Data Notes for IDEA, Part B

These data notes contain information on the ways in which states collected and reported data differently from the OSEP data formats and instructions. In addition, the notes provide explanations of significant changes in the data from the previous year. The chart below summarizes differences in collecting and reporting data for 9 states. These variations affected the way data were reported for the IDEA, Part B child count and the educational environment, exiting, and discipline collections. Additional notes on how states reported data for specific data collections follow this table.

Table A-1
State Reporting Patterns for IDEA, Part B
Child Count Data and Educational Environments Data, 2003
Exiting and Discipline Data, 2002-03

States	Differences from OSEP Reporting Categories Where H = Reported in the hearing impairments category O = Reported in the orthopedic impairments category P = Reported in the primary disability category		
	Multiple Disabilities	Other Health Impairments	Deaf-Blindness
Colorado		O	
Delaware	P	O	
Florida	P		
Georgia	P		
Michigan			H
North Dakota	P		
Oregon	P		
West Virginia	P		
Wisconsin	P		

Tables AA1-AA15: Child Count

Alabama—The state attributed the increase in the reported number of children ages 6 through 21 with autism to continued extensive statewide training on the autism spectrum. The state reported that this training has resulted in more accurate identification and placement of children with this disability.

Alaska—Alaska reported that it estimated the race/ethnicity of 385 students. Of these, 88 were ages 3 through 5, and 297 were ages 6 through 21.

The state attributed the increase in the reported number of children ages 6 through 9 with developmental delay to improvement in district reporting. Alaska has been collecting data on developmental delay for 3 years. Prior to that, districts reported students with developmental delay in other disability categories. Over the past 3 years, districts across the state have been adding a separate category for developmental delay to their data systems, resulting in a gradual increase in the category.

Arizona—The state attributed the increases in the total number of 3- through 5- and 6- through 21-year-olds reported on the child count to increased data accuracy. The state reported that 2003 is the second year that Arizona used student detail reporting within its new accountability system.

The state attributed the 22% increase in the reported number of students ages 6 through 21 with other health impairments to an increase in the number of children identified with ADD and ADHD.

The state attributed the 25% increase in the reported number of students ages 6 through 21 with multiple disabilities to better accuracy in diagnosis and evaluations.

The state believes that the 23% increase in the number of students ages 6 through 21 reported in the autism category is consistent with the increase in the use of the autism category nationwide.

The state attributed the increase in the reported number of 3- through 5-year-old Asian children in special education to the increase in the Asian population.

Colorado—The state does not collect data on other health impairments. Children with other health impairments are reported in the orthopedic impairments category.

The state indicated that the increase in the reported number of American Indian or Alaska Native children ages 3 through 5 in special education is the result of small increases in many districts rather than a significant increase in any one LEA. The proportion of students with disabilities who are American Indian or Alaska Native is close to the American Indian or Alaska Native portion of students in the total public school membership.

Delaware—The state does not collect data on multiple disabilities or other health impairments. Children with multiple disabilities are reported according to their primary disability, and students with other health impairments are reported in the orthopedic impairments category.

Florida—The state does not collect data on multiple disabilities. Children with multiple disabilities are reported according to their primary disability.

Georgia—The state does not collect data on multiple disabilities. Children with multiple disabilities are reported according to their primary disability.

Georgia began collecting data on children with developmental delay for the 2001 child count. The state attributed the increase in the reported number of children in the developmental delay category to the newness of the category. The state reported that districts are increasingly using the developmental delay category for students entering special education rather than using the mental retardation and emotional disturbance categories.

Georgia attributed the increase in the reported number of Asian or Pacific Islander children ages 3 through 5 served in special education to an increase in the Asian population in the state. The state reported that companies with Asian employees are moving into Georgia.

Idaho—The state reported that 312 children with disabilities were identified with noncategorical eligibility. Of these, 15 were ages 3 through 5, and 297 were ages 6 through 21. When reporting to OSEP, the state distributed these children into disability categories based on the disability distribution of students in the same age group and race/ethnicity category whose disability category was known.

Illinois—Illinois attributed the increase in the reported number of students ages 6 through 21 with multiple disabilities to the newness of the category. The 2003 submission is the third year that the state has used the category.

Kentucky—Kentucky attributed the increase in the reported number of American Indian/Alaska Native students ages 3 through 5 in special education to the implementation of a new student-based data system. The new system retrieves the race/ethnicity information from the general education enrollment database. In previous years, race/ethnicity information for special education students was collected separately using intake interviews conducted by the special education staff. The increase in the number of American Indian/Alaska Native students occurred in the state's largest district, Jefferson County (Louisville). The district reported 5 students in this category in 2002 and 58 in 2003.

Kentucky does not use the developmental delay category for students who are 9 years old. Only children ages 3 through 8 are included in this category.

Louisiana—Louisiana attributed the increase in the reported number of children ages 6 through 11 in the developmental delay category to two factors. First, the state no longer allows noncategorical classification of children, and, as a result, many of the students previously reported with noncategorical disability are now classified with developmental delay. Second, the state believes that districts are more committed to early identification through child find efforts; thus, there is an increase in identification of children with developmental delay.

Maine—The state attributed the increase in the reported number of students ages 6 through 21 in the autism category to new programs for students with autism and to growing awareness of autism. Maine reported that the increase occurred in two age groups: ages 7 through 11 (roughly 2nd grade through 6th grade) and 14 through 16 (roughly freshman through junior year of high school). The state reported that the Maine Autistic Society provides information and training on autism and the autism spectrum. In addition, doctors and professional evaluators are more knowledgeable about this population. Finally, the increase is also attributable to a change in the

disability classification of some students. Some students previously classified as mentally retarded, learning disabled, or emotionally disturbed are now identified as students with autism.

Maryland—Maryland attributed the large increase in the number of students ages 6 through 9 reported in the developmental delay category to a change in the state definition of this category. The additional attention paid to the definition and the extension of the age range resulted in an increase in the use of this category.

Massachusetts—Massachusetts reported that 2003 was the first time its data on children in public residential facilities and correctional facilities were collected through the Student Information Management System (SIMS). Districts were responsible for reporting all of their students in public residential facilities as well as those in correctional or DYS facilities. Previously, these data were collected through a separate, aggregate report from the Bureau of Institutional Schools (BIS).

Michigan—The state does not collect data on deaf-blindness. Children with deaf-blindness are reported in the hearing impairments category.

The state began reporting children in the other health impairments and traumatic brain injury categories in the 2002 child count. In previous years, Michigan reported children with other health impairments in the orthopedic impairments category and reported children with traumatic brain injury in other disability categories. Michigan attributed the increases in the reported number of children with other health impairments and traumatic brain injury to the recent implementation of these categories. In addition, the decline in the reported number of children in the orthopedic impairments category is the result of removing children with other health impairments from this category.

The state attributed the increase in the reported number of children with developmental delay to new administrative rules that went into effect in 2002. These rules increased the upper age limit for developmental delay from age 5 to age 7. The state reported that as the districts implement this change during the next few years, it expects the number of children reported in the developmental delay category to continue to increase.

