



Office of the State Superintendent of Education

SY 25-26 SPECIAL EDUCATION NEWSLETTER

Oct. 31, 2025



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Special Education Guidance

Referral Reminders

It's referral season! Local education agencies (LEAs) often receive an influx of referrals around this time of year due to the start of school and the end of the first grading period. [OSSE's Special Education Policy Bulletin: Referral for Initial Evaluation](#) provides a

comprehensive overview of LEA responsibilities for identifying and processing referrals. As you receive these requests, keep the following in mind:

- **Cast a wide net:** Referrals may come from many sources, including parents, teachers, other LEA staff members, family members, medical workers, and social workers.
- **No magic words:** Parents do not need to use specific language, such as asking for an "evaluation," to make a referral. LEAs should treat any request for "testing" or similar statements as an opportunity to ask questions about the parent's concerns and to determine if the parent means to request an initial evaluation. Referrals can be oral or written and do not need to be submitted via specific forms.
- **Save the date:** The date that the request is made (either oral or written) must be documented as the referral date. Delays in parent outreach, school communication, or documentation in data systems do not affect the date of referral.
- **Preparation is key:** School-wide training on referrals can help both general education and special education staff identify these requests and understand next steps so that LEAs act upon referrals appropriately and during the required timeframe.



Special Education Placement Activities

LEA Age-Out Reminder

For each student with a disability placed in a nonpublic school who will exceed the maximum age or grade specified in their charter, LEAs are required to notify parents of children of their enrollment options by **Dec. 31 of the school year in which they will "age out."**

Specifically, DC Municipal Regulation 3025.21 states:

During the school year in which a child with a disability placed in a nonpublic school will exceed the maximum age or grade for children served by the LEA as specified in its charter, the LEA shall:

1. *Provide written notification to the parent of their responsibility to enroll the child at another LEA; and*
2. *Provide such notification before Dec. 31 of the school year.*

Please make sure you are working with students and families regarding enrollment options with the upcoming public-school lottery windows in mind. Lottery applications open on Monday, Dec. 15, 2025, and close on Feb. 2, 2026, for grades 9-12 or March 2, 2026, for pre-K 3 through grade 8.

Monitoring Activities for the 2025-26 Year

As the state education agency (SEA), OSSE must annually monitor and issue findings of noncompliance to LEAs for special education indicators. OSSE will submit this data annually to the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) at US Department of Education (USED). In 2026, OSSE will monitor and issue findings for the following compliance indicators:

Activity	Reporting Requirement	Start of Monitoring Process	Timeframe for Data
Transition	USED Specific Conditions	April 2026	Oct. 1, 2025 – March 31, 2026
State and Continuous Improvement (CCI)*	IDEA General Supervision	Jan 2026	Jan 2024 – May 2026
Transition	USED Specific Conditions	April 2026	Oct. 1, 2025 – March 31, 2026
Annual Performance Report (APR)	USED Annual Performance Report (APR)	July 2026	July 1, 2025 – June 30, 2026
Annual Performance Report (APR)	USED APR	July 2026	July 1, 2025 – June 30, 2026

This year's CCI cohort will be notified in November 2025



Education Performance Report (SEPR)

OSSE issued its 2025 SEPR to the public on its [SEPR website](#). This report is based on data from federal fiscal year 2023 (FFY 23) (July 2023 – June 2024) and is designed to evaluate the performance of each LEA's special education program.

At the time of release, OSSE provided LEAs with family and staff engagement resources via email. In November, LEAs should:

- Continue to analyze their LEA data and determine root causes;
- Work on program improvements and identify staffing and training needs using internal and OSSE-provided supports including the [Special Education Training and Resources](#) document; and

ilitate family and stakeholder engagement, communicating areas of strength and plans for improvement.

er, OSSE will:

ntify and notify the 2025-26 school year cohort for CCI monitoring.

ns about SEPR, please contact Karen Morgan-Donaldson, Karen.Morgan-Donaldson@dc.gov.

