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# Purpose and Use

The need for state lead agencies (LAs) to collect and report comprehensive, high-quality data from all programs across the agency has risen exponentially in the past few years. Decisionmakers, news media, and stakeholders expect to have answers to critical questions and access to comprehensive high-quality data to support broad-sweeping decisions affecting all children and families. It is no longer acceptable to have data reported in silos by programmatic areas and doing so has a potential negative impact on the important research- and evidence-based practices that early interventionists desire to promote. In addition, the legal requirements for the lead agencies’ data must be shared knowledge within and across early childhood programs (e.g., Early Head Start) and not held by any one particular program. The collection, reporting, and analysis of state-level data are discussions that must engage all lead agency leadership.

Retaining knowledge of the various legal requirements and terminology for data reporting, grant applications, timelines, as well as where to obtain certain data collections, are ongoing challenges for lead agencies. When a data manager or other state-level Part C staff leaves, often there is a void that can cause incorrect or untimely reporting and, at times, financial loss. The *IDEA* Data Center (IDC) has addressed this concern by developing the *Part C IDEA Data Processes Toolkit.* Using this toolkit to create protocols for all data collections will establish a well-managed process for data collection, analysis, and reporting. The toolkit can be used to create and maintain a culture of high-quality data, establish and support consistent practices that produce valid and reliable data, and build the capacity of data stewards.[[1]](#footnote-2)

The toolkit contains customizable data collection protocols and a calendar that provide a map for documenting data processes for the lead agency. One staff member should not complete the protocols in isolation; IDC strongly recommends a team approach to completing the protocols. Additional staff that lead agencies might involve include the Part C coordinator, data governance coordinator or manager, program staff, IT steward, other data stewards (e.g., dispute resolution, State Systemic Improvement Plan work group members), and other staff as appropriate.

Establishing a well-managed data process will increase the accuracy and validity of data as well as ensure that required submissions occur on time. Use of this toolkit can assist in the larger agency conversation regarding the importance of collecting, reporting, analyzing, and using high-quality data. Additionally, because it is intended to be completed by a data team, the work itself assists with enhancing communication and increasing collaboration for data use.

 Documentation of state processes requires dedicated effort and a commitment to designate time to complete and regularly update the protocols. IDC has specialized technical assistance (TA) providers available who can facilitate the process in your state.

# Data Collection Protocols

Using the protocols to document the processes for each data collection supports improved data quality by providing a clear framework for collection, validation, and submission of IDEA data. The protocols are in Word format to be fully customizable for documenting each state’s lead agency’s step-by-step processes. Protocols may be amended or expanded to incorporate details associated with other state and federal reporting requirements.

When completing the protocols for each collection, add detailed information about the many processes and information associated with that collection. Note that the listed prompts are not comprehensive, but are meant to serve as a guide for thinking about the processes in your state. Indicate which members of the team are responsible for the various tasks and document any communication that is necessary to support ongoing data processes work.

When completing the Data Collection Protocols:

* Provide as much detail and documentation as available for each collection. Keep in mind the level of detail necessary to support the next person in a state position.
* Reflect on what new or existing state staff might need or wish to know about each collection.
* Expand and reformat the protocols in a manner that works best for your state’s processes.
* Set aside time each year to revisit and refine the protocols.

Contact your [IDC State Liaison](https://ideadata.org/technical-assistance/) to provide assistance with this tool or other aspects of IDEA data work.

Each protocol (except the State Landscape Protocol) allows for documenting *Essential Elements* (e.g., basic collection information such as due date, contact information) and *Processes* (e.g., specific steps for the coll ection, validation, and submission of IDEA data). There is a protocolfor each IDEA data collection.

## State Landscape Protocol

This protocol covers background information on the state including description of the data systems, key state lead agency and data staff, and general policies and procedures that apply to IDEA data. It is useful particularly when onboarding new staff members. The information in the State Landscape Protocol serves as an overview of state infrastructure, and you can apply the information to all of the other data collection protocols.

## 618 Data Collection Protocols

These protocols cover information about data collections as defined in. Section 618 of IDEA. States submit the data to OSEP via ED*Facts* files and the E*MAPS* system.

* Child Count and Settings
* Exiting
* Dispute Resolution

## 616 SPP/APR Indicator Protocols

These protocols cover information about each State Performance Plan/Annual Performance Report (SPP/APR) Indicator, as defined by Section 616 of IDEA. States submit the data to OSEP via GRADS360° for the SPP/APR. Please note that all information prefilled in the white and light green sections of the protocols comes directly from the federal fiscal year (FFY) 2016 Part B SPP/APR Indicator Measurement Table.

* Indicator 1: Timely Provision of Services
* Indicator 2: Services in Natural Environments
* Indicator 3: Early Childhood Outcomes
* Indicator 4: Family Involvement
* Indicator 5: Child Find (Birth to One)
* Indicator 6: Child Find (Birth to Three)
* Indicator 7: 45-day Timeline
* Indicator 8: Early Childhood Transition
* Indicator 9: Resolution Sessions
* Indicator 10: Mediation

## Annual Determinations for Local EI Programs

This protocol covers all processes for using data to establish each local early intervention (EI) program’s annual determination. It will define which data your states uses for the determination and how your state calculates and shares the annual determination.

## Part C IDEA Data Collection Calendar

The calendar assists with organizing and scheduling data tasks. It is prefilled with reporting deadlines and other important events and is especially valuable for new staff. While your state is developing each Data Collection Protocol, you should add tasks to the calendar to ensure it reflects what activities you need to complete each month. As processes or dates change, you should update the calendar to reflect those changes.

# Suggested Resource

[Part C Quick References for IDEA Data](https://ideadata.org/resources/resource/1725/quick-references-for-idea-data) contains the followingtools for quick reference that may be useful while creating the protocols.

**Acronym List:** A list of frequently used acronyms and abbreviations pertaining to ED*Facts* and IDEA.

**Quick Links:** A list of helpful links to various supports available to states, including a list of relevant tools, products, and publications.

**Due Date List:** A list of E*MAPS* due dates.

**Data Source Crosswalk:** A table that connects each SPP/APR Indicator with its required data source.

1. Data steward can be inclusive of anyone who collects, uses, and submits data. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)