



*Dr. John D. Barge, State School Superintendent*  
*"Making Education Work for All Georgians"*

## Georgia Continuous Improvement Monitoring Process Manual

### INTRODUCTION

The Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE), Division for Special Education Services and Supports has supervisory responsibility regarding the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), applicable federal regulations, and Rules of the State Board of Education. The concept of continuous improvement and focused monitoring adopted by the United States Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP), guided Georgia's work in developing its monitoring process. Georgia designed and implemented the Georgia Continuous Improvement Monitoring Process (GCIMP) to promote continuous, equitable educational improvement for students with disabilities, while ensuring continued procedural compliance. In adopting the concept of continuous improvement, Georgia moved from a model of procedural monitoring to one of continuous improvement with a focus on student achievement.

OSEP defines monitoring as "a continuous review procedure designed to compare present functioning against specific standards, and to yield a profile showing areas of conformance as well as those in which new procedures, training, or other methods of improvement may be needed in order to comply with specific standards."

The following themes, identified by OSEP, have been added to Georgia's monitoring process.

**Continuity.** An effective accountability system must be continuous, must link to systemic change, and must integrate self-assessment with ongoing feedback and response.

**Partnership with stakeholders.** At both the state and local levels, stakeholder partnerships are the vehicles for collaboration among parents, students, teachers, administrators, advocates, and other agencies. The stakeholder groups provide input at the state and local levels when developing and implementing a model of continuous improvement. This collaboration among all stakeholders results in improved outcomes for students with disabilities.

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**Local education accountability.** Districts must utilize data in order to identify strengths and weaknesses as well as plan and implement strategies to improve student outcomes. Districts are further required to report these data to their stakeholders and to the state.

**Self-assessment.** Each district, in collaboration with stakeholders, is involved in ongoing self-assessment. The self assessment is guided by the district's data generated from Georgia's Performance Goals and Indicators for Students with Disabilities. Subsequently, improvement activities are developed and implemented. Progress is monitored and activities are adjusted based on the progress monitoring data.

**Data-driven process.** Annual data profiles are available to each district. These data document the district's progress toward meeting the targets on each of the Performance Goals and Indicators for Students with Disabilities. Local stakeholders use these data to review and revise current improvement activities and/or develop additional improvement activities. Priority indicators for Focused Monitoring are also selected based on the districts' data profiles.

**Public awareness.** Stakeholder participation in the continuous improvement monitoring process ensures that the public has access to, and knowledge of, each district's progress toward meeting state targets. Annual district data, as well as Focused Monitoring reviews, formal complaints, mediations, and due process hearing decisions, are available to the public through the GaDOE website.

**Technical assistance.** Technical assistance is an essential component of any monitoring process based on continuous improvement. In order to facilitate program improvement throughout the state, the division has made technical assistance a priority with a focus on data analysis, improvement planning, identification of promising practices, training in areas identified by the district, as well as resources to facilitate program improvement.

**Predictable rewards and sanctions.** Districts meeting the highest level of achievement, as well as those making the greatest improvement on any of the performance goals and indicators, will be recognized. Districts failing to show continuous improvement over time will receive graduated sanctions.

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## **CHAPTER ONE: AN OVERVIEW OF GEORGIA'S CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT MONITORING PROCESS (GCIMP)**

Georgia's Continuous Improvement Monitoring Process (GCIMP) is based on Georgia's Performance Goals and Indicators for Students with Disabilities. These goals and indicators merge the goals of Georgia's Strategic Plan and the goals indentified by OSEP. Data are collected and analyzed in order to measure and report the progress of districts toward meeting targets for these indicators. District profiles are accessible through the GaDOE website and/or the portal. A self-assessment is conducted by each district and stakeholder committee. These groups analyze data from the district profile to identify district strengths and weaknesses. Using these findings, the local stakeholder committee develops or revises its improvement activities.

Each district's performance is expected to remain at or above the state target. Any district that does not meet the state target for any compliance indicator must develop and implement improvement activities for each target not met. It is suggested that districts prioritize improvement activities that focus on strategies for improvement targeting multiple indicators.

The State Advisory Panel for Special Education (SAP) is the statewide stakeholder committee that analyzes Georgia's progress on the Performance Goals and Indicators for Students with Disabilities. Districts are compared to other districts of similar size and ranked for each priority indicator based on district data. Based on that data, the SAP determines the priority indicator(s) for Focused Monitoring (FM) for each fiscal year.

Districts with the most opportunity for improvement, across enrollment size groups, are selected for FM. FM teams conduct on-site visits to investigate the factors impacting the low performance of students with disabilities. The on-site team is led by a division program specialist and includes one special education administrator from outside the district being monitored, the district liaison for the district being monitored, and one or two parents.

During the on-site visit, investigative protocols addressing the focused priority indicator are used to gather and verify information. Student record reviews, classroom observations, professional surveys, as well as parent, student, and professional interviews, are used to gather information. The on-site team prepares a written report based on the findings of the monitoring team. The district then develops a Corrective Action Plan (CAP) that addresses the cited compliance items and includes a long range plan to improve the priority indicator.

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The following additional general supervision procedures are also components of the continuous improvement process.

**Budget Monitoring.** Budget monitoring is a collaborative effort among several divisions in the GaDOE. Special education program budgets, including those for IDEA and state preschool funds, are submitted to the division. Budgets are reviewed to verify that funds are allocated for excess costs associated with special education and related services. Ongoing supervision by the division occurs through monthly review of expenditures, quarterly notifications of the percentage of funds drawn down, and corrective action to address noncompliance and audit findings. Use of funds is reviewed to ensure that funds are used to address needed improvement areas. Budgets are also reviewed any time a complaint alleges misuse of funds.

**Timeline Reviews.** An annual assessment determines each district's ability to meet the timelines for initial eligibility and for transition from preschool programs. Each district must submit a timeline report for each fiscal year in order to verify compliance for each timeline component. Districts with timelines that are out of compliance must develop improvement activities as part of the district's Consolidated Application and the LEA Implementation Plan.

**Student Record Reviews.** Approximately one sixth of Georgia's districts participate in a record review each year. A sample of student records is reviewed by a team from the division. When systemic areas of noncompliance are discovered, the district must correct all identified noncompliance cited in the district report as soon as possible, but no later than one year from identification. Sanctions will apply for persistent failure to implement corrections.

**Local Determinations.** The GaDOE makes an annual determination concerning each district's status regarding the following: Meets Requirements, Needs Assistance, Needs Intervention, or Needs Substantial Intervention. The determination is based on data in the district profile, information gathered during monitoring visits, and other public information. The district determinations are based on compliance indicators. Districts are notified of their determination status in March. March notification allows the districts time to develop improvement activities and to incorporate those activities into the LEA Implementation Plans.

**Formal Complaints.** A formal complaint is a written, signed complaint alleging a violation of IDEA procedures. Formal complaint investigations may require an on-site visit. Once the investigation is complete and a decision made regarding the complaint, the Division for

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Special Education Services and Supports sends a letter, both to the district and to the complainant, that addresses each allegation, the findings, and the conclusions.

**Mediation:** When the parent and district disagree about the education of a student with a disability, either party may request mediation at any time. For example, mediation may be offered by districts upon receipt of a formal complaint or a due process hearing request. Further, the procedures shall ensure that the mediation process is voluntary on the part of both parties and is not used to deny or delay a parent's right to a hearing regarding the parent's due process complaint or to deny any other rights afforded under Part B of IDEA.

