

MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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Date: March 1, 2025

Source of Report: Public Law 2023, Chapter 643, Part W (LD 2214)

Topic: Transition of IDEA Part B, Chapter 619 services from Child Development Services to School Administrative Units.

Context

Public Law 2023, Chapter 643, Part W (Part W) enacted sweeping structural changes to how the State of Maine serves its children with disabilities from age 3-5. Governed by the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Part B, Chapter 619, these special education services had long been the responsibility of a quasi-governmental agency, Child Development Services (CDS). With the enactment of this law, the Department of Education (DOE) and CDS have begun the multi-year transition of the free, appropriate, public education (FAPE) and child find services from CDS to school administrative units (SAUs).

In addition to outlining how this transition would occur, Part W directs the DOE to provide reports to the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee regarding numerous aspects of the transition of services from CDS to SAUs. Specifically:

- Report Section 1: Transition Status Update
 - Sec. W-11: "...the report must include, for school administrative units, each of the components required of the Child Development Services System pursuant to section 7209, subsection 4, paragraph E" (p. 171).
 - Sec. W-17: "...the report must include data and information regarding the number of school administrative units that have assumed responsibility for child find activities and for ensuring a free, appropriate public education and progress on the implementation of the transition under this section. During the transition, this report must include the annual report requirements under section 7006, subsection 5" (p. 175).
 - It is important to note that the CDS Annual Report, outlined in 20-A MRS §7209, subsection 4, paragraph E, describes more than two dozen elements, many of which are specific to CDS and its organizational structure. Many of the reporting elements cannot be applied to SAUs.

- Report Section 2: Recommendation for Revised Reporting Requirements
 - o Sec. W-25: "...submit a report ... including findings, recommendations and suggested legislation, to the joint standing committee having jurisdiction over education matters on reporting requirements that must continue for Child Development Services and revised reporting requirements for the department as school administrative units assume responsibility for child find activities and free, appropriate public education for children eligible under Part B, Section 619" (p. 180).
- Report Section 3: Parental Advisory Committees
 - o Sec. W-17: "... [the report] must include, but is not limited to, the number of parental advisory committees that have been formed, how often they met during the prior year and the number of individuals who have participated. The report may also include findings and recommendations from the parental advisory committees regarding the implementation of child find activities and the provision of free, appropriate public education for children eligible under Part B, Section 619" (p. 176).

The "Actions" section of this report will discuss each of these topics sequentially, providing a robust update on the progress Maine has made in the monumental transition of IDEA Part B, Section 619 services from CDS to SAUs.

Additionally, in Part W, Sec. W-22, the DOE was directed to convene a work group "to review and recommend expansion of the State's eligibility criteria under Part C of the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act... and submit a report including findings, recommendations and suggested legislation." This work has also been completed and will be submitted in a separate report.

It is important to note that this transition work is still in its nascent stage. In the time since passage of LD 2214, the DOE has built internal structural capacity for directing these changes, employed a cohort model to support the first group of SAUs assuming the FAPE and child find responsibilities, continued to collaborate with CDS, provided technical assistance, established reporting criteria to identify successes and challenges, communicated with SAUs, and reviewed SAUs to establish the second cohort of transitioning SAUs, which will begin to take on FAPE responsibilities in the 2025-2026 school year.

Actions

Section 1: Transition Status Update

Section W-11 directed the Department to provide a report for school administrative units that assumed the child find and FAPE responsibilities for preschool-aged children with IEPs. This report was to include each component required of the CDS Annual Report, pursuant to 20-A MRS §7209, subsection 4, paragraph E. The CDS Annual Report includes more than two dozen reporting elements, most of which are

specific to CDS and its organizational and operational structure. Additionally, many of the elements included in the Annual Report ask for year-over-year comparisons.

Section W-17 directed the Department to provide a report on the progress of the transition from CDS to SAUs and stated, “...the report must include data and information regarding the number of school administrative units that have assumed responsibility for child find activities and for ensuring a free, appropriate public education and progress on the implementation of the transition under this section. During the transition, this report must include the annual report requirements under section 7006, subsection 5”, which also refers back to the reporting requirements of 20-A MRS §7209, subsection 4, paragraph E. Each element of the CDS Annual Report was reviewed to determine whether it could be applied to the SAUs that have assumed the child find and FAPE responsibilities following the April 2024 passage of Public Law 2023, Chapter 643, Part W. As the 2024-2025 school year is the first year of the implementation of the transition of these responsibilities from CDS to SAUs, year-over-year comparisons were not possible. At the time of this report, two quarters of data have been gathered. Based on the limited applicability of the elements of the CDS Annual Report and the timing of this report, this section of the report focuses on the progress in this the first year of the transition.

Initial Stages of Implementation: Organization and Structural Capacity-Building

To support the fiscal, data, and programmatic requirements of implementing state and federal regulations for preschool-aged children with disabilities, the Maine Department of Education, Office of Special Services and Inclusive Education (OSSIE) hired outside expertise and specified internal roles and responsibilities to coordinate the effort in April of 2024. Over the next several months OSSIE developed systems of professional development, funding, data collections, and on-going communication to support schools and to ensure preschool children with disabilities in their communities received a free appropriate public education (FAPE) in the least restrictive environment.

