



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
OFFICE OF SPECIAL EDUCATION AND REHABILITATIVE SERVICES

June 23, 2022

Honorable Molly Spearman  
Superintendent of Education  
South Carolina Department of Education  
1006 Rutledge Building, 1429 Senate Street  
Columbia, South Carolina 29201

Dear Superintendent Spearman:

I am writing to advise you of the U. S. Department of Education's (Department) 2022 determination under Section 616 of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). The Department has determined that South Carolina needs assistance in implementing the requirements of Part B of the IDEA. This determination is based on the totality of the State's data and information, including the Federal fiscal year (FFY) 2020 State Performance Plan/Annual Performance Report (SPP/APR), other State-reported data, and other publicly available information.

With the FFY 2020 SPP/APR submission, the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) requested that States and Entities report whether and how the data collection for any indicator was impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Specifically, OSEP requested that States and Entities include in the narrative for each impacted indicator: (1) the impact on data completeness, validity, and/or reliability for the indicator; (2) an explanation of how COVID-19 specifically impacted the State's or Entity's ability to collect and verify the data for the indicator; and (3) any steps the State or Entity took to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on the data collection and verification. OSEP appreciates States' and Entities' level of transparency regarding the impact of COVID-19 on the data reported in the FFY 2020 SPP/APR. When making determination decisions for 2022, OSEP considered all information submitted that related to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. For 2022 determinations, as with 2021 determinations, no State or Entity received a determination of "Needs Intervention" due solely to data impacted by COVID-19.

Your State's 2022 determination is based on the data reflected in the State's "2022 Part B Results-Driven Accountability Matrix" (RDA Matrix). The RDA Matrix is individualized for each State and consists of:

- (1) a Compliance Matrix that includes scoring on Compliance Indicators and other compliance factors;
- (2) a Results Matrix that includes scoring on Results Elements;
- (3) a Compliance Score and a Results Score;
- (4) an RDA Percentage based on both the Compliance Score and the Results Score; and
- (5) the State's Determination.

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The RDA Matrix is further explained in a document, entitled “How the Department Made Determinations under Section 616(d) of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in 2022: Part B” (HTDMD).

OSEP is continuing to use both results data and compliance data in making determinations in 2022, as it did for Part B determinations in 2014-2021. (The specifics of the determination procedures and criteria are set forth in the HTDMD and reflected in the RDA Matrix for your State.) In making Part B determinations in 2022, OSEP continued to use results data related to:

- (1) the participation and performance of CWD on the most recently administered (school year 2018-2019) National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP);<sup>1</sup>
- (2) the percentage of CWD who graduated with a regular high school diploma; and
- (3) the percentage of CWD who dropped out.

In 2022, States were required to submit a new SPP/APR for FFYs 2020 through 2025. The 2022 submission of the SPP/APR is the third six-year SPP and includes baseline data and measurable and rigorous targets for FFY 2020 through FFY 2025 for each indicator in the SPP/APR. OSEP has reviewed and approved your State’s SPP under IDEA Section 616(b) to include measurable and rigorous targets for FFY 2025 that reflect improvement over the State’s baseline data. Any action required by the State is reflected in OSEP’s response.

For the Department’s 2023 determinations, the Department is reviewing and considering whether and how to use existing indicators and/or other available data in making its determinations as part of its continuing effort to prioritize equity and improve results for infants, toddlers and children with disabilities. In April 2022, the Department released an equity action plan as part of its efforts to advance racial equity and support underserved communities. Examples of existing indicators that could be considered and/or be weighted differently include indicators on child find (for Part C) and/or significant discrepancy and disproportionate representation (for Part B). We will offer opportunities for input from the public, including parents, agencies that implement IDEA and other stakeholders, to provide feedback in the coming months, starting with the OSEP Leadership Conference in July 2022 as well as through email submissions and listening sessions open to the public.

As noted earlier, for its 2021 and 2022 determinations, the Department did not issue a determination of “Needs Intervention” to any State because States’ SPP/APR data collections for FFY 2019 and FFY 2020 were impacted by COVID-19. OSEP is considering, but has not yet determined, whether and how a State’s FFY 2021 SPP/APR data collection that was affected by COVID-19 will be considered in the Department’s 2023 determinations.

You may access the results of OSEP’s review of your State’s SPP/APR and other relevant data by accessing the EMAPS SPP/APR reporting tool using your State-specific log-on information at <https://emaps.ed.gov/suite/>. When you access your State’s SPP/APR on the site, you will find, in Indicators 1 through 17, the OSEP Response to the indicator and any actions that the State is

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<sup>1</sup> For the 2022 determinations, OSEP is using results data on the participation and performance of children with disabilities on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) for the 50 States, the District of Columbia, and the Bureau of Indian Education (BIE). Starting in 2022, OSEP is using the NAEP data in making the BIE’s 2022 determination (as indicated in the 2021 determination letters to States and Entities). OSEP is considering whether to use the available NAEP data in making Puerto Rico’s 2023 determination.

required to take. The actions that the State is required to take are in the “Required Actions” section of the indicator.

It is important for you to review the Introduction to the SPP/APR, which may also include language in the “OSEP Response” and/or “Required Actions” sections.

You will also find all of the following important documents saved as attachments:

- (1) the State’s RDA Matrix;
- (2) the HTDMD document;
- (3) a spreadsheet entitled “2022 Data Rubric Part B,” which shows how OSEP calculated the State’s “Timely and Accurate State-Reported Data” score in the Compliance Matrix; and
- (4) a document entitled “Dispute Resolution 2020-2021,” which includes the IDEA Section 618 data that OSEP used to calculate the State’s “Timely State Complaint Decisions” and “Timely Due Process Hearing Decisions” scores in the Compliance Matrix.

