



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

**Final Determination Letter**

June 20, 2025

Honorable Lizzette Reynolds  
Commissioner  
Tennessee Department of Education  
710 James Robertson Parkway  
Nashville, TN 37243

Dear Commissioner Reynolds:

I am writing to advise you of the U.S. Department of Education's (Department) 2025 determination under Section 616 of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). The Department has determined that Tennessee needs assistance in implementing the requirements of Part B of the IDEA. This determination is based on the totality of Tennessee's data and information, including the Federal fiscal year (FFY) 2023 State Performance Plan/Annual Performance Report (SPP/APR), other State-reported data, and other publicly available information.

Tennessee's 2025 determination is based on the data reflected in its "2025 Part B Results-Driven Accountability Matrix" (RDA Matrix). The RDA Matrix is individualized for each State and Entity 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 or Entity's Determination

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 2025: Part B](#)" (HTDMD).

The Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) is continuing to use both results data and compliance data in making determinations in 2025, as it did for Part B determinations in 2015-2024. (The specifics of the determination procedures and criteria are set forth in the HTDMD document and reflected in the RDA Matrix for Tennessee).

In making Part B determinations in 2025, OSEP continued to use results data related to:

- (1) the participation of children with disabilities (CWD) on Statewide assessments (which include the regular assessment and the alternate assessment);
- (2) the participation and performance of CWD on the most recently administered (school year 2023-2024) National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), as applicable (For the 2025 determinations, OSEP is using results data on the participation and performance of children with disabilities on the NAEP for the 50 States, the District of Columbia, the Bureau of Indian Education, and Puerto Rico. OSEP used the available NAEP data for Puerto Rico in making Puerto Rico's 2025 determination as it did for Puerto Rico's 2024 determination. OSEP used the publicly available NAEP data for the Bureau of Indian Education that was comparable to the NAEP data available for the 50 States, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico; specifically OSEP did not use NAEP participation data in making the BIE's 2025 determination because the most recently administered NAEP participation data for the BIE that is publicly available is 2020, whereas the most recently administered NAEP participation data for the 50 States, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico that is publicly available is 2024);
- (3) the percentage of CWD who graduated with a regular high school diploma; and
- (4) the percentage of CWD who dropped out.

For the 2025 IDEA Part B determinations, OSEP also considered performance on timely correction of noncompliance requirements in Indicator 18. While the State's performance on timely correction of noncompliance was a factor in each State or Entity's 2025 Part B Compliance Matrix, no State or Entity received a Needs Intervention determination in 2025 due solely to this criterion. However, this criterion will be fully incorporated beginning with the 2026 determinations.

You may access the results of OSEP's review of Tennessee's SPP/APR and other relevant data by accessing the EMAPS SPP/APR reporting tool using your Tennessee-specific log-on information at <https://emaps.ed.gov/suite/>. When you access Tennessee's SPP/APR on the site, you will find, in applicable Indicators 1 through 18, the OSEP Response to the indicator and any actions that Tennessee is required to take. The actions that Tennessee 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.

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You will also find the following important documents in the Determinations Enclosures section:

- (1) Tennessee's RDA Matrix;
- (2) the HTDMD [link](#);
- (3) "2025 Data Rubric Part B," which shows how OSEP calculated Tennessee's "Timely and Accurate State-Reported Data" score in the Compliance Matrix; and
- (4) "Dispute Resolution 2023-2024," which includes the IDEA Section 618 data that OSEP used to calculate the Tennessee's "Timely State Complaint Decisions" and "Timely Due Process Hearing Decisions" scores in the Compliance Matrix.

As noted above, Tennessee's 2025 determination is Needs Assistance. A State's or Entity's 2025 RDA Determination is Needs Assistance if the RDA Percentage is at least 60% but less than 80%. A State's or Entity'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 or Entity's last three IDEA Part B grant awards (for FFYs 2022, 2023, and 2024), and those Specific Conditions are in effect at the time of the 2025 determination.

Tennessee's determination for 2024 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 or Entity is determined to need assistance for two consecutive years, the Secretary must take one or more of the following actions:

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

Pursuant to these requirements, the Secretary is advising Tennessee of available sources of technical assistance, including OSEP-funded technical assistance centers and resources at the following website: [Individuals with Disabilities Education Act \(IDEA\) Topic Areas](#), and requiring Tennessee to work with appropriate entities. The Secretary directs Tennessee 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 Tennessee to access technical assistance related to those results elements and compliance indicators for which it received a score of zero. Tennessee must report with its FFY 2024 SPP/APR submission, due February 2, 2026, on:

- (1) the technical assistance sources from which Tennessee received assistance; and
- (2) the actions Tennessee took as a result of that technical assistance.

As required by IDEA Section 616(e)(7) and 34 C.F.R. § 300.606, Tennessee 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.

The Secretary is considering modifying the factors the Department will use in making its determinations in June 2026 and beyond, as part of the Administration's priority to empower States in taking the lead in developing and implementing policies that best serve children with disabilities, and empowering parents with school choice options. As we consider changes to data collection and how we use the data reported to the Department in making annual IDEA determinations, OSEP will provide parents, States, entities, and other stakeholders with an opportunity to comment and provide input through a variety of mechanisms.

For the FFY 2024 SPP/APR submission due on February 1, 2026, OSEP is providing the following information about the IDEA Section 618 data. The 2024-25 IDEA Section 618 Part B data submitted as of the due date will be used for the FFY 2024 SPP/APR and the 2026 IDEA Part B Results Matrix and data submitted during correction opportunities will not be used for these purposes. The 2024-25 IDEA Section 618 Part B data will automatically be prepopulated in the SPP/APR reporting platform for Part B SPP/APR Indicators 3, 5, and 6 (as they have in the past). Under EDFacts Modernization, States and Entities are expected to submit high-quality IDEA Section 618 Part B data that can be published and used by the Department as of the due date. States and Entities are expected to conduct data quality reviews prior to the applicable due date. OSEP expects States and Entities to take one of the following actions for all business rules that are triggered in the appropriate EDFacts system prior to the applicable due date: 1) revise the uploaded data to address the edit; or 2) provide a data note addressing why the data submission triggered the business rule. States and Entities will be unable to submit the IDEA Section 618 Part B data without taking one of these two actions. There will not be a resubmission period for the IDEA Section 618 Part B data.

As a reminder, Tennessee 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 Tennessee on the targets in the SPP/APR as soon as practicable, but no later than 120 days after Tennessee's submission of its FFY 2023 SPP/APR. In addition, Tennessee must:

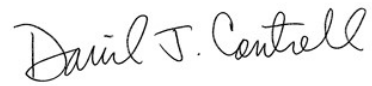
- (1) review LEA performance against targets in the State's SPP/APR;
- (2) determine if each LEA "meets the requirements" of Part B, or "needs assistance," "needs intervention," or "needs substantial intervention" in implementing Part B of the IDEA;
- (3) take appropriate enforcement action; and
- (4) inform each LEA of its determination.

Further, Tennessee 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 Tennessee's determination letter and SPP/APR, OSEP attachments, and all State or Entity 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 Tennessee's efforts to improve results for children and youth with disabilities and looks forward to working with Tennessee 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,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David J. Cantrell". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized 'D' and 'C'.

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David J. Cantrell  
Deputy Director  
Office of Special Education Programs

cc: Tennessee Director of Special Education