The Maine DOE has designated a coordination team that is led by the Deputy Director of OSSIE, Dr. Sandy Flacke, a national consultant with expertise in the area of Section 619 of the IDEA, Suzanne Perry, and an administrative assistant to coordinate training, technical assistance, information management and communication between the Maine DOE, CDS and the SAUs. Informational meetings were held weekly with the entire group of SAUs. Additionally, separate individual meetings occur monthly or as needed to support specific issues pertaining to transition.

Cohort 1 Schools and Students

Between the adoption of the legislation in April 2024 and the opening of the 2024-25 school year in August, recruitment for the first cohort of implementers was initiated and 17 school administrative units elected to provide early childhood special education services to 153

preschool aged children with disabilities, with additional children in the “child find” process of identification. Prior to these SAUs assuming the responsibility for child find and FAPE, a readiness assessment of each SAU was conducted. This [readiness assessment](#) required participating SAUs to review different aspects of their current Pre-K programming, and was developed by the Early Learning Team at the Maine DOE. The readiness assessment provides a common understanding of inclusive practices that support programming for Pre-K students with all abilities. In addition, the readiness assessment provides a structure for SAUs to work collaboratively to review their current Pre-K programs, and to identify areas of strength and opportunities for growth. The Maine DOE reviewed each SAU’s completed readiness assessment and used the information to develop a plan for professional development topics.

In August of 2024, a memorandum of understanding (MOU) was developed with each SAU prior to their assumption of FAPE. The MOU articulates the responsibilities of the State Educational Agency (SEA), CDS, and the SAU. It also establishes and delineates data submission, fiscal responsibilities, and methods to ensure accurate data and timely reporting. DOE personnel meet monthly with each SAU to review the MOU and to support the implementation of the policies and practices necessary to ensure FAPE and regulatory compliance.

The chart below outlines the number of School Administrative Units (SAUs) within Cohort 1 and the services provided by Child Development Services (CDS) under the terms of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). The following sections provide an analysis and interpretation of the data presented.

SAU	CDS partnered with the SAU (yes or no)	Services provided to SAU by CDS
Andover	No	N/A
Beals School Department	No	N/A
Boothbay-Boothbay Harbor CSD	Yes	Child find activities
Calais School Department	No	N/A
Great Salt Bay CSD	Yes	Child find activities, LCSW provide Social Emotional Evaluations, Case Management for students not attending GSB programming, services for students not attending the GSB programming, provide ESY support and support with transition from Part C to B.
Jonesport School Department	No	N/A
Kittery School Department	Yes	Child find activities and SDI Support

RSU 13	Yes	Child find actives, provide all special education needs to children who do not attend RSU 13 programming.
RSU 19	Yes	Preschool Approvals, provide speech, PT and OT support when needed.
RSU 29		Support BDI and DAYC evaluations until staff are trained.
RSU 35	Yes	Point of contact for referrals, support with children who attend programming outside the catchment area.
RSU 68	Yes	Preschool approval, support with children attending programming outside the catchment area, BCBA support and ESY support.
RSU 80	Yes	Referrals passed to SAU, SDI, e-helper for speech, or speech services.
RSU 82	No	N/A
St. George School Department	Yes	Provide all special education services to students attending programming outside the catchment area.
Veazie School Department	No	N/A
York School Department	Yes	Support students who attend programming outside the school's catchment area.

Enrollment Data

SAU Cohort 1	1 st Qtr. Count 7/24		2 nd Qtr. Count 10/24		3 rd QTR. Count 1/25	
	IEPs	Child Find	IEPs	Child Find	IEPs	Child Find
Andover	1	0	1	0	1	0
Beals	1	0	2	0	2	1
Boothbay-Boothbay Harbor CSD	1	0	1	0	3	2
Calais	2	0	3	2	8	4
Great Salt Bay CSD	8	1	11	0	11	0
Jonesport	1	0	0	1	0	1
Kittery	11	2	11	5	18	8
RSU 13	29	6	32	2	34	9
RSU 19	21	4	21	14	43	18
RSU 29/MSAD 29	16	3	17	4	20	2
RSU 35/MSAD 35	23	7	32	5	44	13

RSU 68/MSAD 68	11	3	19	4	24	1
RSU 80/MSAD 04	7	2	10	1	11	0
RSU 82/MSAD 12	0	0	0	0	0	0
St. George	4	3	7	0	9	6
Veazie	3	1	5	2	6	0
York	14	4	17	4	23	10
Total Count	153	36	189	44	257	75

<u>Primary Disability</u>	<u>Number of Children*</u> <u>(Cohort 1 / January 1, 2025)</u>
Autism	59
Developmental Delay	46
Hearing Impairment	2
Other Health Impairment	9
Specific Learning Disability	1
Deaf-Blindness	
Intellectual Disability	1
Orthopedic Impairment	
Traumatic Brain Injury	
Deafness	
Emotional Disability	
Visual Impairment (including Blindness)	
Speech/Language Impairment	99
Multiple Disability	10

*Numbers reflects incomplete data entry by some SAUs

Financial Report

Summary of funding formula and its implementation

Immediately following the passage of the law, staff from CDS and the Maine DOE met to determine the funding formula for the transition. The team determined that an estimate funding for the FY25 school year for each SAU would be calculated in July using the estimate count of 3-, 4-, and 5-year-old Pre-K children with IEPs and children in the child find process using the data from CDS's data management system. The total amount of calculated allocation for the year (July 1, 2024 – June 30, 2025) was divided into four payments, paid at the beginning of each quarter (July, October, January, and April).

