Significant Disproportionality (Identification) Technical Documentation

Version 1.0

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Department of Education & Workforce

Revision History

The revision history section provides a means for readers to easily navigate to the places where updates occurred from prior years. RED underlined text indicates significant changes and updates for additions and ~~RED text with strikethroughs~~ indicates deletions. Minor changes—such as typos, formatting and grammar corrections—are not marked.

Date	Effective	Description
7/24/2025		Initial release of the Significant Disproportionality: Identification technical documentation

Ohio Revised Code and Ohio Administrative Code require districts to report data to EMIS and to verify and approve all EMIS data. Districts should review and verify data before the close of the different data collections. This verification should include all relevant reports, including those in the General Issues Reports.

The Department uses the data for this indicator to evaluate valid and reliable data reporting. The Secure Data Center (SDC) is an interactive tool that allows districts to review data well before it is final. ***The local education agency (LEA) is responsible for data verification and validation. The SDC has now been expanded for districts and schools to review Special Education Indicator Data in addition to all relevant EMIS reports.*** The EMIS Validation and Report Explanations webpage lists current Level 1 and 2 report explanations as well as a list of General Issues Reports that should be used to validate data. Another resource to validate data for students who cross LEAs is the Ohio District Data Exchange (ODDEX).

Secure Data Center Reports Breadcrumb Trails

The breadcrumb trails outlined in this section guide users through the SDC interface to locate specific reports related to Indicator measures. These navigation paths are essential for verifying student group performance and preparing accountability reviews. **At this time the report is unavailable but will be released in the future.**

- **Significant Disproportionality: Identification**
  - Report Portal>Secure Data Center> Special Education Indicators >**IDEA Significant Disproportionality: Identification**

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Introduction

Significant Disproportionality in Identification examines whether racial or ethnic groups of children are identified as children with disabilities at markedly higher rates than their peers. States are required under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) to monitor and make annual determinations about whether a district demonstrates significant disproportionality based on race or ethnicity in the identification of children with disabilities.

The purpose of this technical document is to provide clear, transparent, and replicable rules that guide how the Department calculates risk ratios, determines whether thresholds are exceeded, and designates districts for required actions.

Legal Requirements

Significant Disproportionality determinations are governed by:

- **IDEA Section 618(d)**
- **34 CFR §§300.646–300.647**

Federal regulations require states to annually:

- Use *standard methodology* to calculate risk ratios for each race/ethnicity group.
- Analyze disproportionality across required categories.
- Identify districts that exceed state defined thresholds and meet criteria for "reasonable progress."
- Require districts identified for significant disproportionality to:
    - Conduct a review of policies, procedures, and practices (P/P/P).
    - Identify and address contributing factors.
    - Address inappropriate identification, if present.
    - Set aside 15% IDEA Part B funds for Comprehensive Coordinated Early Intervening Services (CCEIS).

The IDEA Part B State Performance Plan (SPP) and Annual Performance Report (APR) defines the data sources and measurement criteria for all indicators. The Department calculates Significant Disproportionality using data submitted through EMIS.

Reports Utilizing Significant Disproportionality Data

Significant Disproportionality data is featured in several key reports that support monitoring and accountability of special education services:

- **Special Education Profile**– Provides detailed district and community school-level data.
- **Annual Performance Report (APR)**– Submitted to the U.S. Department of Education.
- **Public Indicator Report**–Publicly posted to promote transparency.
- **Special Education Rating**– Evaluates the performance of Ohio's districts and schools.

Each of these reports plays a vital role in assessing and improving educational outcomes for students with disabilities in Ohio.

Definitions

Risk Ratio

A comparison that shows how likely a racial/ethnic group is to experience an outcome (e.g., identification as a child with a disability) compared with all other children. A risk ratio of 1.00 means equal likelihood across groups.

Risk Ratio Threshold

Level at which the state considers disproportionality significant.

