IDEA legal requirements available to all LEAs. Use in tandem with OSSE's [LRP Direct STEP: Direct Specialized Training for Education Professionals, Scope and Sequence](#). These training modules can be accessed through the LMS.
- [Special Ed Connection](#): an LRP platform that provides information on special education legal updates, summaries of significant case decisions, evolving policy guidance and regulatory changes from across the country.

LRP's Direct STEP and Special Ed Connection are provided at no cost to LEAs. For access, please contact [Karen Morgan-Donaldson@dc.gov](mailto:Karen.Morgan-Donaldson@dc.gov).

*Access is determined based on a user's role as indicated in the IDS Tool.



Special Education Performance Report (SEPR)

On Aug. 7, 2025, OSSE issued its 2025 [Special Education Performance Report \(SEPR\)](#). This report is based on data from FFY 23 (July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2024) and is designed to evaluate the performance of an LEA's special education program. Please review the next steps below:

	OSSE will:	LEAs should:
Aug.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Release LEA SEPR Results. • Hold SEPR Office Hours. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review their LEA's SEPR and the SEPR technical guide in the SEPR Application. • Schedule and participate in SEPR Office Hours. An LEA may appeal its assigned level within eight weeks of the date of notification in the SEPR Application. LEA reports can be found by clicking on FFY 2023 under the LEA SEPR tab. • Learn more by visiting OSSE's SEPR Website.
Sept.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to engage in SEPR Office Hours. • Consider LEA appeals as necessary. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan for program improvements and identify staffing and training needs.
Oct.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publicly post final SEPR results on the SEPR Website. • Provide family and staff engagement resources to LEAs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitate family and stakeholder engagement, communicating areas of strength and plans for improvement.
Nov./Dec.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analyze SEPR data and identify the 2025- 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • N/A

	26 school year cohort for CCI Monitoring.	
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For questions about SEPR, please contact Karen Morgan-Donaldson at Karen.Morgan-Donaldson@dc.gov.



Annual Special Education Monitoring Activities

OSSE conducts annual monitoring activities of LEAs' implementation of federal and local special education requirements. Monitoring activities for the 2025-26 school year may include any of the following:

	Monitoring Activity Timeline	Period of Data Monitored
SEPR Metrics		
Initial Evaluation	Summer 2025	SY2024-25
Secondary Transition	Spring 2026	SY2025-26 (Q2 & Q3 only)
Suspension/Expulsion (Equity Monitoring)	Fall 2025	SY2024-25
Disproportionate Representation (Equity Monitoring)	Fall 2025	SY2024-25
Part C -B Transition	Summer 2025	SY2024-25
Onsite Monitoring (Compliance & Continuous Improvement)	Winter/Spring 2026	SY2025-26
Reevaluation	Spring 2026	SY2025-26 (Q2 & Q3 only)
Part C to B Transition + Start of Service*	Ongoing	SY2025-26
Child Find + Enrollment (3–5-year-old) *	Ongoing	SY2025-26
Initial Evaluation (3-5-year-old) *	Ongoing	SY2025-26
Preschool Skills	Ongoing	SY2025-26
Correctional Facilities Monitoring		
Department of Youth Rehab Services (DYRS)	Spring/Summer	SY2025-26
Department of Corrections	Quarterly	SY2025-26

For more information about how OSSE monitors for SEPR metrics, please see [SEPR Technical Guide](#).

For questions or more information about monitoring activities, please contact Karen Morgan-Donaldson at Karen.Morgan-Donaldson@dc.gov.



Important Reminders

Specialized Instruction Tracking: As the school year begins, LEAs are reminded to timely document the first provision of specialized instruction for students with disabilities under age 6. LEAs must provide specialized instruction no later than a child’s third birthday or, if the child turns 3 during the summer, on the first day of attendance (Stage 5 enrollment). Service provision must be documented in a student’s file in Special Programs using the First Provision of Specialized Instruction document. For more information on how to complete this required documentation, see OSSE’s Special Programs User Guide: Documenting the First Provision of Specialized Instruction guidance available in the Special Programs Help section under “Other Resources.”

Nonpublic School Reminders: LEAs continue to be responsible for ensuring students receive a free appropriate public education (FAPE) in the least restrictive environment (LRE) while a student attends a nonpublic school.

Specifically, LEAs should conduct the following progress monitoring and operational coordination activities:

Student Progress Monitoring	Operational Coordination
<p>Review:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student attendance data in the OSSE Special Education Attendance Tracking System (SEATS). • Service delivery documentation in Special Programs. • Progress reports in Special Programs. • Incident reports in the incident reporting module in Quickbase. • The appropriateness of the student’s placement at least annually. <p>Convene and/or participate in IEP team meetings including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual IEP reviews, • Attendance intervention planning, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure the nonpublic school has access to DC systems: Special Programs, SEATS, Staff Qualification Information Repository (SQUIRE), DCCATS, Quickbase Incident Reporting Module, OSSE Support Tool, and IDS. • Coordinate the administration of the annual statewide assessments with the nonpublic school and OSSE. • Report complaints and allegations as required to the appropriate agency(ies).

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Eligibility determination meetings, and• Manifestation determination meetings• Ensure each student has an up-to-date and is receiving the services and supports designed by a:• Functional Behavioral Assessment (FBA) and• Behavioral Intervention Plan (BIP)	
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