The GaDOE maintains a list of individuals who are qualified mediators and knowledgeable in laws and regulations related to the provision of special education and related services. Mediators are selected by GaDOE on a rotational basis. Mediation will occur at a location and time convenient to both parties. If a resolution is reached, the mediator will facilitate the agreement and all parties will sign the mediation agreement. This is a legally binding agreement; and, after mediation, both parties are expected to carry out the activities agreed upon during the mediation as outlined in the agreement. Discussions during mediation cannot be used as evidence in any due process hearing or civil proceeding.

**Due Process Hearings.** Due process hearings are designed to provide all concerned parties an opportunity to resolve differences. Once the hearing decision has been made, the division issues a letter to the district if there are findings that mandate required corrective actions, regardless of whether or not specified by the hearing decision. Any due process procedural or compliance issues identified require that a correction plan with timelines be written even if the issues are unrelated to the hearing decision. The division verifies completion of the required corrective action via written correspondence and/or an on-site visit.

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## CHAPTER TWO: GEORGIA'S PERFORMANCE GOALS & INDICATORS FOR SWDs

Georgia's Performance Goals and Indicators for Students with Disabilities are the focus of Georgia's Continuous Improvement Monitoring Process (GCIMP), which concentrates on accountability. Using the performance goals and indicators, a data collection system has been established to measure improvement on each goal and indicator in order to make comparisons nationally and within the state. Annual targets (benchmarks) for state improvement have been set by the statewide stakeholder committee and are detailed in the State Performance Plan. Each district selects indicators and sets district targets based on its data. This method allows the state as well as districts to monitor the overall performance on each goal. The State Advisory Panel, in its capacity as the statewide stakeholder committee, reviews statewide data annually. When statewide data reflect a significant need for improvement, or when federal continuous improvement monitoring so indicates, the stakeholders may recommend that all districts be required to address a specific indicator.

### *List of GaDOE Performance Goals and Indicators for SWDs*

- I. Improve post-school outcomes for students with disabilities.**
  1. Decrease the percentage of students with disabilities who drop out of school. **SPP 2**
  2. Increase the percentage of students with disabilities who earn a regular high school diploma. **SPP 1**
  3. Increase the percentage of students with disabilities who transition to employment or post-secondary education. **SPP 14**
  4. Increase the percentage of transition aged students with disabilities who have coordinated and measurable IEP goals and transition services that will lead to attainment of post-secondary goals. **SPP 13**
- II. Improve services for young children (ages 3 – 5) with disabilities.**
  5. Increase the percentage of young children referred by parents, or other agencies prior to age three who are determined eligible and have an IEP implemented by the third birthday. **SPP 12**

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6. Increase the percentage of time young children with disabilities spend in natural environments with typically developing peers. [SPP 6](#)
7. Increase the percentage of young children with disabilities who show improved positive social/emotional skills, acquisition and use of knowledge and skills, and use of appropriate behaviors. [SPP 7](#)

### **III. Improve the provision of a Free Appropriate Public Education to students with disabilities.**

8. Increase the percentage of students who are evaluated and determined eligible for special education within 60 days. [SPP 11](#)
9. Increase the percentage of students with disabilities who receive their instruction in the general education setting with appropriate supports and accommodations. [SPP 5](#)
10. Increase the performance of students with disabilities on statewide assessments when given appropriate accommodations. [SPP 3](#)
11. Decrease the percentage of students with disabilities who are removed from their school or placements for disciplinary reasons. [SPP 4](#)
12. Decrease the disproportionate representation of students with disabilities due to inappropriate policies, procedures, and practices. [SPP 9 & 10](#)
13. Increase the percentage of parents of children receiving special education services who report that schools encouraged parent involvement to improve results for students with disabilities. [SPP 8](#)

### **IV. Improve compliance with state and federal laws and regulations.**

14. Correct all identified noncompliance as soon as possible, but no later than one year from identification. [SPP 15](#)
15. Follow dispute resolution procedures and requirements within any applicable timelines. This includes formal complaints, mediation, due process hearings, and resolution sessions. [SPP 16, 17, 18, 19](#)
16. Submit reports in a timely manner. [SPP 20](#)

### CHAPTER THREE: DISTRICT DATA PROFILES

#### *District Special Education Annual Report*

A major component of Georgia's Continuous Improvement Monitoring Process (GCIMP) is the district's Special Education Annual Report for students with disabilities. The report is published annually, and local school districts can view their Annual Report on the [Georgia Department of Education \(GaDOE\) website](#). The Annual Report contains data for the Performance Goals and Indicators for Students with Disabilities associated with the federal State Performance Plan (SPP) and the Annual Performance Report (APR) due to the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) each February. Historical data, when available, is provided to evaluate district trends. The Annual Report also presents the state level data so districts can compare their performance to the overall state performance as well as to the state targets.

Much of the information in the Annual Report is provided to the state by the districts through the GaDOE data collection processes that include the Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) count reports and multiple other record level files in Student Record. Additional federally required information is collected by the districts and directly submitted to the Division for Special Education Services and Supports.

Districts are responsible for the accurate submission of data to GaDOE in accordance with State Education Board Rule 160-5-1-.07 STUDENT DATA COLLECTION. Edit checks are built into the GaDOE data collection system to verify the accuracy of the data and to alert districts to selected potential errors or discrepancies.

Districts use their Annual Reports to identify progress toward meeting the state's targets for the APR performance goals and indicators. The local district stakeholder committee analyzes the data to determine performance trends. Based on the findings, the stakeholder committee may revise an existing activity or develop additional improvement activities to ensure progress on a specified indicator. The improvement activities for each district are submitted annually as part of the district's Consolidated Application.

Stakeholder committees will often need to "unpack" district level data and look at school level data once they review the Annual Report. Information should be reviewed by individual schools; by school levels such as elementary, middle or high; by gender; by disability category; or by other subgroups. District special education administrators should work with other district personnel to develop mechanisms for processing, gathering, accessing, understanding, and using this data.

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District and state level Special Education Annual Reports may be accessed at [www.gadoe.org](http://www.gadoe.org) under the Data Collections menu bar. The “About the Reports” link is revised annually and provides, by performance goal, specific data sources as well as the metric used to calculate performance. The GaDOE provides technical assistance as needed or by request.

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### CHAPTER FOUR: IMPROVEMENT ACTIVITIES

Georgia's Continuous Improvement Monitoring Process (GCIMP) requires that each district develop improvement activities in the LEA Implementation Plan in the Consolidated Application. The activities are developed following the district's self-assessment of its data. Using the district's data profile as a starting point, the stakeholder committee analyzes and synthesizes the data to determine areas of strengths and weaknesses in regard to meeting the state's targets on each of the four performance goals and sixteen indicators.

Districts are encouraged to develop activities that support efforts to coordinate effectively the local school improvement activities, No Child Left Behind activities, Title I, and other initiatives to improve outcomes for all students. A district must have improvement activities for any compliance indicator for which that district is not meeting the state target. For performance indicators, districts should prioritize improvement activities that can impact multiple indicators. If a district has been monitored, that district may also have indicators that are required to be addressed.

The Consolidated Application is a collaborative planning and budgeting process that maximizes district fiscal resources. Each district is responsible for implementing and monitoring the activities identified in the LEA Implementation Plan. District stakeholder committees should review the plans and activities, conduct formative or intermediate assessments of progress, and review and revise the plan as necessary. District liaisons from the Division for Special Education Services and Supports will confer with each district annually to monitor progress and document efforts toward improving outcomes.

