



IDEA Part C Data Notes

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Introduction

Section 618 of the IDEA requires each state to submit data about infants and toddlers who receive early intervention services under Part C of the IDEA and children with disabilities who receive special education and related services under Part B of the IDEA. Under Part C, states report four different data collections which may require data notes: child count, settings, exiting, and dispute resolution. The Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) conducts data quality reviews and as needed requires states to resubmit the data and/or provide explanations of these data in the form of data notes.

The purpose of this brief is to:

- Explain data notes and their purpose;
- Provide an overview of OSEP's data quality review process; and
- Provide considerations and suggestions for writing data notes.

Why Data Notes

A data note is a way for the state to communicate to OSEP and the public any anomalies or idiosyncrasies in the data. Data notes also address OSEP's questions regarding the quality of the data and provide explanations of substantial year to year changes in the data, e.g., data notes are requested when a count for a reporting category changes greater than 20% and 20 infants/toddlers from year to year. Data notes provide important contextual information for interpreting the data and understanding the limitations of the data. These explanations of the data are useful to researchers and policymakers who use the data. Finally, data notes can be used to communicate improvements in data quality to stakeholders.

OSEP's Data Quality Review Process

OSEP's reviews the IDEA Section 618 data to determine the quality of the data submitted by states. OSEP uses the high-quality data to monitor and support the states' implementation of IDEA and publishes these data for the public. Additionally, the review provides an opportunity for OSEP to inquire about potential data quality issues, request state clarification about any potential data quality issues or anomalies, and provide states a means for sharing information on factors that may have impacted the data submitted.

OSEP reviews 618 data in terms of:

- Timeliness – data are submitted by the due date.
- Completeness – all required data are submitted.
- Accuracy – data pass all OSEP edit checks.



The review also examines substantial year to year changes in the data.

OSEP's review process starts at the due date of the specific data collection.¹ The review process involves the following steps:

- A snapshot of each state's submitted data is created on the due date.
- OSEP reviews the snapshot data.
- Data quality review and year to year reports are posted to the state's OMB Max page. The reports identify instances in which additional data notes are needed and/or the data need to be resubmitted.
- The state reviews the reports and begins preparing for the reopen period.
- The state has about one month to resubmit data and/or provide a data note, as required or permitted, during the EMAPS reopen period.
- At the end of the reopen period, OSEP freezes the data and gathers the submitted data notes for public reporting.
- OSEP conducts a final data quality review of the resubmitted data and/or data notes and determines if the final data submitted meet OSEP's criteria for publication in the IDEA Section 618 public release data files.

Tips for Writing Data Notes

Data notes should address in detail any idiosyncrasies in the data or factors that may have impacted the quality of the data or year to year changes. Below are some questions to consider when developing data notes and suggestions and tips for writing them.

Questions to Consider for Data Notes

- Data Collection, Analysis, and Submission
 - Were errors made in the collection and/or analysis of the data?
 - Were there missing data or duplicated data?
 - Was the correct version of the data file submitted?
- State and/or Local Changes
 - Were there changes in policies and/or procedures at the state or local level that may have impacted the data? For example, were there changes in how the data were collected because of the COVID-19 national emergency, or did the state change its eligibility criteria?
 - Were there data definitions or processes that were unclear or that were applied inconsistently at the state and/or local level? For example, was there confusion on how the primary setting is calculated in cases with multiple settings across services?
 - Were there changes in business rules in the data system? For example, did the state change to using only federal categories for race/ethnicity or exiting reasons instead of using additional state options?
 - Was there additional training that helped clarify reporting but may have impacted the data? For example, did the state offer additional training on coding for exit reasons to those reporting the data at the local level?
 - Were there changes in the state or local staff who provide the data?
 - Have you analyzed the data by the local EI program to determine which program(s) may have contributed to the issue? Were local agencies contacted and asked to investigate any such changes?

¹ Part C 618 child count and settings data are due on the first Wednesday of April; exiting and dispute resolution data are due on the first Wednesday of November.

- Major Events
 - Was a new data system in place that could have impacted the data? Describe the specific ways in which the data were impacted.
 - Were there natural disasters, e.g., a pandemic, hurricanes, or fires, that could have impacted the data statewide or at the local level? Describe the specific ways in which the data were impacted.

Data Note Best Practices

- Carefully review OSEP’s comment(s) for a clear understanding of the issue and specifically address each issue.
- If after reviewing the data you conclude the original data were accurate, the data note should explain what accounted for the data issue, for example, why the data changed from year to year.
- If the data need to be resubmitted, explain why and identify the steps the state took to make corrections.
- Briefly describe the issue and a general explanation of why the data issue occurred. Public users of the data will not see OSEP’s comments, only your response; restating the concern provides clarity for readers of the data note.
- Review data notes for grammar, spelling, and punctuation. Ask a colleague to review your note for clarity before submitting. OSEP publishes data notes as submitted. Data notes are published on the [IDEA Section 618 Data Products](#) site.
- Try to exclude actual counts from your data note.
- States may submit a data note with their data submission in advance of the data quality review if you suspect your data are likely to get flagged.

Resources

[Writing Good EdFacts Data Notes](#), ED Facts Partner Support Center

[Back to Basics on IDEA Data Notes](#) webinar, IDEA Data Center, 2018

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About Us

The contents of this brief were developed under a grant from the U.S. Department of Education, #H373Z190002. However, those contents do not necessarily represent the policy of the U.S. Department of Education, and you should not assume endorsement by the Federal Government. Project Officers, Meredith Miceli and Amy Bae.

The DaSy Center is a national technical assistance center funded by the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs. The DaSy Center works with states to support IDEA early intervention and early childhood special education state programs in the development or enhancement of coordinated early childhood longitudinal data systems.

To learn more about the DaSy Center, visit the DaSy Center website at <http://www.dasycenter.org/>.