Minnesota—Minnesota believes that the increase in the number of children ages 3 through 21 reported in the autism category is consistent with increases in autism nationwide. The state believes that some of the increase can be attributed to improvements in child find resulting from training initiatives and better and earlier identification processes.

Mississippi—In 2002, the state began reporting children in the other health impairments and traumatic brain injury categories. These categories were first made available in the data collection system in October 2002; however, 2003 was the first time the schools had full access to these categories. Prior to 2002, Mississippi reported children with other health impairments in the orthopedic impairments category and reported children with traumatic brain injury in other disability categories. Mississippi attributed the increase in the reported number of children in the other health impairments category to the recent implementation of the category. In addition, the

decline in the reported number of children in the orthopedic impairments category is the result of removing children with other health impairments from this category.

Missouri—The state attributed the increase in the reported number of 3- through 5-year-olds with speech or language impairments to changes in the eligibility criteria for sound system disorders. These changes went into effect in October 2001. The previous criterion was that a child's sound production level must be 1 year beyond upper limits of developmental ranges as established by normative data. The current criterion is that a child's sound production level must be equal to or less than the child's actual chronological age as established by accepted normative data. This change essentially removed the "one year beyond" requirement and made children eligible for special education if their sound production level is "equal to or less than the child's chronological age." The state anticipated that this will increase the number of young children identified with sound system disorders. However, by identifying children at an earlier age when remediation of articulation problems is easier, the state expects that in the long run the number of children with speech or language impairments at older ages will decrease. That is, the distribution across age groups will change, but the number served will not.

Montana—In Montana, a state statute allows school districts to identify a child ages 3 through 5 as a "child with disabilities" without specifying a specific disability category. However, Montana encourages schools to use one of the Federal disability categories. As a result, districts reported a specific disability for 60% of the 3- through 5-year-olds served. The state imputed disability for the remaining 40% using the disability distribution for the 3- through 5-year-olds for whom disability data were reported. This is the third year that Montana used this method. Previously, the missing disability data for 3- through 5-year-olds was imputed based on the disability distribution for 6-year-olds.

Nebraska—The state reported that race/ethnicity totals reported on the child count are incorrect. The state was not able to correct this error before these data were finalized. The actual totals for each race/ethnicity category should be as follows:

- American Indian/Alaska Native 1,512;
- Asian Pacific Islander 416;
- Black (not Hispanic) 3,265;
- Hispanic 3,208; and
- White (not Hispanic) 31,715.

New Jersey—The state attributed the increase in the reported number of children ages 3 through 5 with autism to a general increase in the number of children in this age group who receive special education.

New Jersey attributed the increase in the reported number of children ages 3 through 5 and 6 through 21 with other health impairments to districts using this category as a "catch-all" category.

The state attributed the increase in the reported number of American Indian/Alaska Native students in special education to a growth in the American Indian/Alaska Native population in New Jersey.

New Mexico—New Mexico reported an increase in the number of students ages 6 through 9 with developmental delay. According to the state, anecdotal evidence suggests a slight shift away from using a specific disability label for students in this age range and instead reporting them as having a developmental delay. The developmental delay category entitles a student to eligibility under IDEA in New Mexico until age 10. In addition, the state reported that the increase in the number of students ages 6 through 9 with developmental delay is also related to the decrease in the number of students reported in the emotional disturbance and specific learning disabilities categories. It is not the result of an overall increase in the identification rate.

New York—New York collects race/ethnicity for an aggregated count of all school-age students with disabilities (ages 4 through 21). It does not collect a separate count of race/ethnicity for students with disabilities who are ages 6 through 21 or for all students with disabilities who are ages 3 through 5. The reported race/ethnicity for 6- through 21-year-olds was estimated using race/ethnicity data from students with disabilities ages 4 through 21. The race/ethnicity of 4- and 5-year-old children in school-age environments (e.g., kindergarten) is based on the race/ethnicity distribution for 3- through 5-year-olds in preschool educational environments.

New York does not classify preschool children by particular disabilities. The state reported all children ages 3 through 5 in the developmental delay disability category.

North Dakota—The state does not collect data on multiple disabilities. Children with multiple disabilities are reported according to their primary disability.

Oregon—The state does not collect data on multiple disabilities. Children with multiple disabilities are reported according to their primary disability.

Pennsylvania—The state believes that the increases in the reported number of students with autism and the reported number of students ages 6 through 21 with other health impairments are accurate. Last school year, the state noticed that every year the reported number of students with autism and other health impairments increased at a rate faster than the other disability categories. As a result, the state conducted a survey to determine if the disability counts were accurate. It also provided statewide training and technical assistance on the use of the disability categories and analyzed disability counts data to determine whether the increases occurred in some areas of Pennsylvania or were statewide. The state determined that the increases were, in fact, statewide.

Rhode Island—The state's definition of developmental delay only includes children ages 3 through 5.

West Virginia—The state does not collect data on multiple disabilities. Children with multiple disabilities are reported according to their primary disability.

Washington—The state attributed the increase in the reported number of students ages 6 through 21 with autism to the cumulative affect of small increases in districts across the state. The state reported that, over time, the number of children with autism has steadily increased.

Wisconsin—The state does not collect data on multiple disabilities. Children with multiple disabilities are reported according to their primary disability.

Wisconsin indicated that the increase in the reported number of Asian or Pacific Islander children ages 3 through 5 in special education occurred in school districts with high overall Asian or Pacific Islander enrollment.

Tables AB1-AB10: IDEA Part B Educational Environments, 2003

Arizona— The state reported that there is an error in the number of children ages 3 through 5 and 6 through 21 in the residential facilities category. The state did not discover the problem until after the data were finalized for the annual report to Congress.

Connecticut—The state attributed changes in its educational environments data to better data verification procedures implemented in 2003, to ongoing SEA leadership, and to district implementation of better practices related to placing students in the least restrictive environment. The changes include: a decrease in the number of children ages 3 through 5 reported in the separate schools category, an increase in the number of children ages 3 through 5 reported in the reverse mainstream category, and a decrease in the number of students ages 6 through 21 reported in the category outside the regular classroom greater than 60% of the day. The state also stated that as they make the connection between policy, practice, and reporting, more districts are educating more children in the least restrictive environment.

Georgia—The state attributed the decrease in the number of students reported in the duplicated count of children in private schools, not placed or referred by a public agency to technical assistance that the state provided to districts about the definition of this category. Prior to 2002, LEAs incorrectly reported some students in this category who should not have been included. For example, they incorrectly included in the duplicated count children with an IEP served in private daycare centers or at home.

Guam—Guam attributed changes in its educational environments data to a new database implemented in January 2002. The new database allows Guam to enter, maintain, and access more detailed information than the previous database. In addition, it provides the ability to produce reports to check the reliability and validity of the data.

Hawaii—The state attributed the increase in the number of children ages 3 through 5 reported in the part-time early childhood, part-time early childhood special education category to state efforts to provide more opportunities and choices for families of young children with disabilities. By offering part-time programs, parents are able to keep their children in community preschools and come to the Department of Education elementary school for special education and related services. The state reported that without the part-time programs, these children would most likely be in self-contained classrooms with other children with disabilities.