The LEA Implementation Plan is written to reflect the targets for improvement and the strategies for reaching those targets over a three year period of time. Annually, each district will submit a summary of progress on its improvement activities in the LEA Implementation Plan, adding new activities as needed.

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### CHAPTER FIVE: STAKEHOLDERS

#### *Stakeholder Participation*

Georgia's Continuous Improvement Monitoring Process (GCIMP) has stakeholder involvement at two levels. At the state level, the State Board of Education serves an advisory function regarding issues related to special education and related services for children with disabilities. In addition, the State Advisory Panel for Special Education (SAP) serves as an advisory group to the Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE), Division for Special Education Services and Supports (DSESS). At the local level, school districts are required to convene stakeholder committees that will participate in the improvement planning process for special education.

#### *State Stakeholders and Responsibilities*

The SAP was configured to serve as the stakeholder committee for state activities. Members of the Georgia State Advisory Panel include the following persons.

- Parents of children with disabilities
- Individuals with disabilities
- State and local education officials
- State and local agency representatives
- General and special education school administrators and teachers
- Representatives from advocacy groups
- Representatives from institutions of higher education that prepare special education and related services personnel
- Representatives from private schools and charter schools
- Representatives from vocational, community, and business organizations concerned with the provision of transition services to youth with disabilities
- Representatives from state juvenile and corrections agencies

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The SAP has many duties under IDEA. Among those duties is the role of stakeholder for both the Continuous Improvement Monitoring Process (CIMP) and, specifically, Georgia's Continuous Improvement Monitoring Process (GCIMP). As a stakeholder group, the SAP works in partnership with the GaDOE to improve academic achievement for students with disabilities in the state of Georgia. This includes participation in developing state targets, selecting data collection systems, analyzing state and district data profiles, developing and revising improvement activities, as well as identifying priority indicators for Focused Monitoring. The SAP also participates in the annual review and revision of Georgia's Annual Performance Report (APR).

### *Local Stakeholders and Responsibilities*

The selection and involvement of a local stakeholder committee is a requirement for the local improvement planning process. Stakeholders represent all parties with an interest in improving academic achievement for students with disabilities. Local stakeholder committees typically include nine to fifteen members that reflect the ethnic and cultural makeup of the local community. At least one-third of the membership should be parents of students with disabilities, advocates, and/or students with disabilities. The stakeholder membership may be appointed based on the local district's needs. Recommended members may include the following persons.

- Parents (of students with and without disabilities)
- Students with disabilities
- Principals
- Teachers (general education and special education)
- Babies Can't Wait/Early Intervention representative
- Vocational rehabilitation representative
- Related service providers
- School counselor/social worker
- Curriculum specialist
- School psychologist
- Title I representative or School Improvement specialist

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- Advocacy group representative
- PTA representative
- College/University representative
- Georgia Learning Resources System (GLRS) representative
- Child care/Pre-K representative
- Local board of education representative
- State operated program representative (hospitals, state schools, Department of Juvenile Justice)

The stakeholder committee is responsible for assisting with the development of the district improvement activities. This committee verifies the school district's current status by reviewing the district data profile, selecting improvement priorities, developing improvement activities, and subsequently ensuring the implementation of those activities. The stakeholder committee meets as needed in order to

- review improvement activity progress by assessing the effectiveness of the interventions implemented;
- review the updated district data profile as well as additional data the district has collected for analysis;
- revise improvement activities as necessary; and
- expand improvement activities to include additional Georgia Performance Indicators.

This committee works on an ongoing basis to assist the district as it improves outcomes for students with disabilities. The superintendent or special education director facilitates the planning meetings.

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## CHAPTER SIX: FOCUSED MONITORING

### *Focused Monitoring (FM) Overview*

The State Advisory Panel for Special Education (SAP) serves as the statewide stakeholder committee for Georgia's Continuous Improvement Monitoring Process (GCIMP). Annually, the panel reviews and analyzes Georgia's progress on the Performance Goals and Indicators for Students with Disabilities. Based on this data, the SAP determines the priority indicators for Focused Monitoring (FM) for the next fiscal year.

Once priorities are determined, districts are ranked based on their data for the specified priority indicator and compared to districts of similar size. When districts have similar data, other indicators such as disproportionality, audit findings, and other compliance issues are taken into account in the district selection process. Districts selected for an FM review have data that suggests the greatest opportunity for improvement. Prior to the on-site visit, a comprehensive analysis of the district's data available at the GaDOE is completed by the staff from the Division for Special Education Services and Supports in order to identify strengths, weaknesses, and trends. The on-site monitoring team then visits the district to investigate the factors impacting the low performance on the priority indicator.

During the on-site visit, investigative protocols that address the focused priority indicator are used to gather and verify information and to identify barriers to progress. Classroom observations; student record reviews; professional surveys; an FM parent meeting and/or focus group; and interviews with parents, students, and professionals may be used to gather information. Following the visit, the district receives a written report that identifies barriers, compliance findings, and a structure for improvement planning. The school district, with local stakeholder committee participation, is required to develop a Corrective Action Plan (CAP) to address the cited compliance items and to include a long range plan to improve the performance of students with disabilities. Technical assistance from the Division for Special Education Services and Supports is provided, and progress is regularly monitored.

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### *District Selection for Focused Monitoring*

The following chart lists the breakdown of the five size groups by population of special education students within the district.

Size Group	# of Students with Disabilities
A	3000+
B	1000-2999
C	500-999
D	250-499
E	0-249

The number of districts selected for an FM is determined annually, based on the priority indicators selected. The selection of districts for FM is based on data, including data resulting from the following processes.

1. The data for the priority indicator are reviewed.
2. The trend data for each district in the lower quartile of each size group are examined, including progress or lack of progress over time.
3. Current and trend data for the other indicators are reviewed to determine whether progress is evident.

Even when more than one priority indicator is selected for FM by the SAP, each district is only monitored for one priority indicator in a given fiscal year. When a district qualifies for monitoring in more than one priority indicator, the indicator that would have the greatest impact on improving outcomes for students with disabilities within that district will be selected for FM. A district is never selected for an FM for two consecutive years for the *same indicator*.

### *Focused Monitoring Teams*

Focused Monitoring teams visit the selected districts to investigate the factors impacting the low performance on the priority indicator. The team leader is a Division for Special Education Services and Supports compliance review specialist. The other team members

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include the district liaison to the selected district, at least one peer administrator, and at least one parent from a Georgia Learning Resources System (GLRS) region other than that of the district being monitored.

Annually in the spring, the Division for Special Education Services and Supports announces that applications are available for both peers and parents who are interested in participating on a team. Applications are distributed to special education directors through various parent organizations across the state, and they are available on the Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE) website. Selected team members are notified of their acceptance in the summer. All parent team members, both new and returning, as well as all new professional team members, must attend training sessions that are conducted in the fall.

### *Peer Team Members*

The qualifications, requirements, and job description for peer team member applicants include the following.

#### **Qualifications**

- Currently employed as a special education administrator, general education administrator, or GLRS administrator

#### **Requirements**

- Attend one day of training in the fall
- Participate as a Focused Monitoring team member once during the school year for an on-site visit of 3-5 days
- Travel and stay overnight during the on-site visit

#### **Job Description**

- Interview administrators, teachers, parents, and students
- Conduct standards-based classroom observations
- Review student records with a focus on the priority indicator for Focused Monitoring
- Summarize findings on Focused Monitoring protocols
- Present findings to the team during daily debriefing sessions

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- Attend and record minutes of the FM parent meeting

Special education administrators whose districts display exemplary data for the priority indicator are the first selected for team participation. Applicants who work in districts that have been selected for Focused Monitoring will not be allowed to participate on a Focused Monitoring team during the same fiscal year. A peer member is not allowed to monitor a district in which s/he resides or is employed or any district in his/her GLRS region.