The October 1 enrollment count, like each subsequent enrollment count, was based on the actual counts of 3-, 4-, and 5-year-old Pre-K children with IEPs and children in the child find process. The October 1 count is different from other reporting periods, as it is the only time when a student enrollment count could be reduced: if the count on October 1 was lower than the original July estimate, the calculated allocation would be reduced. Conversely, if the count was higher than the original estimate from July, the calculated allocation would be increased. In either case, the remaining quarters of payments are adjusted based on this count.

In the January and April enrollment counts, if the count for either reporting period was higher than the October count, the calculated allocation would be increased. If the count in January or April was lower than the October count, no change to the calculated allocation of funding was made.

Implementation Observations

Cohort 1 assumed the child find and FAPE obligation on September 1, 2024. This later date was determined to ensure funding for this initiative was allocated to the Cohort 1 SAUs. It also ensured that CDS maintained the responsibility for child find and the delivery of extended year services. Feedback from Cohort 1 schools, as well as SAUs considering joining Cohort 2, has reflected the need for some of the funding before the date of the assumption of FAPE. Specifically, funding would be used to hire staff necessary to prepare for the SAU's assumption of FAPE by reviewing IEPs, attending transition IEP team meetings, setting up new classrooms, organize and carry out professional development to SAU staff, attend meetings with DOE and CDS, and transition student data from the CDS system to the local student information system.

Expenditures

Limited data was available for analysis as of the date of this report. The absence of prior year data prohibits more in-depth, year-over-year comparisons and other methods of analysis, such as vertical/horizontal analysis. Expenditure data was examined using a test sample derived from 65% of SAUs in Cohort 1 that have reported child count and expenditures through quarter 2 of year 1. Allocation and child find data was available for analysis through quarter 3 of the 24-25 school year.

Test Sample Expenditure Data

Preschool expenditures by type demonstrated approximately 76% of preschool funding was spent on direct services for children with disabilities. Of those expenditures, approximately 81% were paid to SAUs for employed staff, and 19% were provided through contracted services with private providers. The remaining funds were spent 16% on administration, 4% on transportation, and 3% on tuition.

Administration		
Admin S&B	205,824.63	
Supplies/Equip/Software	33,218.97	
Travel/PD	10,014.49	
Total Admin	249,058.09	16%
Direct Services		
S&B	939,533.51	
Purchased Services	218,274.22	
Total Direct Services	1,157,807.73	76%
Tuition	45,545.62	3%
Transportation	65,703.37	4%
	1,518,114.81	

	ALLOCATION Q1	ALLOCATION Q2	TOTAL ALLOCATION	TOTAL EXPENSES Q1	TOTAL EXPENSES Q2	TOTAL EXPENSES
Andover	4,570.98	4,570.98	9,141.96	4,105.42	10,721.79	14,827.21
Kittery	62,249.73	63,916.39	126,166.12	14,295.13	78,017.77	92,312.90
RSU 13	153,224.92	174,789.09	328,014.01	67,332.47	207,208.82	274,541.29
RSU 19	108,821.30	113,487.96	222,309.26	0.00	187,069.52	187,069.52
RSU 29	81,629.26	89,714.75	171,344.01	18,474.71	75,908.19	94,382.90
RSU 35	129,919.68	198,459.93	328,379.61	120,084.78	253,035.08	373,119.86
RSU 68	54,090.71	107,165.70	161,256.41	21,074.08	126,831.31	147,905.39
RSU 80	36,362.68	57,167.65	93,530.33	4,683.26	14,294.95	18,978.21
St. George	22,003.84	43,283.80	65,287.64	14,694.07	62,733.24	77,427.31
Veazie	16,980.65	32,500.60	49,481.25	1,784.79	61,429.06	63,213.85
York	79,247.47	102,965.34	182,212.81	0.00	174,336.37	174,336.37
	749,101.22	988,022.19	1,737,123.41	266,528.71	1,251,586.10	1,518,114.81

The data in the above table represents a sample data set through quarter 2. The data is not representative of the overall anticipated Pre-K program costs, instead demonstrating initial or start-up costs for the program beginning in September – two months into the first quarter. Anticipated expenditures are expected to significantly increase throughout quarters 3 and 4 as Cohort 1 districts engage in child find, resulting in increased enrollment and continued implementation of Pre-K programming.

Allocation

Child find activities and subsequent identification have resulted in a 60% increase in enrollment in Cohort 1 from the start of the 24-25 school year. Funding paid to Cohort 1 schools specific to supporting child find activities through Q3 totaled \$155,000. Pre-K allocations to Cohort 1 SAUs per quarter have increased 45% from Q1 to Q3 and are expected to increase in Q4.