Kentucky—The state attributed the decrease in the number of children ages 6 through 21 reported in public and private residential facility categories to technical assistance provided to districts about the correct use of these categories. The state instructed districts to only report students in the residential facilities categories if the facility served only special education students. As a result, the largest district in the state reported 101 fewer students in the private residential facility category and 82 fewer students in the public residential facility category.

The state attributed the increase in the number of children reported in the early childhood special education category to technical assistance that the state provided to districts. Specifically, the state emphasized that children ages 3 through 5 should be reported according to where they receive special education and related services, not according to where they receive general education. In prior years, districts reported children's environments according to where they spent the entire day, rather than where they received their special education. As a result, many children who should have been reported in the early childhood special education setting were previously reported in the early childhood setting.

Kentucky attributed the decrease in the number of children ages 3 through 5 reported in the separate school category to a reporting error by one district last year. In 2002, one district misreported 111 students enrolled in the separate school category, rather than in the early childhood special education category.

Louisiana—The state attributed the increase in the number of students reported in the part-time early childhood/part-time early childhood special education category to a number of factors. First, more children with disabilities were placed in early childhood settings through the LA 4 Program. Second, preschool programs now emphasize placing 3- through 5-year-olds in early childhood settings. Finally, some of the increase may be the result of LEAs' misunderstanding the educational environment categories.

The state attributed the decrease in the duplicated count of students receiving special education in correctional facilities to the closure of one of the state's juvenile facilities. When the facility closed, only a small percentage of the students at this facility were sent to other juvenile facilities.

The state attributed the increase in the number of children ages 3 through 5 reported in reverse mainstream settings to a major initiative from the Louisiana Department of Education emphasizing that children should be placed in the least restrictive environment. This resulted in an increase in the number of children in reverse mainstream settings and part-time early childhood/part-time early childhood special education settings and a decrease in the number served in early childhood special education settings.

Maine—The state attributed changes in its educational environments data for children ages 3 through 5 to a change in the state's data collection categories. The state reported that prior to December 1, 2003, the state's Coordinator of Federal Programs and the Director of the Child Development System met to discuss aligning the state's environment categories for ages 3 through 5 as closely as possible with the categories for ages 6 through 21. As a result of this

alignment, OSEP believes that the state's environments categories for children ages 3 through 5 are not consistent with OSEP's categories.

Massachusetts—In an effort to make its data more consistent with OSEP's data reporting requirements, Massachusetts revised the way it reports educational environments for children ages 3 through 5. As a result of these changes, Massachusetts 2003 educational environments data are different from its 2002 data. Fewer children are reported in the early childhood setting and more children are reported in the early childhood special education category and the part-time early childhood/part-time early childhood special education category.

Prior to 2003, Massachusetts incorrectly reported:

- All children ages 3 and 4 in the early childhood category, unless they were served in the home.
- Children age 5 who received general education in a regular classroom at least 80% of the school day in the early childhood category.
- Children age 5 who received special education in a separate classroom for 20 to 60% of the school day in the part-time early childhood/part-time early childhood special education category.
- Children age 5 who received special education in a separate classroom for 60% or more of the school day in the early childhood special education category.

Beginning in 2003, Massachusetts only reported children in the early childhood setting if they received 100% of their special education and related services in the general education environment. It only reported children in the early childhood special education setting if they received 100% of their special education and related services in a separate classroom and were not educated for any amount of time with nondisabled peers. The state reported children who received general education in classrooms with nondisabled peers and special education and related services in separate classrooms in the part-time early childhood/part-time early childhood special education category. Some of these students may not have received any special education while in the regular classroom. Therefore, the children reported in the part-time early childhood/part-time early childhood special education category may include some students who should be reported in the early childhood special education setting.

Minnesota—The state did not submit data for the duplicated counts of children in correctional facilities and children in private schools who were not placed or referred by a public agency.

The state attributed the increase in the part-time early childhood/part-time early childhood special education category to corrections the state made to its instructions for reporting 5-year-old kindergartners. In prior years, the state collected environment data for 5-year-olds who were in school using the environment categories for ages 6 through 21 and then crosswalked the data into the categories for children ages 3 through 5 for Federal reporting purposes. The state now collects these data for these children using the categories for ages 3 through 5.

Mississippi—-The state reported that 2003 was only the second year the state collected educational environments data from Mississippi schools using the statewide student database (MSIS - Mississippi Student Information System). MSIS includes edit checks to check and verify data during data entry and processing.

The state attributed the increase in the number of students reported in the outside the regular classroom less than 21% of the school day category and the decrease in the number of students reported in the outside the regular classroom 21-60% of the day category to a change in the way it collects these data. The year 2003 was the first time that the percentage of time outside the regular classroom was calculated based on students' schedules. Previously, it was based on categorical data reported by the school. After this change, the state education agency made unannounced visits to schools to verify that students' schedules in MSIS accurately reflected the environment in which the student spent the school day.

The state attributed the increase in the number of children ages 3 through 5 reported in the home category and the increase in the number of children reported in the duplicated count of children in private schools, not placed or referred by a public agency, to schools having a better understanding of the data reporting requirements. Previously, many schools did not realize that they needed to report children receiving services at home and those attending private schools.

Missouri—The state attributed the increases in the number of children reported in the itinerant services outside the home and the part-time early childhood/part-time early childhood special education categories to an increase in the total number of children ages 3 through 5 served under IDEA in Missouri. The number of children served in this age group increased by more than 8 percent from 2002 to 2003. Missouri reported that the number of children ages 3 through 5 served in the state has increased for several years and attributed the increases to funding issues and eligibility changes.

Missouri reported that it uses a voluntary survey of nonpublic schools to collect the duplicated count of children in private schools, not placed or referred by a public agency. Because the survey is voluntary, year-to-year changes in the numbers reported for this category are common and reflect the number of nonpublic schools that report data. In 2003, the number of students in this category increased. The state believes that this is due to a change in data collection methods, from a paper form to a web-based data collection. Missouri does not collect data on the race/ethnicity of students in nonpublic schools, and estimates race/ethnicity of these students based on the race/ethnicity distribution of children with disabilities ages 6-21.

New Jersey—The state attributed the decrease in the number of children reported in early childhood settings, the increase in the number reported in part-time early childhood/part-time early childhood special education settings, and the increase in the number reported as receiving itinerant services outside the home to changes to the definitions of the state's environments categories for ages 3 through 5. The state redefined the categories to align with Federal definitions. These changes were reflected in all literature and instructions sent to districts.

New Mexico—The state attributed the increase in the number of children ages 3 through 5 reported in early childhood settings to the ongoing technical assistance provided by the New Mexico Public Education Department. The state continues to emphasize to districts that inclusive settings are more advantageous for preschoolers with disabilities than are segregated settings.

The state attributed the increase in the reported number of children ages 3 through 5 in the home setting to more accurate data reporting by LEAs. In prior years, many of the students served at home were erroneously reported in separate special education settings.