### *Parent Team Members*

The qualifications, requirements, and job description for parent team member applicants include the following.

#### **Qualifications**

- Be the parent of a child who receives or has received special education services in Georgia public schools
- Have exemplary communication skills
- Possess a high school diploma or its equivalent (college degree is preferred)
- Have email access
- Provide references

#### **Requirements**

- Attend two days of training in the fall
- Participate as a Focused Monitoring team member at least once during the school year for an on-site visit of 3-5 days
- Travel and stay overnight during the training and on-site visit(s)
- Pay for all expenses, which will be reimbursed later

#### **Job Description**

- Serve as moderator of the FM parent meeting and/or focus group
- Interview administrators, teachers, parents, and students
- Review student records with a focus on the priority indicator for Focused Monitoring

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- Summarize findings on Focused Monitoring protocols
- Present findings to the team during daily debriefing sessions

The GaDOE does not consider applications for parents who have potential conflicts of interest with the state or local district due to active state employment, active paid advocacy, or involvement in due process hearings. Parent team members do not monitor a district in which they reside, where their children attend school, or any district in their GLRS region. Parent team members must not be currently employed by a school district as an educator.

### *District Notification of Focused Monitoring*

All districts that receive an FM are notified via a letter to the superintendent with a copy going to the special education director. The letter informs the district of the priority indicator that is the focus of the review, the date of the FM, and the team leader assigned for its review. All districts selected for an FM receive training on the procedures and expectations for the FM visit and post-visit requirements. The training is held prior to the scheduled FM visits. After the training, the team leader contacts the special education director to begin planning the logistics of the visit.

### *Data Analysis*

Prior to the on-site visit, a comprehensive analysis of the district's data is completed by GaDOE staff to identify strengths, weaknesses, and trends. Data reviewed may include the district profile, student state-wide assessment scores over multiple years, AYP, FTE, federal and state budgets, complaints/mediations, LEA Implementation Plans, and professional surveys. Assessment data may be examined by student, school, grade, classroom, disability, environment, and ethnicity. A district may provide the team leader with additional data that the district would like considered during the investigation. A preliminary hypothesis is developed, and the team's on-site investigation may either confirm or change the hypothesis.

### *Surveys*

The Division for Special Education Services and Supports conducts surveys of district professionals to secure information related to the focus indicator. All professionals who provide instruction or work with students with disabilities are asked to complete a professional survey online. Directors are provided information necessary to notify all appropriate personnel. The division analyzes and summarizes the information contained in

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the surveys and uses this as part of the information to guide the on-site process. In addition, the team leader shares the results with the district.

### *Typical On-Site Review*

The scheduling for the on-site FM review depends on the location of the local school district to be reviewed. The distance the team must travel to the district determines the time when the on-site review begins. The number of days for the on-site review is based on the size of the district to be reviewed. Larger districts can expect a visit of 4 to 5 days; smaller districts, 3 to 4 days. The following is an example of a typical on-site monitoring review for each day.

#### Day 1

- Focused Monitoring team arrives and meets for planning
- Entrance conference
- Student record reviews
- Parent phone interviews
- Focus group, where appropriate
- Focused Monitoring parent meeting in the evening

#### Days 2-4

- Focused Monitoring team meeting/debriefing
- Interviews of building administrators, teachers, and students at selected schools
- Interviews of special education director, curriculum director, school psychologist, and additional central office staff
- Classroom observations
- Daily debriefing
- Parent phone interviews

#### Final Day

- Follow-up interviews, observations, and record reviews
- Exit summary with district administration

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### *Entrance Conference with District*

A brief meeting is scheduled on the first day of the on-site visit with the school district's superintendent, special education director, and any additional key administrative staff such as building principals, testing coordinators, and curriculum directors. The team leader introduces the FM team members, discusses the purpose of the visit, explains the data to support the reason for the FM review, and outlines the procedures and team activities for the review. The district has the opportunity to ask questions or present information regarding improvement activities already occurring in the district.

### *Student Record Reviews*

Student record reviews are conducted as an essential component of FM. Student record reviews are one of the procedures for collecting information that assists the team in discovering why the district's performance on the priority indicator is low.

Prior to the on-site visit, the team leader requests, from the special education director, an enrollment roster of all students with disabilities who are currently receiving special education services, including those who attend state schools and/or GNETS programs. Sometimes this procedure is not necessary when the team leader identifies student records to review from data, such as CRCT results.

Current and previous IEPs, eligibility reports, and psychological reports are examined either to support the team's hypothesis(es) or to suggest additional possibilities for the low performance on the priority indicator. The records are not reviewed for compliance with detailed due process requirements; however, if district noncompliance is noted, it is addressed in the FM report.

### *Focused Monitoring Parent Meeting/Focus Group*

An important component of FM is the parent meeting, which is scheduled for approximately one hour in the evening of the first day of monitoring. The meeting, facilitated by FM parent team members, provides the division with information and parent perspectives on the district's special education programs and procedures as they relate to the focus indicator. The district assists the team leader in identifying a location and appropriate time for the meeting. Approximately two weeks prior to Focused Monitoring, FM districts are given the parent invitation on CD for distribution to all parents of special education students. A meeting reminder is provided for distribution the day before the FM parent meeting, and a press release is also included on the CD. The district can add specifics to this release before distributing it to the press. In some districts, focus groups may be assembled

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for additional parent input. For a focus group, the parents of those students who are directly involved with the priority area will be selected for input.

### *Interviews*

All team members conduct interviews as part of the FM investigative process. Some interviews take place in schools. If appropriate, the special education directors for larger districts will have escorts available to accompany team members to the schools. School administrators are advised of specific suggestions that will be helpful in making this an efficient process. These suggestions may include having a conference room or media center room available to conduct interviews, arranging coverage for teachers who are to be interviewed, and providing access to permanent record folders.

Team members may interview the following persons.

- Building administrators
- General education teachers
- Special education teachers
- Special education director
- School psychologist
- School counselors
- Curriculum director
- Academic coaches
- Testing coordinator
- SST coordinator
- Graduation coach
- Parents
- District stakeholders
- Students
- School improvement facilitator

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- Community leaders

The interviews are scheduled so that a team member has sufficient time to complete the interviews and write summary notes prior to the next interview. At no time is the process to be rushed, even if it means returning the next day to complete the interviews. Parent team members conduct parent interviews via the telephone both during the day and in the evening. Telephone numbers for parents of students with disabilities will be provided by the district based on a list provided by the team leader.

### ***Final Report and Corrective Action Plans***

The team leader prepares a written report for the MyGaDOE portal within thirty days of the on-site visit. This report summarizes the data related to the FM priority indicator, the activities and findings of the on-site team, and the cited compliance items.

After the school district receives the report, the team leader, district liaison, and relevant GaDOE specialists conduct a webinar meeting with district staff and other pertinent stakeholders to review the final report and to develop a Corrective Action Plan (CAP). The CAP must contain very specific actions, responsibilities, timelines, and targets. The CAP must also contain activities to correct the compliance findings and provide long range plans for improving the priority indicator. The CAP must be submitted, on the portal, to the Division for Special Education Services and Supports for approval within 45 days of receiving the final report.