	ALLOCATION Q1	ALLOCATION Q2	ALLOCATION Q3	TOTAL ALLOCATION	CHILD FIND
Andover	4,570.98	4,570.98	4,570.98	13,712.94	0.00
Beals	4,729.15	11,034.68	11,534.68	27,298.51	1,000.00
Boothbay-Boothb:	5,550.62	5,550.62	28,835.88	39,937.12	2,000.00
Calais	10,247.29	17,720.49	70,919.45	98,887.23	6,000.00
Great Salt Bay	42,697.44	63,921.16	63,921.16	170,539.76	1,000.00
Jonesport	4,560.31	0.00	0.00	4,560.31	2,000.00
Kittery	62,249.73	63,916.39	146,476.24	272,642.36	15,000.00
RSU 13	153,224.92	174,789.09	200,237.89	528,251.90	17,000.00
RSU 19	108,821.30	113,487.96	348,309.59	570,618.85	36,000.00
RSU 29	81,629.26	89,714.75	121,026.15	292,370.16	9,000.00
RSU 35	129,919.68	198,459.93	338,650.91	667,030.52	25,000.00
RSU 68	54,090.71	107,165.70	156,137.76	317,394.17	8,000.00
RSU 80	36,362.68	57,167.65	67,403.47	160,933.80	3,000.00
St. George	22,003.84	43,283.80	67,616.00	132,903.64	9,000.00
Veazie	16,980.65	32,500.60	43,599.17	93,080.42	3,000.00
York	79,247.47	102,965.34	175,034.60	357,247.41	18,000.00
	816,886.03	1,086,249.14	1,844,273.93	3,747,409.10	155,000.00

In most SAUs, the funding for Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) was sufficient and was able to meet the costs of services, even as enrollment increased. In the three smallest programs, additional funding is required to cover all reasonable and necessary costs. In all three cases, the child count was less than 10. In addition to the state ECSE allocation, districts may use federal IDEA funds for the education of children with disabilities aged 3 through 22.

Technical Assistance:

Starting in June 2024, the CDS and the DOE's Office of Special Services and Inclusive Education convened weekly meetings of leaders from the Cohort 1 SAUs. These meetings continued each week through November, when they shifted to every other week. During these cohort meetings SAUs shared the experiences of staff and families that they were now serving, and these experiences were overwhelmingly positive. Administrators and teachers also shared challenges, asked questions, and noted any barriers or problems of practice they

experienced. OSSIE addressed questions and issues through professional development, research, and outreach directly to the SAU. These Cohort 1 meetings included short professional development offerings that included a variety of topics identified by OSSIE and CDS leaders and by SAU staff. Some of the topics included:

- Understanding the C to B transition
- Addressing Challenging Behaviors
- Child Outcomes Summary Process
- High-Cost Incidences and Reporting
- Least Restrictive Environment Placement Decisions

A complete list of the Cohort 1 trainings can be found on the Department of Education website: [Early Childhood Special Education - Cohort Meetings | Department of Education](#)

As CDS and OSSIE personnel have met with SAUs, they have delivered a variety of technical assistance and supports based on the needs of the SAU. The needs of each SAU vary based on the local resources, experience, and available partners in their community. Because Cohort 1 has been relatively small, the two staff members - the Deputy Director of OSSIE and CDS's Assistant Early Childhood Special Education Transition Coordinator – have been able to conduct intensive and timely technical assistance to each SAU, in addition to monthly MOU meetings. As more SAUs assume the child find and FAPE obligation, additional personnel will be necessary to ensure adequate support and guidance are in place in the areas of finance, data, and programming.

The Maine Department of Education has also contracted with a national expert in Part B, 619 who has been consulting with the OSSIE/CDS team to support the professional development and other technical assistance.

There is an ongoing budget initiative of \$2.9 million that was allocated to support preschool classroom setup, retrofitting/adding bathrooms, modifying playground spaces, and improving accessibility for Cohort 1 school preschool programs. At a total cost of \$782,000, 36 classrooms and spaces were established across 16 out of the 17 SAUs in Cohort 1. Some federal emergency relief funds were also utilized to support this work. While this is an ongoing allocation, it is a lapsing fund. Because Cohort 1 included a relatively small number of SAUs, the full amount has not been drawn down. Allowing these funds to continue across fiscal years would allow the funds to be used in years when there are more SAUs in a cohort.

CDS Support and Service Hubs

CDS Sites across the state have been supporting the transfer of early childhood special education to the SAU in multiple ways. Individual MOUs are developed between CDS, the Maine DOE, and the SAU to clearly delineate roles and responsibilities. These services may include support for referrals, evaluations, the transition from Part C (birth to 3) to Part B (Section 619), contracted services, and the provision of special education programming. Some SAUs are electing to have CDS Service and Support Hub follow and support 3-year-old children.

The CDS Leadership team has begun the process of transforming the CDS sites into regional support and service hubs, which will assist SAUs during and after the transition of FAPE for 3 to 5-year-olds.

CDS is currently analyzing how the child count will be impacted by Cohort 2 schools. Based on the updated numbers, CDS will assess its capacity and realign staff across the state to ensure an equitable workload. This shift will allow CDS to continue meeting its dual responsibility: providing FAPE to children in non-Cohort SAUs and offering services and support to Cohort SAUs.