North Carolina—The state did not report race/ethnicity data for students in private schools, not placed or referred by a public agency because it does not collect these data.

Ohio—In 2003, Ohio stopped using the reverse mainstream category for children ages 3 through 5.

The state reported that its early childhood division revised the state's educational environments categories for ages 3 through 5 to directly reflect OSEP reporting requirements.

Oregon—The state noted that its age ranges are different from the OSEP definitions. Oregon considers children who are 5 years old on or before September 1 to be school age. These 5-year-olds are included in the school-age educational environments with the 6- through 11-year-old age group rather than in the preschool environments with 3- through 5-year-olds.

In 2003, Oregon stopped using the optional itinerant services outside the home category.

Pennsylvania—Pennsylvania Act 212 of 1990 provides the opportunity for parents to continue their child in an early intervention program for an additional year at school district cost. Because OSEP collects environments data according to the child's age, 110 of the 6-year-olds with developmental delay actually received special education in preschool environments, but were reported in the environments for ages 6 through 21. In Pennsylvania, the category developmental delay is only used for children in preschool. However, because those 110 children are reported on the school-age form, it appears that developmental delay is a legitimate school-age disability category.

Rhode Island—Prior to 2003, the state reported students ages 6 through 21 according to the percentage of the school day they spent receiving special education services. In 2003, the state began correctly reporting students according to the percentage of time spent receiving special education services outside the regular classroom. This resulted in a number of changes, including an increase in the number of students reported as receiving special education outside the regular classroom less than 21% of the school day and decreases in the number of students reported outside the regular classroom 21-60% and greater than 60% of the school day.

Texas—The state attributed the increase in the reported number of students ages 6 through 21 in public separate schools and the decrease in the number reported in public residential facilities to the clarifications OSEP made to the reporting instructions in 2003. For the 2003 educational

environments data collection, OSEP clarified that students who receive special education at public residential facilities but do not live at the facility should be reported in the public separate school category.

The state did not report race/ethnicity data for students in private schools, not placed or referred by a public agency because it does not collect these data.

Virginia—The state reported that data for ages 6 through 21 are based on the total amount of special education delivered in a school day, rather than the amount of special education delivered outside the regular classroom. Next year, the state plans to collect and use data on time receiving special education outside the regular classroom.

Virginia attributed the decrease in the number of students reported in the public residential facility category to a change in data collection methods. In prior years, the state reported students in correctional facilities in the public residential facility category, as well as in the duplicated count of children in correctional facilities. In 2003, Virginia began correctly reporting these students in the categories for percentage of time outside the regular classroom as well as in the duplicated count of children in correctional facilities.

Washington—The state attributed the increase in the number of children ages 3 through 5 reported in the separate school category to a new early childhood facility that opened in fall of 2003. The facility is in one of the largest districts in the state. A total of 115 children in this district receive special education at this new facility.

Wisconsin—In 2003, the number of children ages 3 through 5 reported in early childhood settings decreased while the number of children reported in part-time early childhood/part-time early childhood special education settings increased. Wisconsin believes that in 2001 and 2002, districts misreported children in these categories. Prior year comparisons show that, with the exception of 2001 and 2002 data, the percentage of children in the early childhood category and the percentage in the part-time early childhood/part-time special education category have been fairly consistent. Many of the children in these categories are in kindergarten or 4-year-old kindergarten programs. The state believes that districts were confused about how to report these students when they received special education services in both the general and special education settings. The state reported that it provided training on the use of the preschool environment categories and established an environment workgroup to develop additional training, such as providing clear instructions and examples.

Tables AC1-AC3: IDEA Part B Personnel, 2002

Alabama—The state attributed the increase in the reported number of speech pathologists and fully qualified speech pathologists to the technical assistance it provided to local education agencies on how to report these personnel. In addition, the state provided LEAs with clearer instructions on reporting personnel. The state expects that this will increase the consistency across LEAs in how personnel are reported in the various related services personnel categories.

Alaska—The state attributed the 78% decrease in the total number of personnel reported to a change in data collection methods that occurred in 2002. In prior years, the state had a contract with Alaska Teacher Placement at the University of Alaska - Fairbanks to supply the data for the personnel report. In 2002, the state began using data collected by the Alaska Department of Education on Certified, Paraprofessional and Classified staff. The state reported that these data collections provide different information and were designed to analyze different staffing questions.

Arizona—The state reported that 2002 was the first year its data included personnel working in approved private special education facilities. In the past, personnel in these facilities were excluded from these data. The state attributed the increase in the reported number of fully certified occupational therapists and diagnostic and evaluation staff to the inclusion of the data from these private facilities.

The state reported that it continues to train LEA staff on how to report data on the personnel table. For the 2002 data collection, LEA training emphasized that the table is a count only of those personnel employed or contracted on or about December 1. The state reported that it also provide training which clarified the definitions of the personnel categories.

The state attributed the decrease in fully certified vocational education teachers to more students with disabilities receiving special education in regular vocational education classrooms.

The state attributed the decrease in the reported number of fully certified other professional staff to training provided to Public Educational Agencies (PEAs) on the definition of this category.

The state attributed the decrease in the reported number of not fully certified work-study coordinators, interpreters, and other professional staff to insufficient funding.

The state attributed other changes in its personnel categories to a change in data collection methods. Prior to 2001, the state required PEAs to submit data at the district level. In 2001, PEAs in Arizona reported personnel data at the school level rather than the district level. The state reported that this confused PEAs, and in 2002 the state went back to collecting data from PEAs at the district level.

Arkansas—The state counted personnel who provided speech services as special education teachers rather than as related services personnel. Speech is not considered a related service in Arkansas.

Bureau of Indian Affairs—BIA reported that because it does not serve 3- through 5-year-olds in early childhood or pre-school programs, it did not report any special education teachers for this age group. BIA reported the teachers that serve 5-year-old kindergartners in the count of teachers who serve children and youth ages 6 through 21.

Colorado—Colorado attributed the increase in the number of not fully certified speech pathologists to the significant shortage of qualified speech/language pathologists in the state. This is an area that the state will address with its State Improvement Grant.

Connecticut—Connecticut's personnel data are collected according to the grade level served rather than the age of the children served. The state's count of special education teachers for ages 3 through 5 includes teachers who work in pre-Kindergarten and Kindergarten. Special education teachers for ages 6 through 21 include teachers who work in grades 1 through 12.

The state reported that, because it is unable to distinguish between physical education and vocational education teachers who serve special education students from those who serve general education students, the state did not include these staff in its personnel data.

The state reported that the number of FTEs reported for the categories psychologists and school social workers include staff who serve both general education and special education students.

The state includes pupil personnel directors in the personnel category LEA supervisor/ administrator.

District of Columbia—The District of Columbia reported that it has two sources of personnel data: the Office of Human Resources and the personnel roster of the Central Office of the Office of Special Education. It reported any personnel working as an administrator or supervisor in the Central Office as an SEA supervisor/administrator. The District of Columbia Public Schools is both an SEA and LEA.