As noted above, the State’s 2022 determination is Needs Assistance. A State’s 2022 RDA Determination is Needs Assistance if the RDA Percentage is at least 60% but less than 80%. A State’s determination would also be Needs Assistance if its RDA Determination percentage is 80% or above but the Department has imposed Specific Conditions on the State’s last three IDEA Part B grant awards (for FFYs 2019, 2020, and 2021), and those Specific Conditions are in effect at the time of the 2022 determination. While South Carolina’s RDA percentage is 50%, for 2022 determinations, the Department is issuing a determination of “Needs Assistance” instead of Needs Intervention” given that South Carolina’s low RDA percentage is directly attributable to South Carolina’s FFY 2020 SPP/APR assessment data and compliance data under Indicator 11 (timely initial evaluation) and Indicator 12 (IEP developed and implemented by the third birthday), all of which were directly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic as explained further below.

Specifically, due to the significant impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the quality of the school year 2020-2021 Statewide assessment data, OSEP has determined that the data on participation rates in regular Statewide assessments will not be scored on the Results Matrix to ensure that the 2022 determinations for States and Entities are not negatively impacted by their use of COVID-19 flexibilities available with respect to assessments.<sup>2</sup> Further, South Carolina received a score of one for Indicator 11 (timely evaluations) on the Compliance Matrix, and South Carolina provided information regarding the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in its explanation of its data under Indicator 11. Specifically, South Carolina reported that, due to COVID-19, some aspects of the evaluation process could not be conducted face-to-face, and certain assessment measures could not be adapted or changed to accommodate for administration using a different format without invalidating the results. Student and staff absences due to COVID-19 also contributed to the delays in completing evaluations. In addition, South Carolina received a score of zero for Indicator 12 (IEP developed and implemented by the third birthday), and South Carolina provided information regarding the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in its explanation of its data under Indicator 12. Specifically, South Carolina reported that, due to

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<sup>2</sup> The February 22, 2021, letter from the Department’s Office of Elementary and Secondary Education to Chief State School Officers offered flexibility with respect to accountability, reporting systems, and assessments for school year 2020-2021.

COVID-19, certain aspects of the initial evaluation and transition processes could not be completed due to the face-to-face interaction required for some assessments. Student and staff absences due to COVID-19 also contributed to the delay in completing some evaluations and, as a result, the development of an IEP by a child's third birthday. For both Indicators 11 and 12, South Carolina reported that delays were also due to difficulty engaging parents because of the sharp rise in students receiving instruction in a virtual setting due to COVID-19. Given the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on South Carolina's assessment data and Indicator 11 and Indicator 12 data, OSEP is issuing its determination for South Carolina to be "Needs Assistance."

The State's determination for 2021 was also Needs Assistance. In accordance with Section 616(e)(1) of the IDEA and 34 C.F.R. § 300.604(a), if a State is determined to need assistance for two consecutive years, the Secretary must take one or more of the following actions:

- (1) advise the State of available sources of technical assistance that may help the State address the areas in which the State needs assistance and require the State to work with appropriate entities;
- (2) direct the use of State-level funds on the area or areas in which the State needs assistance; or
- (3) identify the State as a high-risk grantee and impose Specific Conditions on the State's IDEA Part B grant award.

Pursuant to these requirements, the Secretary is advising the State of available sources of technical assistance, including OSEP-funded technical assistance centers and resources at the following websites: [Monitoring and State Improvement Planning \(MSIP\) | OSEP Ideas That Work](#), [Individuals with Disabilities Education Act \(IDEA\) Topic Areas](#), and requiring the State to work with appropriate entities. In addition, the State should consider accessing technical assistance from other Department-funded centers such as the Comprehensive Centers with resources at the following link: <https://compcenternetwork.org/states>. The Secretary directs 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. We strongly encourage the State to access technical assistance related to those results elements and compliance indicators for which the State received a score of zero. Your State must report with its FFY 2021 SPP/APR submission, due February 1, 2023, 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.

As required by IDEA Section 616(e)(7) and 34 C.F.R. § 300.606, your State must notify the public that the Secretary of Education has taken the above enforcement actions, including, at a minimum, by posting a public notice on its website and distributing the notice to the media and through public agencies.

As a reminder, your State must report annually to the public, by posting on the State educational agency's (SEA's) website, the performance of each local educational agency (LEA) located in the State on the targets in the SPP/APR as soon as practicable, but no later than 120 days after the State's submission of its FFY 2020 SPP/APR. In addition, your State must:

- (1) review LEA performance against targets in the State's SPP/APR;

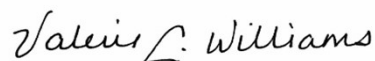
- (2) determine if each LEA “meets the requirements” of Part B, or “needs assistance,” “needs intervention,” or “needs substantial intervention” in implementing Part B of the IDEA;
- (3) take appropriate enforcement action; and
- (4) inform each LEA of its determination.

Further, your State must make its SPP/APR available to the public by posting it on the SEA’s website. Within the upcoming weeks, OSEP will be finalizing a State Profile that:

- (1) includes the State’s determination letter and SPP/APR, OSEP attachments, and all State attachments that are accessible in accordance with Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973; and
- (2) will be accessible to the public via the ed.gov website.

OSEP appreciates the State’s efforts to improve results for children and youth with disabilities and looks forward to working with your State over the next year as we continue our important work of improving the lives of children with disabilities and their families. Please contact your OSEP State Lead if you have any questions, would like to discuss this further, or want to request technical assistance.

Sincerely,



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Valerie Williams  
Director  
Office of Special Education Programs

cc: State Director of Special Education