



GRANT INFORMATION GUIDE

Reducing Overidentification in Special Education (ROSE)

Maryland State Department of Education

200 West Baltimore Street
Baltimore, Maryland 21201

Deadline

May 16, 2023

No later than 11:59 p.m. EST

MARYLAND STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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Secretary-Treasurer, Maryland State Board of Education

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Letter from the State Superintendent

Dear Maryland Educators, Leaders, and Community Members:

Consistently across the country, states report that students returning to school after extended closures displayed a higher level of behavioral challenges. Teachers were not prepared for their students' behavior and the loss of academic skills, resulting in higher rates of identifying students as having an intellectual disability, emotional disability, or "other health impairment" (often ADHD); and disciplinary removals. This was particularly evident for African American, English learner, male, and economically disadvantaged students. The increased overidentification of these disabilities and use of exclusionary discipline was exacerbated by the failure to provide teacher preparation related to culturally responsive instruction, systems of tiered academic and behavioral interventions, and predictable school-wide rituals and routines for learning and socializing. In addition, data suggest that historically underserved students are more likely to be identified with an intellectual disability, while their White peers are identified with autism. These data have been apparent for decades. It's not new. Advocacy and action are overdue.

Unfortunately, we know that the use of intellectual and emotional disability codes is often associated with the removal of these students to more restrictive and segregated settings. This can negatively impact our students who face additional barriers and bias as compared to their non-identified peers. Students who are misidentified are vulnerable to a less rigorous curriculum and lower expectations in a segregated setting.¹ Whereas, research shows that students who are included in the general education setting have higher academic and employment outcomes.²

Furthermore, best-in-class research has validated that the early misidentification of African American, English learner, male, and economically disadvantaged students as having a disability may also impact their identity (i.e. the student may act — be treated — as if they have a disorder, even if that's not the case), which leads to a self-fulfilling prophecy.³ Inappropriate disability identification can result in a loss of self-esteem.⁴ This perpetuates the highly problematic and long-standing discriminatory view that historically underserved students are "cognitively substandard."⁵ This issue is not limited to and present only in majority-minority local education agencies. It is a persistent issue that must be thoroughly addressed, interrogated, and dismantled in all of our systems. This *need not* be a problem we all live with.

This grant program is a call to action. If this call goes unheeded in Maryland, significant numbers of black, brown, and poor children will continue to be misidentified and placed on a pathway that is, because of implicit and explicit systemic biases as well as ineffective instruction, a self-fulfilling pathway ever more difficult to break away from. The systems under which we operate are currently designed to keep reproducing the outcomes we see. It is time to disrupt them.

¹ *Significant Disproportionality in Special Education: Current Trends and Actions for Impact*, National Center for Learning Disabilities; https://www.ncl.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/2020-NCLD-Disproportionality-Trends-and-Actions-for-Impact_FINAL-1.pdf (2020).

² *Id.*

³ *Confronting special education's race problem*, University of Michigan- Dearborn News, <https://umdearborn.edu/news/confronting-special-educations-race-problem> (February 7, 2022).

⁴ National Center for Learning Disabilities, *supra*, note 1.

⁵ Dearborn News, *supra*, note 5.

To care about special education means to care about being certain in who and for what children become eligible for special education services. Anything less is an abdication of our responsibility as policymakers, advocates, educators, and humans. Let us hold ourselves accountable for the trajectories on which we place our children.

Join me in this call to action with tangible solutions. Reducing overidentification in special education is essential to transform and create the necessary change to actualize the Blueprint for Maryland's Future for all Maryland's children.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mohammed Choudhury', written in a cursive style.