Georgia—The state attributed the increase in the reported number of fully certified diagnostic and evaluation staff to school improvement efforts related to the No Child Left Behind Act.

Illinois—Illinois attributed the decrease in the reported number of not-fully certified teachers for students ages 6-21 and the number of not-fully certified other professional staff to an overall reduction in staff in Chicago Public Schools. The state reported that the reduction in staff is due to budgetary constraints.

Indiana—The state attributed the decrease in the reported number of fully certified social workers and counselors to budget constraints at the local school district level. Districts were forced to lower costs in order to balance their budgets. This resulted in a reduction in certain local staff positions.

Kansas—Kansas attributed the decrease in the reported number of LEA supervisor/ administrators to an error on the 2001 personnel report. Last year, some SEA supervisor/administrators were included in the count of LEA supervisor/administrators. In 2002, the state corrected this error.

Louisiana—The state attributed the increase in the reported number of fully certified speech pathologists to an increase in the number of students in need of speech services and to a change in data collection methods. In the past, Louisiana only reported speech pathologists working in pupil appraisal services. The 2002 count included speech pathologists working in school settings as well as those working in pupil appraisal.

Maine—The state reported speech pathologists in its count of special education teachers. No speech pathologists are reported in the related services personnel count.

Massachusetts—Prior to the 1999-2000 school year, Massachusetts collected personnel data using a paper form in use for over 30 years. In school years 1999-2000 and 2000-01, Massachusetts began using an electronic form to collect the data. The electronic form was extremely difficult for districts to use and may have inadvertently resulted in a decrease in the number of staff reported by districts. In school year 2001-02, Massachusetts discontinued use of the electronic form and returned to a paper collection. In school year 2002-03, Massachusetts continued to use the paper form to collect staff data but made several changes to it, including:

- Adding interpreters and speech pathologists as reporting categories.

- Collecting separate counts for licensed and not licensed staff. In prior years, the state did not collect data on certification. Prior to 2002-03, Massachusetts assumed licensure and reported all staff as fully certified.

Massachusetts reported that it reported school counselors in the school social worker category.

Minnesota—The state does not collect sufficient information to report the number of special education teachers for children ages 3 through 5. As a result, the state reported no teachers for this age group for the second year in a row.

The state reported that this year it was able to obtain counts of vocational education teachers. These teachers were not included in its 2001 personnel report.

Minnesota does not collect data for work-study coordinators, recreation and therapeutic recreation specialists, or rehabilitation counselors.

The state attributed the decrease in the reported number of SEA supervisors/administrators to layoffs. In addition, the state reported that the decrease in the total number of other professional staff reported is due to budget cuts.

Mississippi—Mississippi reported that this is the first year that it used data from its new statewide web-based data collection system. The state believes that this system will greatly improve data accuracy, but may result in significant changes in the numbers and types of personnel reported.

Missouri—The state reported that it is unable to explain the increase in the number of fully certified diagnostic and evaluation staff or the decrease in the number of not-fully certified diagnostic and evaluation staff. Missouri did not change certification requirements for these staff.

Nebraska—Nebraska reported that it does not require any formal certification or licensure for educational interpreters, but does require that these staff meet minimum skill standards.

New York—New York reported that it included the following positions in the category special education teachers for ages 3 through 5: Preschool Teacher of Special Education; Preschool Teacher of Special Education-Bilingual; Teacher of English as a Second Language; Teacher of the Speech and Hearing Handicapped-Certified Only; Teacher of the Speech and Hearing Handicapped-Bilingual, Certified Only, Teacher of the Deaf and Hearing Impaired; Teacher of the Deaf and Hearing Impaired-Bilingual; Teacher of the Blind and Partially Sighted; and Teacher of the Blind and Partially Sighted-Bilingual.

The state reported that it included the following positions in the category special education teachers for ages 6-21: Teacher of Special Education; Teacher of Special Education-Bilingual; Teacher of English as a Second Language; Teacher of the Speech and Hearing Handicapped, Certified Only; Teacher of the Speech and Hearing Handicapped-Bilingual, Certified Only; Teacher of the Deaf and Hearing Impaired; Teacher of the Deaf and Hearing Impaired-Bilingual; Teacher of the Blind and Partially Sighted; and Teacher of the Blind and Partially Sighted-Bilingual.

That state reported that it included the following positions in the category other professional staff: Teacher Assistant, Teacher Assistant-Bilingual, Physical Therapist Assistant, Physical Therapist Assistant-Bilingual, Occupational Therapist Assistant, Occupational Therapist Assistant-Bilingual, Orientation and Mobility Instructor, Orientation and Mobility Instructor-Bilingual, Registered Nurse, Registered Nurse-Bilingual, Licensed Practical Nurse, Licensed Practical Nurse-Bilingual, and Other Professional Staff.

New York reported that it included the following positions in the nonprofessional staff category: Instructional Volunteer, Instructional Volunteer-Bilingual, Non-Professional Staff, and Administrative Volunteer.

North Carolina—The state reported that its data do not include personnel from four charter schools that failed to report these data.

Pennsylvania—The state reported that it engaged in a number of activities to improve its personnel data. For example, Pennsylvania worked with the statewide data advisory committee to design ways to improve the data collection; conducted statewide trainings at the state, regional, and district levels; and improved the data checks and verification process at the state, regional, and district levels. These activities may explain the changes observed in the reported number and types of personnel reported.

Vermont—Vermont reported that it included behavior specialists in the other professional staff category.

Virginia—The state reported speech pathologists and other personnel who provide services to students with speech/language impairments as special education teachers. No speech pathologists were reported in the related services personnel count.

Wyoming—Wyoming reported that its personnel data were collected in October 2002, rather than December 2002.

Tables AD1-AD4: IDEA Part B Exiting

Alabama—On the exiting table, Alabama incorrectly included 22-year-olds in its exit data by race/ethnicity. The exit data by race/ethnicity should only include exiting students ages 14-21. Because the state collects aggregate data, it could not remove the 22-year-olds from the totals. The state reported that it is implementing a statewide student information management system that will allow it to correctly report these data in the future.

American Samoa—American Samoa reported that its standard diploma requirements are the same for students with and without disabilities. There are no proficiency requirements, but completion of certain courses is required. American Samoa also issues certificates of completion.

Arizona—The state incorrectly included 22-year-olds in its exit data by race/ethnicity. The exit data by race/ethnicity should only include exiting students ages 14-21. Because the state collects aggregate data, it cannot remove the 22-year-olds from the totals this year. The state reported that it will correct this error on next year's report.

Arizona reported that it cannot fully explain the increase in the number of students with specific learning disabilities reported in the moved, known to be continuing category. One possible explanation is better tracking and follow up procedures by Public Education Agencies (PEAs).

Arizona attributed the decrease in the reported number of dropouts to better tracking and follow-up procedures by PEAs. The state is establishing procedures to improve the accuracy of its dropout data. The state plans to work with PEAs to ensure that students reported as dropouts are not actually continuing in an educational program elsewhere in the state.