CDS aims to allocate Part B staff to one of two key roles. The first is coordinating and delivering special education and related services for children with disabilities from birth through age five. The second is offering fee-for-service support to Cohort schools through a service and support hub, which may include coordinating services and managing child find responsibilities. In addition to these two key roles, CDS anticipates that they will be able to provide MaineCare billing assistance to SAUs.

This work will include realigning the existing CDS sites to the superintendent regions in the state. Through this realignment, CDS is dedicated to creating consistency and equity across the support and service hubs to ensure that SAUs have access to the support and guidance of the early childhood special education expertise available in our state.

Data Collection

To support the provision of early childhood special education, the Maine Department of Education expanded the statewide student information system to include three-year-old children with disabilities. This expansion will allow SAUs to include the 3-year-old children who have IEPs. There are explicit federal reporting requirements that are part of the state performance plan/annual performance report (SPP/APR). Ensuring information about all students served is included in the statewide student information system is necessary to ensure

that the federal reporting requirements are met accurately. The Maine Department of Education has also contracted with a national expert in Part B, 619, and that consultant is supporting the development of a data tool that will meet these federal reporting requirements. This data collection is ongoing.

Community Partnerships

Preschool children with disabilities receive early childhood special education services in a variety of inclusive and developmentally appropriate settings. These programs foster collaboration among educators, therapists, families, and community partners to support each child's individual needs.

All SAUs in Cohort 1 have public Pre-K classrooms, where they provide special education services. In addition, SAUs may offer services through community partnerships, including:

- **Head Start Programs:** Federally funded programs that provide comprehensive education, health, and family support services for low-income families. Head Start emphasizes inclusion, allowing children with disabilities to receive specialized instruction alongside their typically developing peers.
- **Community-Based Childcare Centers & Preschools:** Many children receive special education services within private childcare centers or preschools. SAUs partner with providers to deliver specialized support in familiar settings, minimizing disruptions to daily routines. Itinerant special educators and therapists may also provide services within these settings, ensuring embedded intervention and natural learning opportunities.
- **Special Purpose Pre-K Programs (SPPKs):** Designed for children with more complex needs, these specialized settings offer small class sizes, individualized instruction, and comprehensive therapeutic services.

SAUs in Cohort 1 have reported positive collaborations with community partners and the development of strong relationships within the early education community, fostering a network of support for young children with disabilities. By leveraging a range of settings and services, these partnerships have enhanced access to individualized, high-quality learning experiences in inclusive and supportive environments.

The chart below details the SAUs in Cohort 1 and the locations where students with disabilities are receiving their early childhood special education services.

SAU Cohort 1	Community Partnerships	Students Attending a SPPKs	Number of Public Pre-K Classrooms	Total PreK Enrollment (including students with and without IEPs)
Andover	0	0	1	6
Beals	0	0	1	8
Boothbay-Boothbay Harbor CSD	1	0	1	14
Calais	1	0	2	25
Great Salt Bay CSD	0	0	2	24
Jonesport	0	0	1	9
Kittery	9	1	2	47
RSU 13	2	0	5	89
RSU 19	5	5	5	95
RSU 29/MSAD 29	3	0	3	60
RSU 35/MSAD 35	4	1	7	149
RSU 68/MSAD 68	0	6	3	49
RSU 80/MSAD 04	1	0	2	25
RSU 82/MSAD 12	0	0	1	6
St. George	0	0	1	24
Veazie	4	1	1	21
York	5	5	2	54

Cross Agency Collaboration

The Maine Department of Education, in collaboration with the Office of Child and Family Services and the Governor's Office of Policy Innovation and the Future, has been actively engaged in coordinated planning to support a mixed delivery system which would ensure equitable access to high-quality preschool programming across the state. This work has involved cross-agency meetings to align policies and strategies, the development of professional learning opportunities for SAUs and early childhood providers, and the creation of systems to identify and connect providers throughout Maine. Additionally, partnerships with agencies have been instrumental in increasing awareness and understanding of the transition of Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) responsibilities to SAUs.

Through this robust ongoing cross-agency collaboration, Maine is working to build a strong and sustainable mixed delivery system for early childhood special education, which is essential not only for expanding inclusive learning opportunities for children with disabilities but also for supporting working families and strengthening local economies. These collaborative efforts focus on ensuring access to high-quality

early childhood programs in diverse settings, including public Pre-K programs, Head Start, community-based childcare centers, and specialized preschool settings. By aligning resources, improving coordination between providers, and developing systems to support families and educators, these partnerships help ensure that children receive developmentally appropriate services in their communities. A well-supported early education system, driven by strategic interagency collaboration, directly contributes to the economic vitality of communities by fostering a stable, skilled workforce and ensuring that families have the resources they need to thrive.

Cohort 2

Throughout the fall and winter of the 2024-2025 school year, the CDS and OSSIE team engaged in extensive outreach efforts to foster collaboration and support for the transition. This outreach targeted community leaders, superintendents, special education directors, and school administrators, ensuring broad engagement across the educational landscape. The team delivered presentations at key events, including the Children's Cabinet, MSMA Fall Conference, Early Childhood and Education Summit, Maine Coalition for Housing and Quality Services, and various other statewide associations.