Alternate Risk Ratio

Used when the district comparison group is too small. Compares the risk for the target group in the district to the statewide risk for all other groups.

Reasonable Progress

A state defined rule indicating whether a district is making sufficient year to year improvement to avoid identification even if above the threshold.

Minimum Cell and N Sizes

Minimum values used to ensure statistical reliability prior to calculating risk ratios.

Categories Analyzed

Federal regulations require the state to annually assess Significant Disproportionality in Identification for:

1. **Identification of children with disabilities (overall)**
2. **Identification within specific disability categories**, including at least:
    - Autism
    - Specific Learning Disability (SLD)
    - Intellectual Disability (ID)
    - Emotional Disturbance (ED)
    - Speech or Language Impairment (SLI)
    - Other Health Impairment (OHI)

Business Rules

Determining Students included in Denominator

For Significant Disproportionality in Identification, Ohio *does not use Where Kids Count*. Instead, the denominator is based strictly on EMIS-reported **district enrollment**, using the following rules:

A. Students Included in the Subgroup Denominator

A student is included in the denominator for a specific race/ethnicity subgroup when:

- The student is reported in EMIS as enrolled in the district during the reporting window.

- The student's race/ethnicity is reported and valid in GI/GJ records.
- The student is ages **3–21** and included in Child Count or general district enrollment.
- The student is reported under the **district of residence**, unless otherwise noted below.

B. Students Included in the Comparison-Group Denominator

The comparison group denominator comprises all students **not classified within the target racial/ethnic subgroup** who satisfy the established enrollment parameters.

C. Preschool Students

For purposes of the Significant Disproportionality calculations, **both preschool students with disabilities (SWD) and preschool students without disabilities (typical)** are included in the district's enrollment counts **regardless of the educating entity**. This includes students who are educated by another provider, such as an Educational Service Center (ESC).

While the **district of residence (DOR)** is required to report only preschool **SWD** in EMIS, typical preschool students are reported by the educating entity (e.g., an ESC). These non-SWD records are then attributed to the **district of residence** for enrollment purposes. As a result, **all preschool students—SWD and non-SWD—are included in the subgroup and comparison group denominators**.

E. Shared Students / Multiple Enrollment Records

If a student appears under multiple LEAs:

- For SWD: use **status as of 10/31**.
- For Non-SWD: use **end-of-year status**.

F. Minimum Requirements

A district's subgroup category is included for calculation only if BOTH are met:

- Subgroup N-size ≥ 10
- Comparison group cell size ≥ 30

Districts not meeting both minimums show **NC** for that subgroup/year.

Determining Ratio Used

The determination of which ratio type to use—**Regular Risk Ratio** or **Alternate Risk Ratio**—is based on whether the district meets the minimum n-size and cell-size requirements for both the subgroup and the comparison group.

A. Use of the Regular Risk Ratio

The **Regular Risk Ratio** is used when:

- The subgroup meets the minimum **n-size ≥ 10**; and
- The comparison group meets the minimum **cell size ≥ 30**.

When these conditions are met, the district's subgroup identification rate is compared directly to the identification rate of all other racial/ethnic groups within the district.

B. Use of the Alternate Risk Ratio

The **Alternate Risk Ratio** is used when the regular risk ratio **cannot** be calculated because:

- The comparison group does **not** have at least **10 students identified with the disability** (comparison n-size < 10); **or**
- The comparison group does **not** have at least **30 students enrolled** (comparison cell size < 30).

When this occurs, the district's subgroup risk is compared to the **statewide** identification rate for all other racial/ethnic groups.

C. Summary of Ratio Selection Logic

- If comparison group meets 10/30 → **Regular Risk Ratio**.
- If comparison group fails 10/30 → **Alternate Risk Ratio**.

Minimum N-Size and Cell Size Requirements (10/30 Rule)

Ohio applies **minimum N-size = 10** and **minimum cell size = 30** to ensure stability and reliability in Significant Disproportionality calculations.