Bureau of Indian Affairs—The Bureau of Indian Affairs reported that, in most cases, BIA schools use the graduation standards of the states in which they operate. As a result, BIA does not have data on whether students with disabilities reported as graduating with a regular high school diploma met the same criteria for graduation as did their nondisabled peers.

Colorado—Students who received a diploma but did not meet the same graduation standards as their nondisabled peers are reported in the received a certificate category.

According to the state, the increase in the reported number of Asian/Pacific Islander students who exited special education occurred in LEAs with high mobility rates or a rapidly increasing population.

Data reported for school year 2002-03 are for students exiting between December 2001 and December 2002.

Connecticut—The state attributed the decrease in the number of students reported in the received a certificate category to inaccurate data after 2001-02. The state reported that the reported number of students who received a certificate in 2002-03 is consistent with the number reported in 2000-01.

Beginning in 2002-03, all students reported by districts in the moved, not known to be continuing category were reported to OSEP in the dropped out category. As a result, the number and percentage of students reported in the dropped out category significantly increased, and the number reported in the moved not known to be continuing category dropped to zero. This increase is particularly notable for the disability categories emotional disturbance and specific learning disabilities.

Connecticut reported that its reporting period is from December 1, 2002, to November 30, 2003. It incorrectly calculated students' ages as of December 1, 2003, rather than December 1, 2002.

Florida—Prior to the 2002-03 school year, the state did not report students with disabilities in the graduated with a regular high school diploma category unless they passed the state graduation test. As a result of a law passed in 2003, students with disabilities who did not pass the state graduation exam received diplomas if the IEP team determined that the test did not reflect their academic abilities, they had taken the test in both 10th and 11th grades, and had been provided with remediation opportunities. The state reported that this change affects the graduation rate for students with specific learning disabilities more than other groups, and this group represents approximately 45% of the total students with disabilities in the state. Due to this policy change, more students with specific learning disabilities received high school diplomas and were reported in the graduated with a regular high school diploma category in 2002-03.

Georgia—The state was unable to explain the annual changes in the number of students reported in the no longer receives special education category. The state did not change the category definition or the method of collecting the data. However, the state pointed out that the data for 2001-02 were substantially lower than previous years. The data for 2002-03 are more consistent with the data for 2000-01.

Georgia attributed the decrease in the moved, known to continue category to efforts to improve data quality. The state believes that in the past, LEAs used these moved, known to continue and moved, not known to continue categories as "catch-all" categories.

Hawaii—The state attributed the large decrease in the number of students reported in the no longer receives special education category to the use of a different database to report the exit data. The new database uses a different method to identify students who no longer receive special education.

Idaho—Students who received a regular diploma, but did not meet the same standards for graduation as their nondisabled peers, are reported in the graduated with a high school diploma category. This is inconsistent with the OSEP definition of graduated with a high school diploma.

Illinois—The state attributed the decrease in the number of students reported in the exit categories no longer receives special education, reached maximum age, moved known to continue, moved not known to continue, and dropped out to improved data accuracy. The state believes the data are more accurate because of a change in its data collection methods. In 2002-03, all districts submitted data electronically for the first time. In March of 2003, data processing changed from transaction-based files to replacement files. In addition, in 2002, Illinois

discontinued the use of an "other" exit category. The state reported that in the future, it plans to provide guidance to LEAs on the appropriate use of the exit categories. In addition, the state is releasing a request for proposal for bids to enhance its special education records keeping system.

The state does not know whether students reported in the graduated with a high school diploma category met the same standards for graduation as their nondisabled peers because it does not collect information about students' courses of study. Decisions on the issuance of diplomas are made at the local school district level. Districts issue diplomas when they determine that students have met the requirements for graduation. A certificate of completion is also offered in Illinois. Students who received a certificate of completion rather than a diploma are the only students reported in the received a certificate category.

Indiana—In Indiana, students must pass the Indiana Graduation Qualifying Exam to receive a diploma. Students who do not pass the test, but complete other requirements, receive a certificate instead of a diploma. The state attributed the increase in the number of students reported in the received a certificate category to this requirement.

Louisiana—The state reported that its definition of graduated with a regular high school diploma is consistent with OSEP definitions. The state only reports students in this category if they meet the same standards for graduation as those for students without disabilities.

The state attributed the increase in the number of students reported in the returned to regular education category to a change in reporting practices. In the past, a student who returned to regular education with no disability on his or her last evaluation was not reported on the exiting table. This year, the state corrected this problem by reporting these students on the exiting table according to their last known disability.

The state attributed the decrease in the number of students reported as dropouts to an error in last year's data. In 2001-02, districts incorrectly used the exit categories. Some students who moved from one district to another were incorrectly reported as dropouts. The state provided training to districts on the correct use of the categories, and this resulted in a decrease in the reported number of dropouts.

Maine—Maine reported that its exiting data for 2002-03 were actually collected between December 1, 2001, and November 30, 2002.

Maryland—The state attributed the increase in the number of students reported in the reached maximum age for services category to the data from one local school district. This district recently provided training to its schools on the use of the categories reached maximum age and received a certificate.

Massachusetts—The state reported that the 2002-03 school year was the first year that a high school diploma required passing a statewide assessment. Students who did not pass the assessment were issued certificates of completion. Prior to 2002-03, diplomas were granted based solely on local criteria, and certificates of completion were not issued in the state. In 2002-03, Massachusetts reported students who met local graduation criteria but did not pass the

statewide assessment in the graduated with a regular diploma category. It did this because the state could not differentiate between students who passed the state assessment and received diplomas and those who did not pass the assessment and received a certificate of completion. This method of reporting is inconsistent with the OSEP definition of graduated with a high school diploma. Next year, the state plans to report students who received certificates in the received a certificate category and only report those students who met the same standards for graduation as students without disabilities in the diploma category.

Minnesota—The state reports students who received a regular high school diploma, but did not meet the same standards for graduation as their nondisabled peers in the category graduated with a regular high school diploma. This is inconsistent with the OSEP definition of graduated with a high school diploma.

Minnesota attributed the increase in the number of children reported in the category no longer receives special education to a coding error in previously reported data. Prior to 2002-03, the state reported students who no longer needed special education in the dropout category. These students are now correctly reported in the no longer receives special education category.

Minnesota attributed the increase in the number of students reported as moved, known to continue and the decrease in the number reported as moved, not known to continue to training provided to LEAs by the state. The training emphasized that LEAs need to do a better job tracking students who move because, in the future, students who move and are not known to continue will be reported as dropouts.

Mississippi—In Mississippi, any student reported as receiving a traditional diploma must have met all the standards and objectives laid out for that course, as well as passed all state tests. This requirement holds for students with disabilities as well as for students without disabilities. Students who received a GED, or who did not meet the state standards or test requirements, were reported in the category received a certificate. The state also included in the certificate category those special education students who received a Mississippi Occupational Diploma.

Missouri—The state reported that the graduated with a regular high school diploma category includes all students who received a high school diploma, regardless of the standards for graduation met. This category includes both students who obtained the necessary number of credits and students who met the goals and objectives of their IEPs. This is inconsistent with the OSEP definition of graduated with a high school diploma.