Three times during the following year, the district must report and provide evidence of implementation of the improvement activities specified to bring the district into compliance. Within one year after receiving the final report, the district must demonstrate compliance with all cited items via mail-in documentation or an on-site review. The division may continue to monitor district level data for two years to see that improvement is evident in the priority indicator monitored.

### ***Special Education Director Responsibilities for Focused Monitoring***

#### ***Pre-Visit Activities (refer to the FM Handbook for complete details)***

1. Submit a list of all special education students in the district.
2. Provide a list of phone numbers for parents from a list provided by the team leader.
3. Distribute parent invitations to Focused Monitoring parent meeting two weeks prior to visit, and reminders one day before scheduled meeting.

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4. Notify all professional staff in district to complete professional survey online.
5. Arrange accessible location for Focused Monitoring parent meeting and/or focus group.
6. Arrange location (with telephone and Internet access) for headquarters for FM team for record reviews, interviews, and daily debriefings.
7. Arrange for escorts to accompany FM team members to schools selected for interviews, if appropriate.
8. Notify curriculum director, testing coordinator, school psychologist, and additional central office staff that FM team may interview them during the on-site visit.
9. Notify all building administrators of the possibility that FM team members may be visiting their schools to interview personnel, observe classrooms, and possibly review permanent records.
10. Arrange coverage for classes as necessary.
11. Make lesson plans available for all classrooms being observed.
12. Assist schools with gathering information, such as the general school information sheet and maps of the school, and submit that information to the team leader.

### Monitoring Visit Activities

1. Set up and attend brief entrance and daily conferences with FM team.
2. Make sure the FM team has space and resources needed for the visit.
3. Interview with an FM team member.
4. Set up and attend the summary conference with the FM team and superintendent.

### Post-Visit Activities

1. Invite the superintendent, stakeholders, and additional essential staff to the follow-up CAP and improvement activities development meeting.
2. Assume the lead role in the CAP and improvement activities development.
3. Collaborate with the superintendent to submit the CAP through the MyGaDOE portal within 45 days of receiving the final report.
4. Ensure CAP implementation.

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5. Submit required evidence of CAP implementation on specified dates.
6. Submit progress monitoring quarterly for the next two years, as scheduled.

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## CHAPTER SEVEN: BUDGET OR FISCAL MONITORING PROCEDURES

This chapter is currently under development.

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### CHAPTER EIGHT: TIMELINES

Timeline data are indicators included in the State Performance Plan (SPP) that must be reported in the Annual Performance Report (APR) submitted by the Division for Special Education Services and Supports to the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP). In addition, as required by the SPP, timeline data are included in the district's annual data profiles. Districts have timeline data regarding their progress toward one hundred percent compliance reported annually.

The timeline summary report must be submitted to the division each year in July. Local school districts must complete a summary report of their performance in meeting timelines for initial eligibilities, eligibility redeterminations, and Babies Can't Wait (BCW) preschool transitions that have been completed during that fiscal year (July 1 - June 30). All evaluations for children attending private schools and eligibility determinations data conducted by the district should be included in this report. Timeline data are collected through the Student Record System. The division expects to move toward student record as a method of data collection for timelines in the future.

The expectation is that all districts will be in compliance with meeting the timeline requirements. The division staff reviews timeline summary reports yearly and contacts those districts out of compliance. Staff from the district in noncompliance and division staff review the district's previous annual timeline data, the current actions the district has in place to correct timeline noncompliance, and other pertinent information. In addition, any district not meeting compliance on timeline indicators must include improvement activities as part of the Consolidated Application LEA Improvement Plan.

#### *Reminders*

1. If referrals are late due to student failure to pass the vision and hearing screenings, the district should review its policies and procedures in order to evaluate changes that can be made to correct this problem. For example, a vision and hearing screening should be completed during the SST process, before consent to conduct an evaluation is obtained. Districts should have procedures in place when a student fails the screening.
2. Timeline data are collected for **all initial evaluations to determine eligibility for special education. This includes speech/language and all other eligibilities.**

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3. Please note that once a student has an IEP, any other evaluations are considered reevaluations, including when a speech/language impaired student is being considered for SLD eligibility or a SDD student is being considered for a different eligibility.
4. It is recommended that districts collect and review their timeline data monthly. A procedure needs to be in place either at each school or in the central office that results in the timely collection and accuracy of data.
5. The Preschool Transition data are for Babies Can't Wait (BCW) data only (Indicator 12). All other preschool referrals should be counted with the initial eligibility data. All BCW referrals should be done through a transition meeting. Not all transition meetings result in a consent for evaluation (parents do not want the service). Therefore, the number of referrals from BCW and the number of completed referrals with consent may be different. The form calculates from the number of referrals completed with consents.
6. If BCW does not make the referral via a transition meeting during the transition period (as early as 9 months but no later than 90 days prior to the child's third birthday), this referral is not considered a transition referral. Referrals received outside of the transition period are considered an initial referral with a 60 day timeline. These referrals will not be counted in the preschool data but will be reported in the initial eligibility data.
7. A Summary Report for SPP/APR Indicator 11 will automatically generate on the Timeline Summary Report once the district has entered initial and BCW information.
8. Districts not in total compliance (100%) with each of the timeline reports must report the number of days the referral was late and the reasons why the district failed to maintain compliance.
9. **All districts in noncompliance with timelines must develop improvement activities as part of the LEA Consolidated Application.**

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Districts may deduct some identified exceptions from the total number of timelines reported late. These exceptions are described in the chart below.

Timeline	Exception
Initial Eligibility, Babies Can't Wait	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Parent repeatedly fails or refuses to produce the child for evaluation.</li> <li>2. Extenuating circumstances are present, e.g., illness, unusual evaluation needs, or revocation of parent's consent for evaluation.</li> </ol>
Initial Eligibility	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. Child enrolls in a school from another district with the 60 day timeline in process, and the parents have agreed to a different timeline.</li> </ol>
Babies Can't Wait	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4. Parent refusal to provide consent caused delays in evaluation or initial services.</li> <li>5. Child referred to BCW less than 90 days before the 3<sup>rd</sup> birthday.</li> </ol>

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When reporting the data for the timeline indicators, the district must provide the number of days late and the reasons for lateness. Reasons for late evaluations are reported in the following chart.

Reasons for Lateness	Initials	BCW
Student delays (excessive absences)		
Parent delays (canceling meetings, not providing relevant information in a timely manner)		
Teacher/evaluator delays (teachers not following through; lack of psychologists, diagnosticians, or speech-language pathologists)		
District errors (errors in tracking, errors in policies and procedures).		
Other (Explain)		

Reviewing the timeline data monthly allows districts to identify and correct problems early in the process. All districts are required to maintain their tracking logs/databases yearly. These tracking logs must contain the information needed to complete the summary reports thoroughly and accurately. The division strongly encourages districts to incorporate a database that can be easily accessed for the district's internal monitoring.