In addition to these presentations, the team held over 50 individual meetings with interested parties, including SAU leaders considering participation in Cohort 2. These discussions provided an opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of each SAU's strengths, challenges, and specific needs, while also allowing CDS and OSSIE team members to answer questions, share enrollment estimates, and identify potential provider partnerships.

As with the SAUs in Cohort 1, those joining Cohort 2 represent a diverse range of resources, capacities, and requirements. This ongoing dialogue has been instrumental in ensuring that each participating SAU receives tailored guidance and support throughout the transition process.

SAUs that have applied to participate in Cohort 2 as of February 25, 2025:

SAU Cohort 2	January 2025 Child Count
<i>Airline Community School (AOS 47)</i>	0
<i>Auburn</i>	98
<i>Blue Hill (School Union 93)</i>	2
<i>Brewer</i>	38
<i>Brooksfield (School Union 93)</i>	0

<i>Castine (School Union 93)</i>	0
<i>Dayton School Department</i>	5
<i>Dedham (AOS 47)</i>	5
<i>Greenbush Public School</i>	4
<i>Hancock</i>	8
<i>Lamoine</i>	3
<i>Orrington (AOS 47)</i>	11
<i>Penobscot</i>	0
<i>RSU 17 (Oxford, Norway, Paris)</i>	109
<i>RSU 21(Kennebunk)</i>	94
<i>RSU 26 (Orono)</i>	13
<i>RSU 50</i>	7
<i>RSU 52 (Green, Leeds, Turner)</i>	38
<i>RSU 54 (Skowhegan)</i>	54
<i>RSU 56 (Dirigo)</i>	13
<i>RSU 71 (Belfast, Morrill, Searsmont, Swanville)</i>	109
<i>RSU 72 (Fryeburg, Lovell, Brownfield, Denmark, Sweden)</i>	22
<i>RSU 75 (Topsham, Bowdoin, Bowdoinham, Orrs Island)</i>	59
<i>MSAD 41 (Milo)</i>	22
<i>Richmond School Department</i>	15
<i>Saco</i>	100
<i>Surry (School Union 93)</i>	1
<i>Wiscasset</i>	16
Total Count	846

Report Section 2: Recommendation for Revised Reporting Requirements

Section W-25 directed the Maine DOE to submit a report that includes findings, recommendations and suggested legislation on reporting requirements that must continue for Child Development Services and revised reporting requirements for the department as school administrative units assume responsibility for child find activities and free appropriate public education for children eligible under Part B, Section 619.

Title 20-A § 7209, subsection 4, paragraph E has been amended multiple times to reflect on the work over the decades to gather information on the administration and efficiency of CDS. It should be noted that CDS is also subject to federal reporting requirements. Much of the information included in the federal report is consistent – and, at times, duplicative - with the elements outlined in section 7209. Additionally, some of what is collected does not provide information that addresses the most important aspects of the work. An example would be the place of birth for a child entering Part C services. While CDS does gather the referral source, it does not have any way of obtaining information on where an infant is born. Additionally, the place of the child's birth is not directly related to the provision of Part C services.

Based on a review of existing reports and the implementation of the transition of the child find and FAPE responsibilities, the Department recommends the following:

Federal Reporting

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requires each state to develop a state performance plan/annual performance report (SPP/APR) that evaluates the state's efforts to implement the requirements and purposes of the IDEA and describes how the state will improve its implementation.

The SPP/APRs include indicators that measure child and family outcomes and other indicators that measure compliance with the requirements of the IDEA. Both Part C and Part B are required to complete a SPP/APR annually and these reports are submitted to the US Department of Education by February 1st of each year. The information for the SPP/APR describes the states performance from the previous year.

The federal reporting is posted publicly on the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) website as well as on the Maine DOE's website. Some of the federal reporting is duplicated in the CDS Annual Report, namely Part C federal indicators.

CDS Annual Report

Child Development Services and the DOE recommend that the following elements continue until the legislative session in 2028. To obtain a robust understanding of the operational structure, expenditures, and services provided, the following areas should be reflected in the CDS Annual report for 2026 through 2028.

1. Actual expenditures compared to the budget for each of the last 3 fiscal years, by expense type and function, including salaries, benefits, contracted services, and transportation; direct services and administration; and
2. Actual revenues received compared to the budget for each of the last 3 fiscal years by revenue source; and
3. The total dollar value of MaineCare claims paid through the Department of Health and Human Services for each of the last 3 fiscal years for services provided pursuant to children's individualized education programs or individualized family service plans that were billed directly to the MaineCare program by contracted service providers; and
4. The number of children referred to the CDS System in Part C in the prior year by referral source, including the screening programs in Title 22, sections 1532, 8824, and 8943, and the percentage of children referred found eligible for services; and
5. The number of children who transitioned in the prior year from early intervention services for children from birth to under 3 years of age to special education and related services for children at least 3 years of age and under 6 years of age; and
6. The percentage of children who received direct services in the prior year who had MaineCare coverage for all or some of the services specified in their individualized education programs or individualized family service plans and the percentage of children who received direct services in the prior year who had private insurance coverage for all or some of the services specified in their individualized education programs or individualized family service plans; and
7. A listing of the regional sites and their locations; and
8. The total number of employees by function; and
9. The number of private providers that contracted with the Child Development Services system to provide direct services, including transportation services, and the number of contracted providers delivering each type of service in the prior fiscal year; and
10. The number of children who received direct services provided by Child Development Services system employees in the prior fiscal year and the number of children who received direct services provided by contracted private providers in the prior fiscal year; and
11. A description of current and emerging trends and challenges that are influencing or are expected to have an effect on costs, services or service delivery methods of the CDS system.

