



**Equity Research Action Coalition**

UNC Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute

**ecta** Early Childhood  
Technical Assistance Center



**FRANK PORTER GRAHAM  
CHILD DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTE**

## Fact Sheet: Advancing Racial Equity in Early Intervention and Preschool Special Education (Abridged)

Read the full fact sheet at <https://ectacenter.org/topics/racialequity/factsheet-racialequity-2023.asp>

Updated January 5, 2023

The science is clear that the first years of children's lives set the foundation for their healthy development. A young child's race, gender, location, language, and ability should not determine their access to needed services, experiences, and outcomes.

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### 1. Access to early intervention and early childhood special education for eligible children is a civil right provided under the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

1. [20 U.S.C §1400\(c\)\(6\)](#)
2. [34 CFR §303.1](#)
3. [20 U.S.C §1400\(d\)\(1\)\(a\)](#)
4. [20 U.S.C §1400\(d\)\(1\)\(b\)](#)

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### 2. IDEA includes requirements and priorities focused on equity, such as addressing disproportionality in identification and disciplinary practices.

5. O'Hara, N., and Bollmer, J. (2021, July). *Equity Requirements in IDEA (Version 2.0)*. IDEA Data Center. Rockville, MD: Westat. <https://ideadata.org/sites/default/files/media/documents/2021-07/EquityInIDEA.pdf>
6. [20 U.S.C §1416](#)
7. [20 U.S.C §1418\(d\)\(1\)](#)

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### 3. The U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) provides funding to states to serve a diverse group of children with disabilities and their families.

8. U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs (2022). *IDEA Section 618 Data Products: Static Tables, Part C Child Count and Settings*. <https://data.ed.gov/dataset/idea-section-618-data-products-static-tables-part-c>
9. U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs (2022). *IDEA Section 618 Data Products: Static Tables, Part B Child Count and Educational Environments*. <https://data.ed.gov/dataset/idea-section-618-data-products-static-tables-part-b>

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**4. Children who have access to early intervention and early childhood special education services and programs are more likely to have better outcomes compared to those who do not receive services.**

10. Casto, G., & Mastropieri, M. A. (1986). The Efficacy of Early Intervention Programs: A Meta-Analysis. *Exceptional Children*, 52(5), 417–424. <https://doi.org/10.1177/001440298605200503>
11. Camilli, G., Vargas, S., Ryan, S., & Barnett, W. S. (2010). Meta-analysis of the effect of early education interventions on cognitive and social development. *Teachers College Record*, 112(3), 579–620.
12. Karoly, L.A., Kilburn, M.R., & Cannon, J.S. (2005). *Proven Benefits of Early Childhood Interventions*. RAND Corporation. [https://www.rand.org/pubs/research\\_briefs/RB9145.html](https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_briefs/RB9145.html)

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**5. Racial and economic disparities occur in access to early intervention and early childhood special education screening, identification, and referral.**

13. Keating, K., Cole, P., Scheider, A., Schaffner, M. (2021). *State of Babies Yearbook 2021*. ZERO TO THREE. <https://stateofbabies.org/national/>
14. McManus, B.M., Richardson, Z., Schenkman, M., Murphy, N.J., Everhart, R.M., Hambidge, S., & Morrato, E. (2020). Child characteristics and early intervention referral and receipt of services: a retrospective cohort study. *BMC Pediatrics*, 20(1), 84. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12887-020-1965-x>
15. Mandell, D.S., Wiggins, L.D., Carpenter, L.A., Daniels, J., DiGuseppi, C., Durkin, M.S., Giarelli, E., Morrier, M.J., Nicholas, J.S., Pinto-Martin, J.A., Shattuck, P.T., Thomas, K.C., Yeargin-Allsopp, M., & Kirby, R.S. (2009). Racial/Ethnic Disparities in the Identification of Children with Autism Spectrum Disorders. *American Journal of Public Health*, 99(3), 493–498. <https://doi.org/10.2105/ajph.2007.131243>

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**6. Racial disparities exist among those who receive early intervention and early childhood special education services.**