Mohammed Choudhury
State Superintendent of Schools

Program Description

The Reducing Overidentification in Special Education (ROSE) grant program is a highly competitive Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) grant opportunity that will leverage remaining one-time American Rescue Plan Elementary and Secondary School Relief Funds (ESSER III) to make a substantial investment in local education agency (LEA) strategies that will mitigate long-term learning loss for students who are disproportionately likely to be misidentified as students with intellectual and/or emotional disabilities and, as a result, end up in unnecessarily restrictive classroom environments that hinder progress rather than provide the remediation and acceleration necessary within the general education classroom for these students. MSDE will award up to three, \$1,000,000 grants to local education agencies to directly address the disproportionate identification of certain student subgroups in special education populations.

To that end, grants will be awarded for work that **includes and addresses** the overidentification of historically underserved students with intellectual and/or emotional disabilities, such as African American students, English learners, and economically disadvantaged students.

Applicants must address and provide a description of how planned activities align with the goals of the ROSE program and the expected impact of the work on the overidentification of Maryland's students for special education services. Applicants must commit to addressing the substantial overidentification of students based on their race, sex, gender, home language, and income status in LEA policies, processes, and practices. To do so, applicants should include detailed baseline data and clear and feasible but ambitious success criteria associated with program goals that demonstrate tangible progress to addressing disproportionality in the identification of students for special education services. Applicants must also ensure all goals and measurable success criteria are disaggregated by all student subgroups, particularly historically underserved groups to ensure that proposed plans address existing and persistent disparities. Selected applicants will partner with a single, national leader awarded by MSDE for program implementation.

NAME OF GRANT PROGRAM

Reducing Overidentification in Special Education (ROSE)

AUTHORIZATION

[American Rescue Plan \(ARP\) Act of 2021](#)

PURPOSE

To seed resources for up to three local education agencies (LEAs) to mitigate the effects of pandemic learning loss on persistently underperforming students who risk being misidentified for special education services due to their race, sex, gender, home language, and/or income status. The program also connects to and supports Blueprint implementation efforts associated with special education policies, processes, and practices.

DISSEMINATION

This Grant Information Guide was released on March 1, 2023.

DEADLINE

Applications are due no later than 11:59 p.m. EST on May 16, 2023.

GRANT PERIOD

July 1, 2023 - September 30, 2024

TOTAL FUNDING AVAILABLE

Up to \$3,000,000

ESTIMATED NUMBER OF GRANTS

3

SUBMISSION INSTRUCTIONS

Applicants must submit the Reducing Overidentification in Special Education grant application and all required attachments no later than 11:59 p.m. EST on May 16, 2023, via email to rose.msde@maryland.gov.

All deliverables must meet current Web Content Accessibility Guidelines ([WCAG 2.1 Level AA](#)) and accessibility standards as outlined in [Senate Bill 617](#).

STATE RESPONSIBILITIES

MSDE is responsible for providing required information, data, documentation, and technical assistance to facilitate the grantee's performance of the work and will provide such additional assistance when requested.

PROGRAM CONTACT

Justin Dayhoff
Assistant State Superintendent, Financial Planning, Operations, and Strategy
410-767-0439
rose.msde@maryland.gov

Use of Funds

Funds may be used for (not an exhaustive list):

- Salaries and wages
- Instructional materials
- Collateral, engagement, informational, and marketing tools
- Translation services
- Consulting and technical assistance
- Supplies and materials

Funds may not be used for (not an exhaustive list):

- Capital expenditures
- Cost(s) incurred prior to the approval of the grant

Eligibility

Program eligibility is open to the twenty-four primary local education agencies (LEAs) in Maryland.

MSDE reserves the right to take into consideration several goals when making awards: achieving a distribution of services and support that aligns with differences in geographic need; increasing the participation of underrepresented demographic subgroups; and broadening award recipients to applicants who have not previously been eligible for or successful in applying to a State grant program.

Getting Started

Learn

- ❖ Read this document in its entirety as it provides a comprehensive overview of the program expectations, application process, and grant program timeline. Continue to monitor the MSDE Office of Grants Administration and Compliance webpage for more information and updates.
- ❖ Explore the links to additional resources and readings identified as “Inspiration from the Field” for the grant focus areas.
- ❖ Learn more by attending live information sessions which will be recorded and posted online for asynchronous viewing.