Wide Assessments

Assessment Eligibility – Updates

egun reviewing initial applications for Alternate Assessment Eligibility. Initial eligibility determinations will be available via the [Alternate Assessment Eligibility QuickBase \(QB\) Application](#) by Friday, Nov. 21, 2025. Students who are denied as part of this initial review will be eligible to appeal by applying through the Alternate Assessment QB Application. Any students who were added to the application process after Tuesday, Nov. 19, 2025, are considered late applicants and will be reviewed as part of the late submission review window.

s and case managers should connect with their LEA Assessment contacts as needed to complete the Alternate Assessment Eligibility process.

ormation about processes and timelines, please visit the [OSSE Alternate Assessments](#) webpage.

Technical Assistance and Training

Transition Compliance Worksheet: Common Errors Guide – Created in collaboration with WestED, this tool provides LEAs with a checklist for identifying and reviewing secondary transition plans during the 2025-26 school year. The tool helps identify and fix common errors before the final review in April 2026. OSSE will be in touch with information regarding additional support and technical assistance around secondary transition plans in the coming weeks.

[Transition Common Errors Resource Guide Fillable.pdf](#)

Education Training and Resources -This document highlights resources to build educator and system capacity to serve students with disabilities. OSSE's SEPR measures. SEPR evaluates the performance of an LEA's special education program to provide LEAs and families with

information about LEA progress improving outcomes for students with disabilities and implementing the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

Technical Assistance - OSSE will conduct focused monitoring in the form of data reviews in key areas of practice related to Child Find, IDEA Part C to B Transition throughout the school year. Monitoring outcomes will inform the provision of tiered technical assistance based on areas of demonstrated need.

Reevaluation Timeliness – OSSE will contact LEAs in the coming weeks with additional support and technical assistance in the area of reevaluation and eligibility timeliness.

Early Childhood Community of Practice (CoP) - The Early Childhood Special Education CoP is designed to create authentic opportunities for educators, parents, and other support points of contact and others who support pre-K learners to collaborate with others and improve learning outcomes for children with disabilities who are enrolled in early childhood special education programs. Upcoming community of practice sessions will focus on the topics listed below. Sessions will take place from 10 to 11 a.m.

Session 1: Navigating DL vs. District of Columbia: Understanding Requirements and OSSE's Targeted Technical Assistance (TA) for CoP (Wednesday, Nov. 19, 2025)

Session 2: Measuring Growth: Child Outcomes Summary Exit Ratings & Determining Student Progress (Wednesday, Jan. 21, 2026)

Session 3: Strengthening Transitions: Referral, Transfer, and Interagency Collaboration in Early Childhood (Wednesday, March 18, 2026)

Session 4: TBD (Wednesday, May 20, 2026)

Register for community practice sessions using the links above. For questions, contact Dawn Hilton, Supervisory Coordinator for Special Education, at dawn.hilton1@dc.gov.

Need of technical assistance or training in any other area? Reference the topics below! Book office hours with one of our OSSE points of contact in the Office of Special Education.

	Point of Contact	Email/Phone	Book Office Hours
Guidance	Christie Weaver-Harris, Special Education Policy Team	OSSE.DSEpolicy@dc.gov	Special Education Policy Office
Support & Intervention	Jasmine Fleming, Special Education Policy Team	Jasmine.Fleming@dc.gov	N/A

Monitoring and Compliance

Monitoring & Compliance	Karen Morgan-Donaldson, IDEA Part B Monitoring and Compliance Team	Karen.Morgan-Donaldson@dc.gov	Special Education Monitoring Compliance Office Hours
Monitoring & Compliance	Debra Melville, IDEA Part B Monitoring and Compliance Team	Debra.Melville@dc.gov	IDEA Compliance Office Hours
Monitoring & Compliance	Sarah Peisch, IDEA Part B Monitoring and Compliance Team	Sarah.Peisch1@dc.gov	Part C to B Monitoring Office Hours
Placement			
Placement	Katie Reda, Placement Oversight Unit	Katie.Red@dc.gov	Special Education Placement Office Hours
Monitoring and Compliance			
Monitoring & Compliance	Sharon Powell, Nonpublic Monitoring and Compliance Team	Sharon.Powell@dc.gov	N/A
Complaints			
Complaints	Kirstin Hansen, State Complaints Team	Kirstin.Hansen@dc.gov	State Complaints Office Hours



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