The state attributed the decrease in the number of students reported in the moved, not known to be continuing category to better follow-up on the part of districts and to LEA training.

Nevada—Nevada attributed the increase in the reported number of students who received a certificate to the introduction of a high-stakes graduation exam.

The state believes that the decrease in the number of students reported in the dropped out category may be related to dropout prevention efforts.

New Mexico—The state reported that only students who met the same standards for graduation are reported in the graduated with a diploma category. Students who graduated through the state's ability and career pathway are reported in the received a certificate category. These students received a high school diploma but did not meet the same standards for graduation as students without disabilities. The state also reported that several districts are in the process of building the infrastructure necessary to collect and report data on diploma type. Once implemented, New Mexico anticipates that this infrastructure will improve the accuracy of the exit data.

Based on a recommendation from the state legislature, New Mexico did not estimate race/ethnicity data for unknown or missing race/ethnicity cases. The state has missing race/ethnicity data for a total of 30 students in the following categories: no longer receives special education (2), graduated with a regular high school diploma (9), received a certificate (2), moved, known to be continuing (4), and moved, not known to be continuing (13). The state reported that, starting in 2003-04, race/ethnicity will be required on all student and staff records reported to the New Mexico State Department of Education.

Northern Marianas—Northern Marianas reported that its definition of graduated with a regular high school diploma is consistent with OSEP definitions and that students must meet the same standards for graduation as those for students without disabilities in order to receive a diploma.

Oregon—Oregon developed new year-to-year comparison reports for districts to check their exit data for possible over- or underreporting of exiting students. Districts were required to review and address these possibilities in their electronic correction process. The state believes that its exit data are improving due to the increased attention paid to the data at the local and state level.

Palau—Palau reported that it uses an 11-month data collection period (rather than a full year) for its exiting data. Data from 2002-03 were collected between December 2002 and October 2003.

South Dakota—The state attributed the increase in the number of American Indian/Alaska Native students reported on the exiting table to more accurate data that result from a change in data collection methods. The state switched from a web-based data collection in which districts entered data one time per year to a web-based real-time student record system in which districts enter data throughout the school year.

Texas—Each fall, the state collects exiting data for the previous year. Data reported for school year 2002-03 are actually for students exiting between August 2001 and August 2002.

Texas attributed the decrease in the number of students reported in the graduated with a regular high school diploma category to OSEP's clarification of the instructions on how to report students who received a diploma, but did not meet the same graduation criteria as students without disabilities. Last year, Texas reported these students in the category graduated with a regular high school diploma, but this year it reported them in the received a certificate category. This is the first year that Texas used the category received a certificate.

The state attributed the increase in the number of students reported in the moved, known to be continuing category and the decrease in the number reported in the moved, not known to be continuing category to a change in the state's exit categories. The state eliminated three exit codes about students' "intent" to enroll in a Texas public school, a private school, or a school outside of Texas. Previously, these students were reported as moved, not known to continue.

The state attributed the increase in the number of students reported in the dropout category to the addition of four new state exit categories that districts use to report student exits. All students reported by districts in these four categories are reported to OSEP as dropped out. These categories include: failed exit-level TAAS but met all other graduation requirements; expelled under the provisions of TEC 37.007 and cannot return to school; withdrew from/left school to enroll in an alternative program (HSEP, Job Corps, HEP, trade school, etc.), is in compliance with compulsory attendance laws (TEC 25.085-25.086), and is working toward the completion of a high school diploma or Certificate of High School Equivalency, but the attendance file shows the student did not complete the school year; completed HSEP and has not returned to school, and the attendance file shows that the student did not complete the school year.

Texas reported that it imputed disability information for 1,309 students reported on the exiting table. The state imputed disability for these students based on the distribution and the disabilities for the remaining students on the table. The state estimated disability data in the following categories: graduated with a regular diploma (386), received a certificate (106), reached maximum age (1), died (7), moved, known to continue (586), moved, not known to continue (31), and dropped out (242).

Vermont—Data reported for school year 2002-03 are actually data for students exiting between December 2001 and December 2002.

The Vermont Department of Education recognizes the diploma as the only legal exit document in the state. All students in the state are expected to exit high school with a diploma. The diploma is earned through the accrual of credits. Each district determines the number of credits that all students need to accrue in order to receive a diploma. Students with disabilities, through their individual education plans, often take an alternative route to credit accrual.

West Virginia—The state reported that, as required by state policy, all students with disabilities who receive a regular diploma met the same graduation requirements as students without disabilities. The state reported those students with disabilities who received a modified diploma in the received a certificate category.

Wisconsin—Data reported for school year 2002-03 are actually data for students exiting between December 2001 and December 2002.

Tables AE1-AE4: IDEA Part B Discipline

Alabama—The state attributed the increase in the reported number of students with multiple short-term suspensions to improvements in the state's data reporting. These improvements include the establishment of a team at the state level that queries and analyzes discipline data.

Alaska—The state attributed the decreases in the reported number of students in all discipline categories to problems at two of the state's largest districts. The largest district in the state experienced technical problems and was unable to double-check numbers from the 2002-03 school year. In addition, the state's second largest district began using a new reporting system this year and encountered technical difficulties during the transition that may have resulted in underreporting of discipline data.

Colorado—The state attributed the decreases in the number of students reported in some of the categories on the discipline table to a change in the suspension/expulsion policy of one of the state's largest LEAs.

Delaware—The state indicated the decreases in the number of students reported in various discipline categories may be due to inconsistent data reporting by districts and confusion about regulations for reporting student conduct, suspensions, and expulsions. Delaware indicated that it continues to work with districts to improve the accuracy of their discipline data.

Georgia—Georgia reported that it changed its methods for collecting data about the number of students who were unilaterally removed by school personnel for drug or weapon offenses and students who were removed by a hearing officer. For the first time in 2002-03, these data were submitted to the state electronically through the state student information system. After this change, the number of students reported in the category unilaterally removed by school personnel for drug or weapon offenses decreased significantly.

The state attributed the increase in the number of students with multiple short-term suspensions to better data reporting by districts. The Georgia Department of Education worked with local school systems to help them maintain consistent data across student databases. Over the years, the state has emphasized to local school systems that they are responsible for accurate student discipline data.

Illinois—Illinois attributed the decreases in the number of students reported in various discipline categories to several factors. First, within the past year, the state board of education (ISBE) convened a meeting of local directors of special education to discuss the accuracy of the discipline data. This meeting was convened as a result of concerns about the accuracy of last year's data. Several suggestions for improving communication resulted from this meeting. During this past year, all local directors received notice of the discipline data collection, and many were involved in the correction of local data. Data accuracy was also discussed at every statewide conference of the Illinois Alliance for Administrators in Special Education (quarterly meetings) and at the annual directors' conference and other events sponsored by ISBE. In addition, through a grant from the U.S. Department of Education, ISBE conducted an analysis of the quality of all special education data. A report from this study (available on the ISBE web site at www.isbe.net) included specific recommendations for improving the quality of the suspension data. These recommendations are now being implemented. Finally, because there were many questions about suspensions and expulsion, ISBE special education monitors received training on the state and Federal regulations governing suspensions and expulsions as part of their professional development.