Consider

- ❖ Assess the capacity of your local education agency a strong application containing innovative ideas rooted in relevant supporting data and evidence that suggest a high likelihood of proposed program success.
- ❖ Consider how the proposed activities align to Blueprint Implementation Plans, existing federal IDEA program activities, and local education agency needs.
- ❖ Plan to use this opportunity to innovate and inspire while also planning for sustainability.

Collaborate

- ❖ Identify the primary point of contact and key collaborators responsible for the application submission.
- ❖ Build in opportunities to gather input from subject matter experts, relevant LEA program offices, and other stakeholders.
- ❖ Utilize the information sessions and office hours hosted by MSDE to pressure test ideas, gain new insights, and refine applications.

Apply

- ❖ Attend an information session live or watch an information session recording (required).
- ❖ Submit the online grant application with all required appendices (required).

The Overidentification of Students with Intellectual and Emotional Disabilities



As described in the opening letter of this program, consistent with national trends, the significantly disproportionate overidentification of African American students with an intellectual and/or emotional disability has consistently been a challenge for the State and multiple LEAs. In SY 2021, African American students ages 3-21 accounted for 33.5% of the Maryland student population, and yet, they represented 40.2% of the students receiving special education services for intellectual disabilities and 51.8% for emotional disabilities (2020-2021 MSDE Student Publications). For that same school year, African American students in Maryland were almost three times more likely to be identified as having an intellectual disability than their peers of other races and over two times more likely to be identified as having an emotional disability (2021 Significant Disproportionality Profiles). These disparities exist when disaggregating the data further by sex, gender, home language, and/or income status.

Consistently across the country, states report that students returning to school after extended closures displayed a higher level of behavioral challenges. Teachers were not prepared for their students' behavior and the loss of academic skills, resulting in higher rates of identifying students as having an intellectual disability, emotional disability, or "other health impairment" (often ADHD); and disciplinary removals. This was particularly evident for nonwhite students, males, economically disadvantaged students, and English learners. The increased over-identification of these disabilities and use of exclusionary discipline was exacerbated by the failure to provide teacher preparation related to culturally responsive instruction, systems of tiered academic and behavioral interventions, and predictable school-wide rituals and routines for learning and socializing. In addition, data suggest that nonwhite students are more likely to be identified with an intellectual disability, while their white peers are identified with autism. These data have been apparent for decades.

Best-in-class research has validated that the early misidentification of students as having a disability may also impact their identity (i.e. the student may act —be treated — as if they have a disorder, even if that's not the case), which leads to a self-fulfilling prophecy.⁶ Inappropriate disability identification can result in a loss of self-esteem.⁷ This perpetuates the highly problematic and long-standing discriminatory view that African American students are "cognitively substandard."⁸ This issue is not limited to and present only in majority-minority systems. It is an issue in all of our systems and, nationally, communities have begun to tackle this work head-on (see, for example, the work in Berkeley Unified⁹). It is time for Maryland to follow suit.

⁶ *Confronting special education's race problem*, University of Michigan- Dearborn News, <https://umdearborn.edu/news/confronting-special-educations-race-problem> (February 7, 2022).

⁷ National Center for Learning Disabilities, *supra*, note 1.

⁸ Dearborn News, *supra*, note 5.

⁹ <https://www.berkeleyside.org/2022/06/12/black-latino-students-berkeley-unified-overrepresented-special-ed>

The Overidentification of Students with Intellectual and Emotional Disabilities



Call to Action

The Maryland State Department of Education seeks three **local education agencies to partner with a single, national leader for program implementation**. Applicants **must describe** how their proposed grant program plans will specifically and intentionally address the overidentification of students as intellectually and/or emotionally disabled based on race, sex, gender, home language, and income status.