Minimum N-Size (10)

The minimum N-size of **10** refers to the number of students in the racial/ethnic subgroup being evaluated. This threshold prevents unstable calculations caused by very small populations, where small numerical changes can create large risk ratio swings.

Minimum Cell Size (30)

The minimum cell size of **30** applies to the comparison group (all students not in the target subgroup). A sufficiently large comparison group ensures a stable denominator and reduces the risk of inflated or suppressed risk ratios.

Purpose of the 10/30 Rule

Using 10/30 thresholds:

- Ensures meaningful year-to-year trend evaluation.
- Reduces the likelihood of false identification.
- Supports consistent application of the three-year identification rule.

Districts that do not meet both thresholds for a racial/ethnic subgroup/disability category are **excluded from calculation** for that analysis year.

Significant Disproportionality Calculation

Definition: measures whether a district (LEA) identifies children with disabilities at markedly higher rates for a specific racial or ethnic group compared with all other students. This includes both **overall identification of children with disabilities** and **identification within specific disability categories**.

Calculation Methodology: Step-by-step Risk Ratio Calculation

1. **Identify the racial/ethnic subgroup.**
2. **Count students identified with disabilities** in that racial/ethnic subgroup (numerator).

3. **Count all enrolled students** in that racial/ethnic subgroup (denominator).

4. Calculate the Risk for Students with Disabilities in a Specific Racial/Ethnic Group in the LEA

# students with disabilities in a specific racial/ethnic group	÷	# students in the specific racial/ethnic group	=	Risk for students with disabilities in a specific racial/ethnic group

5. Calculate the Risk for Students with Disabilities in All Other Racial/Ethnic Groups in the LEA

# of students with disabilities in all other racial/ethnic groups	÷	# students in all other racial/ethnic groups	=	Risk for students with disabilities in all other racial/ethnic groups

6. Calculate the Regular Risk Ratio for the LEA

Risk for students with disabilities in a specific racial/ethnic group	÷	Risk for students with disabilities in all other racial/ethnic groups	=	**Regular Risk Ratio**

When calculating **Significant Disproportionality in Identification (Specific Disability Categories)**, the term "disabilities" is replaced with a **specific disability category** (i.e., autism, intellectual disabilities, specific learning disabilities, emotional disturbance, other health impairment – minor, or speech or language impairments).

Alternate Risk Ratio Calculation

If an LEA does not meet the minimum cell size and n-size requirements, an alternate risk ratio is calculated. This method compares a risk in the LEA to the statewide risk.

Example:

The example below displays a calculation for autism. In the example, an alternate risk ratio is used because the LEA does not have at least 10 non-white students identified with autism. Therefore, an alternate risk ratio is calculated by dividing the **risk for white students to be identified with autism in the LEA** by the **risk for non-white students to be identified with autism in the state.**

Step 1: Calculate the Risk for White Students to be identified with Autism in the LEA

# white students with autism **in the LEA**	÷	# white students **in the LEA**	=	Risk of white students identified with autism **in the LEA**

Step 2: Calculate the Risk for all Non-White Students to be identified with Autism in the State

Step 3: Calculate the Alternate Risk Ratio for the LEA

Significant Disproportionality Met/Not Met Status

Ohio considers an LEA to have significant disproportionality when it has a risk ratio for a racial/ethnic group that equals or exceeds 2.50 for three consecutive years. The risk ratio for Speech and Language Impairment has been set at 4.00. Such LEAs must review with the Department their policies, procedures, and practices related to identification, student records, and factors contributing to disproportionality, and set aside 15% of their IDEA funds for Comprehensive Coordinated Early Intervening Services (CCEIS).

Reasonable Progress

Districts and community schools with significant disproportionality reducing risk ratios by at least 0.25 for two years are given flexibility. Despite having ratios above 2.50, if they show progress in reducing risk ratios by at least 0.25 for two consecutive years, they aren't required to use 15% of federal special education funds to address the disproportionality.