In addition to the above recommended reporting requirement, CDS recommends that the CDS Annual Report date align with federal reporting requirements (July 1 to June 30 of the prior year). Currently, the reporting period for the CDS Annual Report is 10/1/2023 –

9/30/2024, which does not match any other state and federal reporting requirements and requires the CDS data team to manipulate data ranging over two reporting periods.

CDS to SAUs Transition Report

Public Law 2023, Chapter 643, Part W-17 directs the DOE to provide an annual report during the transition that includes the elements outlined in §7209, subsection 4, paragraph E. While many of the requirements for the CDS Annual report align with transition activities occurring across the state, there are several data points taken from CDS's student information system (the CINC system) and fiscal system that are not utilized by the SAUs who have assumed the child find and FAPE responsibility. The funding mechanism for Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) is a separate fund that flows out of the Department of Education, not CDS. Further, as the SAUs take on the FAPE responsibility, the data for preschool special education students will be in the state's data system, NEO, and much of this data will be publicly reported.

Data pertaining to special education can also be found in the State Performance Plan/ Annual Performance Report (SPP/APR), which is federally reported data that is posted annually on the Maine DOE's website.

Through the transition, it will be important to provide the following information:

1. SAUs that have elected to provide FAPE prior to July 1, 2028; and
2. Number of students being served in SAUs listed by SAU; and
3. Number of children transitioning from Part C (Birth the 3) to Part B (3+) who are eligible for special education; and
4. Expenditures of preschool special education programming for SAUs that have elected to provide FAPE prior to July 1, 2028; and
5. CDS Service and Support Hub contracted services provided by Site and listed by SAU; and
6. The total dollar value of MaineCare claims paid through Department of Health and Human Services for children in preschool programming; and
7. A description of current and emerging trends and challenges that are influencing or are expected to influence costs, services or service delivery methods.

After July 1, 2028

After full transition, CDS will have shifted into the regional CDS support and service hubs model. CDS will continue to be responsible for the delivery of Early Intervention (Part C), as well as some tasks identified by the SAUs in their region. Given these changes, the following components would still be germane:

1. Actual expenditures compared to the budget for each of the last 3 fiscal years, by expense type and function, including salaries, benefits, contracted services and transportation, direct services and administration; and
2. Actual revenues received compared to the budget for each of the last 3 fiscal years by revenue source; and
3. The total dollar value of MaineCare claims paid through the Department of Health and Human Services for each of the last 3 fiscal years for services provided pursuant to children's individualized education programs or individualized family service plans that were billed directly to the MaineCare program by contracted service providers; and
4. The number of children referred to the CDS System in Part C in the prior year by referral source, including the screening programs in Title 22 §1532, 8824, and 8943, and the percentage of children referred found eligible for services; and
5. The number of children who transitioned in the prior year from early intervention services for children from birth to under 3 years of age to special education and related services for children at least 3 years of age and under 6 years of age; and
6. A listing of the regional sites and their locations; and
7. The total number of employees by function; and
8. The number of private providers that contracted with the Child Development Services system to provide direct services; and
9. A description of the activities of the CDS Service and Support Hub, including:
 - a. Services provided
 - b. Revenue
 - c. Staffing configuration that supports Part B, early childhood special education
 - d. SAUs contracting with CDS support and service hubs; and
10. A description of current and emerging trends and challenges that are influencing or are expected to have an effect on costs, services or service delivery methods of the CDS System.

Section 3: Parental Advisory Committees

Section W-17 directed CDS to report back on the implementation of the Parental Advisory Committees. This section stated, "... [the report] must include, but is not limited to, the number of parental advisory committees that have been formed, how often they met during the prior year and the number of individuals who have participated. The report may also include findings and recommendations from the parental advisory committees regarding the implementation of child find activities and the provision of free, appropriate public education for children eligible under Part B, Section 619."

Pursuant to this section of law, CDS may establish parental advisory committees at each of the 9 regional support and service hubs. A majority of the members of these committees must be parents. Other members should reflect representatives from the regional support and service hubs, SAUs, and statewide associations dedicated to assisting parents and families of persons with disabilities. The committees will seek input and feedback from a broad array of parents from diverse geographic regions of the State on the implementation of child find activities and the provision of special education and related services to children eligible under Part B, Section 619. In addition, CDS shall assist the parental advisory committees in establishing a method for parents to communicate directly with the parental advisory committee. While the law describes the parental advisory committees to be established at each of the 9 regional support and service hubs, these hubs have not yet been established and CDS wanted to prioritize the initiation of these committees. To that end, the parental advisory committees have been established around the existing CDS Regional Sites.