Focus Areas

Grant applications must **demonstrate a commitment to implementing all of the following** six focus areas:

- Conduct an analysis of data to determine where overidentification of students as intellectually and/or emotionally disabled based on race, sex, gender, home language, and income status exists and identify root causes for overidentification through a comprehensive assessment of district policies, including the special education referral process; instructional practices and curricular materials; multi-tiered systems for support, including assessment and interventions; pre-referral processes; family involvement and support; and staff beliefs and perceptions, including implicit bias.
- Develop and implement a professional learning plan that aligns to the root causes for overidentification and builds the knowledge and skills of general education teachers and other staff, particularly in early learning grades, to deliver high-quality instruction and intervention that is differentiated to meet the needs of individual students.
 - Consider opportunities for professional development that include culturally responsive pedagogy, implicit bias, effective instructional practices for diverse learners such as English learners, implementation of high-quality instructional practices and curricular materials, utilizing targeted intervention strategies and assessing progress accurately, classroom management, etc.
- Develop and maintain equitable policies, processes, and practices that mitigate and eliminate opportunities for overidentification, ensure equitable outcomes for struggling and historically underserved students, and are designed to overcome and address the root causes identified for overidentification of students as intellectually and/or emotionally disabled based on race, sex, gender, home language, and income status.
- Create or strengthen pre-referral processes that precede a student's referral for assessment to special education and includes:
 - A team of individuals (e.g., teachers, related services staff, counselors, administrators, and parents) who can provide individualized recommendations for support and intervention for students, resulting in an individualized learning plan;
 - Systems for monitoring and supporting general education teachers in the implementation of individualized learning plans;

The Overidentification of Students with Intellectual and Emotional Disabilities



- Evaluation opportunities for the district to identify systemic needs related to instructional practices, curricular materials, and intervention; related wraparound services and resources; and professional development.
- Ensure systems and structures for family engagement support and include effective communication, opportunities to support children's learning at home, and participation in pre-referral processes, including developing a student's individualized learning plan.
- Grant activities should complement, strengthen, and align to any existing [Comprehensive Coordinated Early Intervening Services](#) (CEIS) programs if applicable.



Inspiration from the Field

[Black and Latino Students in Berkeley Unified Are Overrepresented in Special Ed](#)

Berkleyside

[Addressing Over-Representation of African American Students in Special Education](#)

The Iliad Project

[School District Finds Latino, Black Students Improperly Placed into Special Education](#)

Palo Alto Online



Additional Readings

- [ExtraOrdinary Districts: Season 1, Episode 2: Lexington, Massachusetts](#), The Education Trust
- [Disproportionality and Learning Disabilities: Parsing Apart Race, Socioeconomic Status, and Language](#), Journal of Learning Disabilities
- [Distinguishing Difference from Disability: The Common Causes of Racial/Ethnic Disproportionality in Special Education](#), The Metropolitan Center for Urban Education at New York University
- [The Pre-Referral Process: Procedures for Supporting Students with Academic and Behavioral Concerns](#), The Iris Center, Peabody College, Vanderbilt University
- [The Disproportionality of Latinx Students in Special Education](#), ACSA Leadership Magazine
- [Disproportionality of African American Children in Special Education](#), Gwendolyn Cartledge and Charles Dukes
- [Examples of Fiscal and Child Tracking for Voluntary and Comprehensive Coordinated Early Intervening Services \(CEIS\)](#), IDEA Data Center



Customer Service Support Sessions

The Maryland State Department of Education seeks to support any potential applicant in submitting the strongest application possible. Strong program designs are essential to ensuring the Reducing Overidentification in Special Education program delivers upon the goals of the initiative. Customer service and support for the ROSE program consists of information sessions as well as office hours for individual appointments, upon request. Applicants are encouraged to leverage office hours for thought partnership, application development, and individualized support. The session dates are below.