The division conducts data verification reviews when a district submits annual timeline summary reports indicating noncompliance or inaccurate data. In addition, random verification will be conducted for districts meeting compliance. The timeline summary report and instructions are on the Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE) portal. The district must check the portal for the most current summary report since revisions may occur from year to year. **Sanctions may occur for districts out of compliance for two consecutive years or for the inability to verify the information submitted by the districts to the division.**

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### CHAPTER NINE: STUDENT RECORD REVIEW

Student record reviews for due process procedural compliance are a component of Georgia's Continuous Improvement Monitoring Process (GCIMP) to meet the state's general supervision responsibility. At least one-sixth of the state's school districts receive a record review annually. Selected districts will be notified a month in advance and asked to submit a special education enrollment roster to the Division for Special Education Services and Supports. A random selection of student records that represents various disabilities, grade levels, schools, teachers, and related service providers, including the students attending state schools, GNETS, and residential programs, will be made for the review.

The number of records for review is determined by the size of the school district as indicated in the chart at the end of this section. The numbers indicate a minimum for each size group. For certain size groups, the minimum may fall within the range indicated. In addition to those records, at least 10 will be reviewed for transition plans to determine whether coordinated, measurable annual IEP goals and transition services have been developed to enable the student to meet the post-secondary goals established for the student. These data are needed for Indicator 15 in the State Performance Plan and are reported annually in the Annual Performance Report. The GaDOE reserves the right to request additional records if the findings warrant additional documentation.

The random selection of student names will be given to the special education director a couple of days in advance of the review. Procedural item(s) found in noncompliance during the record review will be written as noncompliance. All identified noncompliance must be corrected as soon as possible, but no later than one year from identification. For annual determinations and other data reports, noncompliance for a district is only reported when a district fails to correct the noncompliance within one year.

A Record Review team is established by the division. The team will visit the GLRS site or other central location for the region of the district(s). The special education director will be asked to bring the special education files of students selected to the district's GLRS or other central location. Multiple districts may have records reviewed on the same day. Specific team members will be designated to review each district's records. The division will review the student records for compliance using a due process checklist. Record reviews are documented through an application developed and accessed through the GaDOE portal. The record review report will be developed by the team leader after the visit. The GaDOE special education program manager and director will approve and submit the report

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developed by the team leader to the district special education director. The district special education director will accept the report through the portal. This report provides required evidence of correction the district will need to submit to remediate the noncompliant issue(s). The district special education director will develop a Corrective Action Plan (CAP). The CAP will then go to the district superintendent for approval before being submitted back to GaDOE.

Within one year from the on-site record review, the district will submit requested student records to the division to document that the noncompliant issues have been corrected. Records will be requested based on the two-prong method required by OSEP. Prong one consists of a portion of the same student records reviewed the previous year and reviewed again to ensure compliance has taken place for each student. Prong two involves selecting students who were not previously reviewed and conducting a record review on these students. Using these records, the division will conduct a desk audit focusing on the identified noncompliance issues. If the district is in compliance, the special education director is notified by a portal follow-up report, and the process is complete. A letter of clearance will be issued by the GaDOE. If the district remains noncompliant, the district must write an additional plan for correction. The division will accept the plan and identify deadlines for correction. Sanctions will occur for those districts that do not correct identified noncompliance within the time period designated by the division.

Student record reviews are also a component of complaint investigations and Focused Monitoring. When record reviews are a component of a formal complaint investigation, the review may encompass the entire student record. Record reviews for Focused Monitoring are specific to the priority indicator identified for the Focused Monitoring. This type of student record review examines how decisions were made and how services were implemented to reach desired student outcomes, rather than focusing on procedural due process. If due process procedural findings should surface, these are addressed and included in the district's FM report.

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### *Size Chart for Record Reviews*

**(These figures are the minimum records review)**

Size Group A	40 Records
Size Group B	30 Records
Size Group C	25 Records
Size Group D	20 Records
Size Group E	15 Records

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## CHAPTER TEN: LOCAL DETERMINATIONS

### *Overview of the Process*

In order to meet the requirements of IDEA, the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) annually reviews the State's Performance Plan and Annual Performance Report. Based on the information contained in the report, information obtained through monitoring visits, and other public information, OSEP determines whether the state Meets Requirements; Needs Assistance, Needs Intervention, or Needs Substantial Intervention.

IDEA also requires states to make "Determinations" annually on the performance of LEAs. Based on the data in each District Profile, information obtained through monitoring visits, and any other public information, the Georgia Department of Education determines whether each local school district Meets Requirements, Needs Assistance 1, Needs Assistance 2, Needs Intervention, or Needs Substantial Intervention. Districts' data on the compliance indicators is reviewed to determine whether the district met the state targets in the State Performance Plan (SPP). In addition to the data, other factors are considered, including the progress over time that the district has made toward meeting state targets, Focused Monitoring status, activities to address disproportionality, and activities documented in LEA Implementation Plans. Determinations are made annually and superintendents are notified in March to enable districts to develop improvement activities and to incorporate those improvement activities into their LEA Implementation Plans

### *Annual Determinations*

#### *Meets Requirements*

Factors the state will consider in determining whether a District *Meets the Requirements* and purposes of IDEA include the following.

- The district demonstrates substantial compliance on the required compliance indicators, and the district has improvement activities for timely correction of the identified noncompliance.
- All indicators have timely, valid, and reliable data.

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### Needs Assistance 1

The factors the state will consider in determining whether a District *Needs Assistance* in implementing the requirements of IDEA include the following.

- The district does not demonstrate substantial compliance on the compliance indicators and does not have improvement activities for timely correction of the identified noncompliance.
- The district does not correct any noncompliance identified through Focused Monitoring or other means within the time period designated by the division.
- One or more of the indicators do not have valid and reliable data.

**Needs Assistance *for the first year*, the state will take the following action.**

- The district will be required to review and revise the LEA Implementation Plan to address areas needing improvement.
- The state will advise the district of available sources of technical assistance to address the areas needing improvement.

### Needs Assistance 2

When the district has been in Needs Assistance for two consecutive years, the state will take one or more of the following actions.

- The district will be required to revise the LEA Implementation Plan to include the technical assistance activities to address areas of need.
- The state will direct the use of district funds to address areas of need.

### Needs Intervention

The factors the state will consider in determining whether a district *Needs Intervention* in implementing the requirements of IDEA include the following.

- Two years in the *Needs Assistance* level, and the district has not made significant progress in meeting state compliance targets.
- Any identified noncompliance that the district has not corrected within one year.
- The district's LEA Implementation Plan does not result in improvement in the areas of need.

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When a district is determined to *Need Intervention*, the state may take any of the following actions.

- Require the district to use identified sources of technical assistance to address the area(s) needing intervention.
- Require the district to revise the LEA Implementation Plan to include activities to address areas needing intervention and to report data on improvement activities.
- Direct the use of district funds to address the problem area(s).

If the state determines that the district *Needs Intervention* for three or more years, the state may take any of the actions described under *Needs Assistance* as well as one or more of the following actions:

- Conduct on-site compliance monitoring focused on the area(s) needing intervention.
- Require the district to develop a data-based specific Corrective Action Plan to correct identified areas.
- Delay or withhold, in whole or in part, IDEA funds to the district.

### Needs Substantial Intervention

After three or more consecutive years in *Needs Intervention*, or at any time the state determines that a district *Needs Substantial Intervention* in implementing the requirements of IDEA, the district will be designated as needing substantial intervention. The following are among the factors the state will consider.

- The district has three or more consecutive years in *Needs Intervention*.
- The district has failed to meet compliance requirements that significantly impact the provision of a Free Appropriate Public Education to students with disabilities.
- The district has informed the state that it is unwilling to comply.

If the state determines that a district *Needs Substantial Intervention*, the following action may be taken in addition to all previous activities.

- The state may withhold, in whole or in part, IDEA and state funds to the district.