During the fall of 2024, teams from CDS and the DOE's Office of Special Services and Inclusive Education collaborated to develop an implementation plan for Parental Advisory Committees. To encourage participation, parents were contacted via email, and each regional CDS director reached out to regional SAUs and service providers to extend invitations. Additionally, members of statewide organizations dedicated to supporting parents and families of individuals with disabilities were invited to a meeting to strategize ways to ensure ongoing representation at all Parental Advisory Committee meetings.

As of this report, the inaugural Parental Advisory Committee meetings have successfully taken place. A total of seven committees were formed; however, since some sites operate under shared leadership, a decision was made to merge certain locations. This consolidation occurred between Down East and Two Rivers as well as First Step and Opportunities. During the initial meetings, committee members discussed the site combinations and reached a consensus that, provided parent representatives from both sites were present, the merged committees would effectively fulfill the intended purpose of the Parental Advisory Committees.

To support meaningful parent feedback, the Parental Advisory Committees have established the following methods for collecting input:

- **Dedicated Parent Feedback Time:** Each meeting includes time for parents to share questions or concerns about service provision.
- **Online Feedback Form:** A live link directs parents to an anonymous form where they can submit questions, comments, or requests for support. Parents may also request additional information about Parental Advisory Committee meetings. If a parent wishes to be contacted, they must provide their contact details.

An executive assistant monitors form submissions daily. Urgent matters are forwarded to the site director for immediate response, while all other feedback is compiled and reviewed during monthly committee meetings.

As the Parental Advisory Committees have held only one meeting, and this feedback system was introduced in January, there are no formal findings or recommendations to report at this time. Future reports will reflect parent feedback as data becomes available.

The chart below provides details on each Parental Advisory Committee, including the members who attended the first meeting and whether parent attendance met the recommendation that the majority of each committee's membership consist of parents. In sites where the rate of parent participation fell below the required 50% attendance, CDS site directors have reached out to parents in their sites to encourage engagement and participation. In addition, participating parents also offered to reach out to and invite other parents to increase parent participation.

Site	Parents	Statewide agencies	SAU's	Providers	Other	Percentage of Parents (first meeting only)
Aroostook	1	1	2	1	2	14%
Down East/ Two Rivers	5	1	1	2	2	45%
First Step/Opportunities	2	1	1	2	1	29%
Midcoast	3	2	4	3	1	23%
PEDS	5	1	1	2	1	50%
Reach	7	2	0	1	2	58%
York	12	2	3	1	1	63%

Recommendations

Recommendations Relevant to CDS

1. CDS should continue to build out the functionality of the CDS Support and Service Hub model to support SAUs in the provision of early childhood special education services and the transition from Part C to Part B (early intervention to early childhood special education).

Recommendations Relevant to the Maine DOE

2. Maine DOE should continue to analyze SAU readiness to support the complete transition of early childhood special education to the SAUs by 2028. This may consist of assessments, surveys, outreach, and other activities to support readiness. Particular attention should be directed to SAUs where there are known shortages of preschool programming. Additional technical assistance should be utilized through the CDS Support and Service Hub to provide regional support.
3. Maine DOE should continue coordinated planning to support a mixed delivery system of support in Maine to ensure adequate preschool programming is available across the state. This work would continue to require interagency partnerships, especially through the Office of Child and Family Services (OCFS) and the Office of MaineCare Services (OMS) in the Department of Health and Human Services. It may also include partners such as Maine Roads to Quality (MRTQ) and the Center for Community Inclusion and Disability Studies (CCIDS).
4. Maine DOE should continue to support increased MaineCare billing by SAUs through the continued cross-agency partnership with the Office of MaineCare Services (OMS).

Recommendations Relevant to the Legislature

5. Amend the budget initiatives that support the expansion of preschool programming infrastructure should be considered, including acquiring furniture, curriculum materials, adaptive playground equipment, and updates to facilities to allow this ongoing allocation to be non-lapsing.
6. Funding is needed to move forward with establishing the centralized MaineCare billing system. Funding would be used for Maine DOE personnel and the data system solution to support SAUs in making claims for IDEA services that are eligible for reimbursement.
7. The CDS Annual Report as currently outlined in §7209, subsection 4, paragraph E, should be amended to align with the federal reporting timeline and to account for the changes in its operation during and after the transition of the child find and FAPE responsibilities to the SAUs, as described in Section 2 of this Report, on pages 17-20.

References

Maine Revised Statutes Title 20-A, §7006, subsection 5. <https://legislature.maine.gov/statutes/20-A/title20-Asec7006-4.html>

Maine Revised Statutes Title 20-A, § 7209, subsection 4, paragraph E. <https://legislature.maine.gov/statutes/20-A/title20-Asec7209.html>

Maine Revised Statutes Title 22, §1532. <https://legislature.maine.gov/statutes/22/title22sec1532.html>

Maine Revised Statutes Title 22, §8824. <https://legislature.maine.gov/statutes/22/title22sec8824.html>

Maine Revised Statutes Title 22, §8943. <https://legislature.maine.gov/statutes/22/title22sec8943.html>

Public Law 2023, Chapter 643, Part W (LD 2214). <https://legislature.maine.gov/backend/App/services/getDocument.aspx?documentId=107302>

State Performance Plans / Annual Performance Reports (SPP/APR). US Department of Education. Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. <https://sites.ed.gov/idea/spp-apr/>

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