Information Sessions

Prior to completing and submitting the application, it is required that applicants attend at least one information session either live or via watching the recorded session. These sessions provide an overview of the ROSE grant program, requirements, and how to apply. To register for a session, click on the associated link. See the dates and times below:

- [Monday, March 20th, 2023 – 3:30 PM ET](#)
- [Tuesday, March 28th, 2023 – 9:00 AM ET](#)
- [Thursday, April 6th, 2023 – 12:30 PM ET](#)

Application

Complete applications, including all appendices, should be submitted by the deadline as a PDF document via email to grants.msde@maryland.gov.

COVER PAGE

Applicants must provide contact information and identify which strategy they are addressing in the application, the pathway if applicable, and the total amount of funding being requested. All applications must be signed by the head of the applying organization.

INFORMATION SESSION ATTENDANCE

Applicants are expected to attest to and provide the name and titles of all individuals associated with their organization who have attended (or watched the recorded) information sessions MSDE is hosting for the ROSE program.

NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Discuss the anticipated needs of the LEA related to the overidentification of students as intellectually and/or emotionally disabled based on race, sex, gender, home language, and income status. Consider the district's policies, processes, and practices and how they may be contributing to the overidentification of certain student groups for special education and the support needed to address related challenges.

GOALS AND OUTCOMES

All applicants must include as one of their goals: The LEA will reduce the gap in students identified for special education services by at least XX% for a specific group of students based on race, sex, gender, home language, and/or income status.

Articulate clear goals and the related near-, mid-, and long-term outcomes that will drive achievement of those grant program goals. Goals should be specific and tie directly to required ROSE program focus areas. Goals should also align to needs identified in the application's needs assessment.

- **EXAMPLE:** The root cause analysis indicates that general education teachers need more support related to intervening when students are struggling and monitoring their response to intervention;
- The applicant could suggest that a project goal is to ensure general education teachers receive professional development in the effective implementation of evidence-based intervention strategies and progress monitoring;
 - The applicant could describe near-term goals related to providing general education teachers with initial professional development to build their knowledge and skills related to intervention and progress monitoring;
 - The applicant could articulate mid-term goals related to increasing opportunities for job-embedded support specific to the implementation of intervention activities (e.g., observing a model teacher, co-planning, co-teaching, etc.);
 - The applicant could suggest long-term goals associated with the results of intervention for specific student(s) and/or student group(s).



PROJECT NARRATIVE (5-PAGE LIMIT)

Proposed Activities

Describe the proposed activities and how they align to required focus areas.

EVIDENCE OF IMPACT

Describe how the proposed plan and strategies being implemented are evidence-based and will lead to the desired impact. Include a description of your experience in terms of effective practices leading to the desired outcomes.

Historically Underserved Groups

Describe how the proposed activities will increase participation and have a positive impact on historically underserved groups.

Timeline

Use the table below to outline proposed activities and the anticipated dates of implementation throughout the grant period.

Proposed Activities (sample)	Date of Implementation
<i>e.g., Develop a plan that identifies the data needed (some of which may be readily available and others for which additional activities may be required) for analysis to determine the root causes associated with overidentification of students for special education services.</i>	July, 2023
<i>e.g., Create and deploy a survey to general education teachers to gather data related to attitudes, beliefs, and abilities when working with students struggling academically and/or behaviorally.</i>	August, 2023

Measuring Success

Since all applicants must include as one of their goals: **The LEA will reduce the gap in students identified for special education services by at least XX% for a specific group of students based on race, sex, gender, home language, and/or income status – applicants should be sure to identify and include the corresponding measure of success.**

Describe what success for this project would look like and what criteria will be used to determine success. LEA applicants should identify clear, data-driven metrics and provide baseline data and realistic expected success targets anchored in and tied to the evidence of impact already described above. For example, if cited evidence suggests a likelihood of achieving a given result (e.g., new subgroup identification rate) for certain activities and resources, the success criteria should use similar expectations.



Key Personnel and Management Plan

The management plan clearly defines the roles, responsibilities, tasks and deadlines of key contributors to make sure the program is a success. Ensure that all administrative and key personnel responsible for the successful implementation and monitoring of the grant requirements are captured here.