16. U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs (2020). *OSEP Fast Facts: Infants and Toddler with Disabilities*. <https://sites.ed.gov/idea/osep-fast-facts-infants-and-toddlers-with-disabilities-20/>
17. U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs (2020). *OSEP Fast Facts: Children 3 through 5 Served Under Part B, Section 619 of IDEA*. <https://sites.ed.gov/osers/2020/10/osep-releases-fast-facts-on-children-3-through-5/>
18. Khetani, M.A., Richardson, Z., & McManus, B.M. (2017). Social disparities in early intervention service use and provider-reported outcomes. *Journal of developmental and behavioral pediatrics: JDBP*, 38(7), 501–509. <https://doi.org/10.1097/DBP.0000000000000474>
19. Magnusson, D., Palta, M., McManus, B., Benedict, R.E., & Durkin, M.S. (2016). Capturing unmet therapy need among young children with developmental delay using national survey data. *Academic Pediatrics*, 16(2), 145–153. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.acap.2015.05.003>
20. Advocates for Children of New York (2019). *Early Inequities: How Underfunding Early Intervention Leaves Low-Income Children of Color Behind*. <https://s3.amazonaws.com/media.ccnny.org/2020/12/EI-Report-FINAL-12-4-19.pdf>

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**7. Part B (ages 3–21) programs serve more Black and Hispanic children compared to other racial groups; however, there are racial differences in the disability categories under which they are deemed eligible.**

21. U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs (2020). *OSEP Fast Facts: Race and Ethnicity of Children with Disabilities Served under IDEA Part B*. <https://sites.ed.gov/idea/osep-fast-facts-race-and-ethnicity-of-children-with-disabilities-served-under-idea-part-b/>
22. Skrtic, T.M., Saatcioglu, A., & Nichols, A. (2021). Disability as status competition: The role of race in classifying children. *Socius: Sociological Research for a Dynamic World*, 7. <https://doi.org/10.1177/23780231211024398>

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**8. Racial disparities occur in the outcomes for individuals with disabilities, and these disparities start early.**

23. Graves, S.L., & Ye, F.F. (2017). Are special education labels accurate for Black children? Racial differences in academic trajectories of youth diagnosed with specific learning and intellectual disabilities. *Journal of Black Psychology*, 43(2), 192–213. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0095798416636280>
24. Schwartz, A.E., Hopkins, B.G., & Stiefel, L. (2021). The effects of special education on the academic performance of students with learning disabilities. *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, 40(2), 480–520. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1002/pam.22282>

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**9. Children and families experience better outcomes when there is a racial/ethnic match with their educators.**

25. Redding, C. (2019). A teacher like me: A Review of the effect of student-teacher racial/ethnic matching on teacher perceptions of students and student academic and behavioral outcomes. *Review of Educational Research*, 89(4), 499–535. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0034654319853545>
26. Downer, J.T., Goble, P., Myers, S.S., & Pianta, R.C. (2016). Teacher-child racial/ethnic match within pre-kindergarten classrooms and children's early school adjustment. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 37, 26–38. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecresq.2016.02.007>
27. Bates, L.A., & Glick, J.E. (2013). Does it matter if teachers and schools match the student? Racial and ethnic disparities in problem behaviors. *Social Science Research*, 42(5), 1180–1190. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssresearch.2013.04.005>
28. Zippia. (n.d.) *Early Intervention Specialist Demographics and Statistics in the US*. <https://www.zippia.com/early-intervention-specialist-jobs/demographics/>
29. U.S. Department of Education (2022). *IDEA Section 618 Data Products: Static Tables*. <https://data.ed.gov/dataset/idea-section-618-data-products-static-tables-part-c-child-count-and-settings-table-5/resources>

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**10. Racial disparities that exist in disciplinary practices negatively impact children's learning opportunities.**

30. McLean, C., Austin, L.J.E., Whitebook, M., & Olson, K.L. (2021). *Early Childhood Workforce Index — 2020*. Berkeley, CA: Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley. <https://cscce.berkeley.edu/workforce-index-2020/report-pdf/>
31. Office for Civil Rights. (2014). *Data Snapshot: School Discipline, Issue Brief No. 1* (Civil Rights Data Collection). <http://ocrdata.ed.gov>
32. Zeng, S., Pereira, B., Larson, A., Corr, C.P., O'Grady, C., & Stone-MacDonald, A. (2021). Preschool Suspension and Expulsion for Young Children with Disabilities. *Exceptional Children*, 87(2), 199–216. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0014402920949832>
33. Katsiyannis, A., Gage, N.A., Rapa, L.J., & MacSuga-Gage, A.S. (2020). Exploring the Disproportionate Use of Restraint and Seclusion Among Students with Disabilities, Boys, and Students of Color. *Advances in Neurodevelopmental Disorders*, 4(3), 271–278. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s41252-020-00160-z>