Kentucky—The state attributed the decrease in the reported number of students removed by school personnel to an interim alternative educational setting (IAES) for drug or weapon offenses to one district that now has a better understanding of state law. The state reported that state law is more restrictive than Federal law on the authority of school personnel to remove students to an IAES for drug or weapon offenses. Under state law, a student can only be sent to an IAES for 10 days at a time, no matter what the reason for the removal was. In order for a student to be removed for more than 10 days (and thus be reported on the Federal discipline table), the student would have to commit multiple offenses.

The state reported that the 2002-03 school year was the first year that districts and schools used the statewide student-level tracking system for reporting students in special education.

Massachusetts—Last year, Massachusetts incorrectly reported the number of children with single suspensions/expulsions greater than 10 days, rather than the number of single suspensions/ expulsions greater than 10 days. In 2002-03, Massachusetts collected and reported data using OSEP categories and definitions.

Last year, Massachusetts did not collect data on the unduplicated count of children with suspensions/expulsions greater than 10 days, and with permission from OSEP, generated this count by adding the number of children with multiple short-term suspensions and the number of children with single suspensions greater than 10 days. In 2002-03, Massachusetts collected data from districts on the unduplicated count of children with suspensions/expulsions. The state attributes the decrease in this category to the change in reporting methods.

Massachusetts reported that some districts were unsure of the terminology "unduplicated count" and often reported students twice for the same offense (once in the unduplicated count of children unilaterally removed by school personnel and once in the unduplicated count of children with suspensions/expulsions greater than 10 days).

The state attributed the decrease in the reported number of children unilaterally removed for drugs/weapons to better understanding of this category by districts.

Massachusetts attributed the decrease in the number of children removed by a hearing officer to technical assistance that the state provided to districts. In the past, some districts had difficulty understanding the meaning of the term hearing officer and, as a result, misreported students who were removed by the IEP team. This year, the state verified district data and more clearly defined the term hearing officer.

Michigan—The state reported that since the inception of the discipline data collection, agencies in Michigan have discussed the issue of who has the authority to collect this information. These discussions have caused inconsistency in the data over the years. The discipline counts are low this year because of a jurisdictional disagreement about this data collection. Next year, the state will begin using a new system for collecting discipline data. It expects this change to result in a more accurate count.

Minnesota—Minnesota attributed the increase in the reported number of students with multiple suspensions summing to greater than 10 days to more accurate data. The state believes that the 2001-02 data were underreported by school districts. In addition, the 2001-02 data did not include suspension data from the two largest districts in the state. In 2002-03, Minnesota's data collection system was in transition and, as a result, the SEA collected much of the data through calls to individual districts. As a result of the additional SEA staff attention to the data collection, the state was able to achieve full participation from the largest school districts in Minnesota.

Mississippi—Mississippi reported that this is the first year that it used data from its new statewide web-based data collection system. The state believes that this system will greatly improve data accuracy, but may result in changes in the number of student and events reported.

Missouri—The state believes that the increase in the reported number of single suspension/expulsions greater than 10 days may be due to better data reporting by districts. The 2002-03 school year was the third year the state used a web-based system to collect discipline data on students with and without disabilities. The state reported an overall increase in the number of reported incidents and suspensions/expulsions for both students with and without disabilities.

Montana—The state attributed the increases in the reported number of students reported in the category unilaterally removed by school personnel for drug and weapon offenses and the number reported as suspended/expelled to improvements to the state's new data collection system. Because of the confusing format of the old data collection instrument and the resulting assumptions made about that data, the reported number of students removed to an interim alternative educational setting was not accurate. The new system addresses all of discipline data requirements, is less confusing for school districts, and provides sufficient detail to eliminate the need for assumptions.

Nevada—The state attributed the increase in the number of students reported as suspended or expelled to a continuing and heightened emphasis on school safety. This emphasis has led to more suspensions and/or expulsions for students whose behavior is considered unacceptable. Within the context of students with disabilities, districts feel increasingly competent to make those suspensions within the procedural requirements of IDEA.

New Jersey—New Jersey attributed the increase in the number of students with multiple short-term suspensions to an increase in the number of districts reporting suspension data to the SEA. The state is in the process of improving its reporting system to better capture discipline data from all districts.

Northern Marianas—Northern Marianas reported that only one student was removed for a drug offense. All other students received suspensions of less than 10 days and therefore were not reported on the discipline table.

Pennsylvania—The state reported that the increase in the number of students unilaterally removed by school personnel for drugs or weapons is the result of the trainings it conducted. The state believes that these trainings at the regional and district level improved data accuracy.

Texas—Texas reported that it allows removals of students for more than 45 days. Last year, the state reported students removed for greater than 45 days in the category suspension/expulsions greater than 10 days. The state used this category because the definition of interim alternative educational setting specifies that the removal is for 45 days or less. This year, based on input from OSEP and Westat, Texas reported the removals more than 45 days based on the method of removal (by school personnel for drugs/weapons or by a hearing officer). As a result, the number of students in the categories removed by school personnel for drugs or weapons and removed by a hearing officer increased, and the number of suspension/expulsions greater than 10 days decreased.

Washington—The state attributed the decrease in the number of students reported in the removal by a hearing officer category to its providing clarifying instructions to districts on the definition of hearing officer and to the technical assistance provided to districts on the definition. The state believes that districts are now using this category more appropriately.

Washington reported that it will begin using a web application to collect discipline data starting next year (2003-04 school year).

West Virginia—The state reported that nine of the students reported in the suspensions greater than 10 days category were removals for drug or weapon offenses. They were reported as suspensions because the districts did not specify that the students were removed to an interim alternative educational setting. Seven of the nine were removals for more than 10 days for drug violations, and the remaining two were removals for more than 10 days for weapons violations.

Wisconsin—Wisconsin reported that it made several resources available to local school districts to help them collect the discipline data. First, the state disseminated two bulletins discussing the legal requirements for disciplining children with disabilities and addressing their behavioral needs. Second, it funded a statewide discretionary grant on behavioral assessments and programming directed at increasing the understanding and implementation of the Functional Behavioral Analysis/Behavior Intervention Plan. Third, the state developed an interactive web-based application for school personnel that provides immediate feedback on disciplinary actions required under IDEA. Finally, the interim alternative educational setting data are now posted on the state's web site for public viewing. Wisconsin believes that public access to these data resulted in more accurate data reporting by districts.

The state reported that it will change its data collection method in school year 2003-04. It will no longer collect aggregate data on discipline from districts and will incorporate the data collection into two newly developed student-level electronic submissions called Violence or Drug-Related Incidents and Student Discipline Records. This progressive change will allow the state to compare various aspects of the suspension/expulsion of both students with disabilities and general education students utilizing the same data source. In addition, the state will be able to link the data to the state's individual student database to verify data.