Key Personnel

Name	Title, Organization	Responsibilities

BUDGET AND BUDGET NARRATIVE (5-PAGE LIMIT)

The project’s budget should detail all related project expenses in a separate itemized budget. It should demonstrate the extent to which the budget is reasonable, cost-effective, and integrates other sources of funding. All costs described in the project narrative should appear in the budget narrative and must have a corresponding entry in the itemized budget for that year. Each line must be detailed and specific. General expenses should be broken down into specific line items. Be as detailed as possible. The budget should tie to and match the applicant’s submitted C-1-25 budget form (see below).

MSDE will give award preference to applicants that demonstrate or pre-identify additional sources of revenue in their application and commit to using funds outside this award to ensure long-term sustainability. For LEAs, this could refer to braiding existing funds with this grant program; for non-LEAs this could refer to external revenue opportunities and related funding (e.g., public-private partnerships or in-kind support).

APPENDIX

The following Appendices must be included in the application:

- A [signed C-1-25 MSDE budget form](#)
- A [signed recipient assurances page](#)
- Letters of support from any partners (if applicable)

The Review Process

The review of proposals will be a five-part process:

1. Written applications will be pre-screened for submission requirements and inclusion of all required sections. Applicants not meeting all pre-screening requirements will not be reviewed.
2. A review committee established by MSDE will evaluate applications.
3. Applicants may be scheduled for an oral program presentation as determined by the review committee.
4. Final approval for awards will be determined by the review committee.
5. MSDE will issue notice of award and notice of non-award to all applicants in June 2023.

Due to the anticipated volume of applicants, MSDE will not consider appeals for grant applicants. MSDE reserves the right to take into consideration several goals when making awards: achieving a distribution of services and support that aligns with differences in geographic need; increasing the participation of underrepresented demographic subgroups; and broadening award recipients to applicants who have not previously been eligible for or successful in applying to a State grant program.

Reporting Requirements

The Maryland State Department of Education will provide participating eligible applicants with a more detailed implementation timeline once the grant period commences. In addition to the activities above, it will include detailed information related to meetings with MSDE staff, ensuring continued connection and collaboration throughout the grant period.

Non-Discrimination Statement

MSDE does not discriminate on the basis of age, ancestry/national origin, color, disability, gender identity/expression, marital status, race, religion, sex, or sexual orientation in matters affecting employment or in providing access to programs and activities and provides equal access to the Boy Scouts and other designated youth groups. For inquiries related to Department policy, please contact:

Equity Assurance and Compliance Office
Office of the Deputy State Superintendent for Operations
Maryland State Department of Education
200 W. Baltimore Street - 2nd Floor Baltimore, Maryland 21201-2595 410-767-0123 - voice
410-767-0431 - fax
410-333-6442 - TTY/TDD



The General Education Provisions Act (GEPA), Section 427

Each application must develop and describe the steps the applicant proposes to take to ensure equitable access to, and equitable participation in, the project or activity to be conducted with such assistance, by addressing the special needs of students, teachers, and other program beneficiaries in order to overcome barriers to equitable participation.

Questions

If you have questions about the application or program, please contact the Program Monitor:

Justin Dayhoff
Assistant State Superintendent, Financial Planning, Operations, and Strategy
410-767-0439
rose.msde@maryland.gov

A customer service specialist will respond to all inquiries within 24 hours or the next business day.

A list of frequently asked questions (FAQ) and answers will be posted to the webpage following customer service support sessions.



Grant Application Timeline

Date	Program Milestone
March 1, 2023	Reducing Overidentification in Special Education Grant Information Guide and application are released
March 20, 2023	Information session
March 28, 2023	Information session
April 6, 2023	Information session
May 16, 2023	Application window closes
May - June, 2023	The Review Committee evaluates applications
June 2023	MSDE announces grant awards
July 2023 - September 2024	Grant period