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### *Local Determinations Chart*

District data on the compliance indicators will be reviewed to determine whether the district met or exceeded the state targets in the State Performance Plan (SPP). Based on the data in each District Profile, Focused Monitoring information, progress over time, activities documented in LEA Implementation Plans, and any other public information, the Georgia Department of Education will determine whether each local school district **Meets Requirements, Needs Assistance, Needs Intervention, or Needs Substantial Intervention**. Determinations will be made annually, and superintendents will be notified by March 1, in order to allow districts time to develop and incorporate improvement activities into their LEA Implementation Plans.

<b>District Determination</b>	<b>Factors the state will consider in determining whether a district meets the requirements and purposes of IDEA include the following.</b>	<b>Based on the district determination level the state will take one or more of the following actions.</b>
<b>Meets Requirements</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• District demonstrates substantial compliance on required compliance indicators, and the district has improvement activities for timely correction of the identified noncompliance.</li> <li>• All indicators have timely, valid, and reliable data.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No actions required</li> </ul>

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District Determination	Factors the state will consider in determining whether a district <i>Needs Assistance</i> in implementing the requirements of IDEA include the following.	Based on the district determination level, the state will take one or more of the following actions.
<b>Needs Assistance</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The district does not demonstrate substantial compliance on the compliance indicators and does not have improvement activities for timely correction of the identified noncompliance.</li> <li>• The district does not correct any noncompliance identified through Focused Monitoring or other means within the time period designated by the division.</li> <li>• One or more of the indicators do not have valid and reliable data.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Needs Assistance 1</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The district will be required to review and revise the LEA Implementation Plan to address areas needing improvement.</li> <li>• The state will advise the district of available sources of technical assistance to address the areas needing improvement.</li> </ul> <p><b>Needs Assistance 2</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The district will be required to revise the LEA Implementation Plan to include the technical assistance activities to address areas of need.</li> <li>• The state will direct the use of district funds to address areas of need.</li> </ul>

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<b>District Determination</b>	<b>Factors the state will consider in determining whether a district <i>Needs Intervention</i> in implementing the requirements of IDEA include the following.</b>	<b>Based on the district determination level, the state will take any of the following actions.</b>
<b>Needs Intervention</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The district has been in the <i>Needs Assistance</i> level for two years, and the district has not made significant progress in meeting state targets.</li> <li>• Any identified noncompliance that was not corrected within one year.</li> <li>• The district’s LEA Implementation Plan does not result in improvement in the areas of need.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The state will require the district to use identified sources of technical assistance to address the area(s) needing intervention.</li> <li>• The state will require the district to revise the LEA Implementation Plan to include activities to address areas needing intervention and to report data on improvement activities.</li> <li>• The state will direct the use of district funds to address the problem area(s).</li> </ul> <p><b>Three Years or More—Needs Intervention</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The state will conduct on-site compliance monitoring focused on the area(s) needing intervention.</li> <li>• The state will delay or withhold, in whole or part, IDEA funds to district.</li> </ul>

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<b>District Determination</b>	<b>Factors the state will consider in determining whether a district <i>Needs Substantial Intervention</i> in implementing the requirements of IDEA include the following.</b>	<b>Based on the district determination level, the state will take one or more of the following actions.</b>
<b>Needs Substantial Intervention</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The district has three or more consecutive years in <i>Needs Intervention</i>.</li> <li>• The district has failed to meet compliance requirements that significantly impact the provision of a Free Appropriate Public Education to students with disabilities.</li> <li>• The district has informed the state that it is unwilling to comply.</li> </ul>	In addition to all activities for other levels, the state may withhold, in whole or in part, IDEA and state funds to the district.

### CHAPTER ELEVEN: DISPUTE RESOLUTION

Families of students with disabilities are guaranteed specific dispute resolution processes under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). These include: (1) a formal complaint, (2) mediation, and/or (3) a due process hearing. When the outcome of a formal complaint or a due process hearing results in findings that require actions on the part of the district, it is the responsibility of the Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE) to ensure that mandated actions have been completed. The follow up of required actions is a component of continuous improvement monitoring. In addition, districts that have a disproportionate number of complaints or due process hearings will be reviewed by the division.

#### *Formal Complaints*

A formal complaint is a signed written complaint alleging the violation of IDEA procedures. Any organization or individual may file a signed written complaint. The complaint must include a statement that a public agency has violated a requirement of IDEA, the facts on which the complaint statement is based, and suggested resolutions to the complaint issue.

Upon receipt of the written complaint, the Division for Special Education Services and Supports contacts the public agency and forwards a copy of the complaint to that agency. The public agency must submit a written response to the division within ten business days and send a copy of the response to the person filing the complaint. The division conducts an investigation to confirm details and to obtain clarification of the issues. The investigation may include interviews with the parties, on-site visits, and other activities as indicated by the nature of the allegation. The division gives the complainant the opportunity to submit additional information in writing about the allegations of the complaint once it has reviewed the response from the public agency. The division issues a written decision to the district and to the complainant that addresses each allegation in the complaint, the findings of fact, and the conclusions. If there is a violation of the law or regulations, then a resolution is required that may include technical assistance activities or corrective actions to achieve compliance.

#### *Complaints and GCIMP*

The division investigates complaints as part of Georgia's Continuous Improvement Monitoring Process (GCIMP). When concerns cannot be resolved through written correspondence, an on-site visit may be scheduled to gather additional information focusing

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on the complaint issue(s). After the written decision is issued to the district and the complainant, follow-up activities by the division to verify compliance are conducted. If procedural or compliance issues (unrelated to the complaint) are identified during the course of the complaint investigation, a correction plan with timelines is required.

### *Due Process Hearings*

An impartial due process hearing is designed to provide an opportunity to resolve differences between concerned parties in the identification, evaluation, placement, or provision of a Free Appropriate Public Education for a student with a disability. A hearing may be requested by either the school district or the family when the parties cannot agree and other means of dispute resolution have not been successful. When a request for a due process hearing is made, the school district is required to schedule an Early Resolution Session, unless both parties agree in writing to waive this requirement. If both parties waive participation in the Early Resolution Session, the option of mediation should be offered to provide an additional opportunity for the parents and the school district to resolve the dispute prior to the hearing. If an Early Resolution Session is held, the meeting must be scheduled within 15 days of the due process hearing request. If an agreement is reached, a written settlement is developed and signed by the district and family. The agreement is binding in state or federal court after a three day review period. When a due process hearing is conducted, the decision must be issued within 45 days of the request for a hearing. Due process hearings are conducted by the Office of State Administrative Hearings (OSAH). A hearing decision is legally binding to both parties and compliance is mandatory.

### *Due Process Hearings and GCIMP*

Due process hearings are designed to provide all concerned parties an opportunity to resolve differences. Once the hearing decision has been issued, the division must review the decision for any noted procedural or other violations of IDEA. The division will issue a letter to the district when findings mandate required corrective actions, whether or not specified by the hearing decision. The division is responsible for verification of the completion of the required corrective action through written correspondence and/or an on-site visit. As with complaint investigations, if any due process procedural or compliance issues (unrelated to the hearing decision) are identified, a correction plan with timelines is written.

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## CHAPTER TWELVE: REWARDS & SANCTIONS

Districts are recognized for their performance on each state performance goal and indicator. Recognition occurs when the district either meets the state target or exhibits the highest performance on the goal in its enrollment size group. The district superintendent receives a letter and a certificate recognizing the district's accomplishments. The Pacesetter Award is presented to one district from each size group with the highest performance in the most performance indicators. These recognitions are often highlighted by superintendents within the district during local board of education meetings and through the local media.

Districts not meeting compliance in one or more areas must develop a Compliance Agreement to be approved by the Division for Special Education Services and Supports. Districts must correct noncompliance as soon as possible, but no later than one year after identification. When districts fail to correct their noncompliance within the time period designated by the division, one or more sanctions may be implemented. These sanctions may include the following.

### **Letter to Superintendent**

For districts that are not compliant at the one year clearance date, an official letter is sent to the district superintendent. The letter documents the area(s) of noncompliance and includes a date by which the district is expected to meet compliance.

### **Public Reporting of Noncompliance**

The name of the districts not meeting compliance may be posted on the GaDOE website along with the area(s) of noncompliance for each district.

### **Targeted Technical Assistance (TTA)**

The division will provide TTA for districts in order to support them as they work toward becoming compliant. TTA is initially provided on site to develop the Compliance Agreement. TTA is required and takes place in addition to any TTA provided when noncompliance was initially identified. TTA usually includes adding required activities to the LEA Implementation Plan.

### **Progress Monitoring and Reporting**

The district's Compliance Agreement will include more frequent monitoring and review of the documentation required to clear compliance. In addition, on-site monitoring may occur.

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### **Directed Expenditure of Funds**

When a district does not meet the timeline date for compliance that was specified in the superintendent's letter, the GaDOE will direct the district to spend funds on specific activities designed to bring the district into compliance.

### **Delay of Funds**

When all previous sanctions have not brought the district into compliance, the GaDOE may elect not to release state or federal funds until compliance is met. In the event that the GaDOE proposes to delay funds, the district has the opportunity to request a hearing.

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## CHAPTER THIRTEEN: DISPROPORTIONALITY

With the reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), the Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE) was required to make determinations for disproportionality regarding race and ethnicity. As part of that requirement, the GaDOE must also review policies, procedures, and practices to ensure compliance with the reauthorized IDEA.

Disproportionality is a comprehensive construct that requires determinations in three different categories: significant disproportionality, disproportionate representation, and significant discrepancy.

### **Determination 1: Significant Disproportionality**

GaDOE must collect and examine data to determine whether or not significant disproportionality exists at the local level with respect to identification of children with disabilities; placement of children with disabilities in specific educational settings; as well as the incidence, duration, and type of disciplinary actions that include suspensions and expulsions. All districts identified as having significant disproportionality must address their review policies, procedures, and practices; reserve fifteen percent (15%) of federal funds to provide Coordinated Early Intervening Services (CEIS) for at-risk students; and publicly report revisions to policies, procedures, and practices that have contributed to the disproportionality. Districts that provide CEIS for at-risk students must submit a plan and budget to GaDOE for approval. After implementation of the CEIS plan, the district must submit student level data in the GaDOE CEIS Portal Application no later than June 30<sup>th</sup> of that fiscal year.

### **Determination 2: Disproportionate Representation**

The GaDOE must monitor local education agencies (LEAs) to determine whether or not disproportionate representation of racial and ethnic groups is the result of inappropriate identification; this includes “all disability” categories as well as individual disability categories. Disproportionate representation includes both overrepresentation and underrepresentation.

### **Determination 3: Significant Discrepancy**

The GaDOE must examine aggregate data for all children with disabilities as well as disaggregated data by race and ethnicity in order to determine whether or not significant discrepancies exist in the rate of long-term suspensions and expulsions. Discrepancy rates

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for students with disabilities must be considered for LEAs in the state of Georgia as well as discrepancy rates for nondisabled children in those same LEAs.

### *The Review of Policies, Procedures, and Practices*

The GaDOE must determine which districts are disproportionate and provide a procedure for those districts to review their policies, procedures, and practices that have contributed to the disproportionality. A Self-Assessment Monitoring Protocol with six areas of focus was developed by the GaDOE to be used for this process.

- I. School-Wide Approaches and Pre-Referral Interventions
- II. Child Find Procedures
- III. Evaluation Procedures
- IV. Eligibility Determination
- V. Least Restrictive Environments (LRE)
- VI. Discipline Procedures

Districts initially convene a team of stakeholders to complete the Self Assessment Monitoring Protocol. The stakeholder team must include parents in addition to general and special educators representing administration, professional learning, curriculum and instruction, school psychology, student support services, and school improvement. The monitoring process is a focused review of a district's policies, procedures, and practices that most closely relate to the specific areas of disproportionality.

### *Checklist to Complete the Disproportionality Self-Assessment Monitoring Protocol*

- ✓ Select team members to conduct the review (superintendent or designee)
- ✓ Conduct an initial team meeting to discuss
  - timelines for the review
  - process to collect and review the required information
- ✓ Identify other sources of data and information that must be reviewed
- ✓ Select appropriate samples to support documentation and evidence of indicators

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- ✓ Complete the Self-Assessment Monitoring Protocol and appropriate attachments
- ✓ Convene a Self-Assessment team meeting to discuss the findings
- ✓ Analyze the data and identify appropriate action steps to address improvement areas
- ✓ Submit an electronic copy of the Self-Assessment Monitoring Protocol to the GaDOE

Districts may either email a scanned copy of the signature page or fax it to the GaDOE.

### *Report to the Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE)*

Districts are required to maintain documentation of the review for a period of five years. This documentation is subject to review by the GaDOE and, therefore, should be maintained in an organized and easily retrievable manner.

### *GaDOE Review of Self-Assessment Monitoring Protocol*

The GaDOE will review the Self-Assessment Monitoring Protocol and respond as outlined below.

1. Each district must use the Next Steps planning template to outline pertinent actions necessary to address disproportionality. This document must support the details of the improvement activities later incorporated into the district's Consolidated Application.
2. If the district reports compliance of all policies, procedures, and practices assessed in mandatory areas, the GaDOE reserves the right to arrange for a review of that determination.
3. If the district reports any instances of noncompliance, the GaDOE will notify the district that it must correct all instances of noncompliance no later than one year from the identification of those issues. The district must develop a Corrective Action Plan (CAP) and incorporate the plan into the Consolidated Application. The CAP must contain activities to correct the compliance findings as well as provide long range plans for improving the priority indicator. In addition, it must include very specific actions, responsibilities, timelines, and targets. The CAP must be submitted to the division for approval within 45 days of notification. The district is required to provide evidence of implementation of the improvement activities three times in the year following CAP approval. Within one year after receiving the notification, the district must demonstrate compliance with all cited items via mail-in

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documentation or an on-site review. The GaDOE will periodically contact the district to ensure that correction of noncompliance has occurred within a year.

### *On-site Monitoring Visits*

The GaDOE reserves the right to conduct on-site monitoring visits either in concert with another special education monitoring or exclusively for the purposes of verifying data for disproportionality. On-site monitoring will be tailored to meet the individual outcomes for that particular district.

### *District Notification of Disproportionality*

All districts identified as disproportionate will be notified via a letter to the superintendent with a copy to the special education director. The letter informs the district of the specific type of disproportionality and any necessary expectations and/or timelines. In the notification letter, a deadline will be established for the submission of the Self-Assessment Monitoring Protocol, which will be used to identify any instances of noncompliance. After the district's self-assessment has been reviewed, the GaDOE will notify the district of any instances of noncompliance via a letter to the superintendent with a copy to the special education director. All instances of noncompliance must be corrected within one year of this notification.

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