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Tool 2: Annual Count Process Checklist

This tool provides a checklist of practical tips State Part D coordinators (and their teams) can use to approach the Annual Count process efficiently and effectively, and meet the counting requirements for the Title I, Part D program. These tips were generated by NDTAC on the basis of technical assistance communications with states and through questions and issues that have been raised regularly during NDTAC events (i.e., conference calls, webinars, conferences).

NDTAC welcomes additional tips from the field. E-mail us at ndtac@longevityconsulting.com.

Purpose of this Tool

Throughout the count process **State Part D coordinators and SA and LEA administrators** may have questions about how to ensure that the count is “complete and accurate,” as required by Section B of the U.S. Department of Education [Annual Count Reporting Form 4376](#). For example, State Part D coordinators may have questions about how to appropriately collect counts from subgrantees, and SA and LEA administrators may have questions about the importance of the count and why they should submit counts of children and youth in their programs. States can prepare for the Annual Count and address these questions by understanding the Title I, Part D, Annual Count requirements and process and by having information about the issues that states typically face in conducting the count.

How to use this Tool

This tool includes various tips that are organized by the three steps coordinators take to ensure accurate and complete counts (see figure below).

Step 1	Prepare for the Annual Count Process.
Step 2	Provide training and technical assistance.
Step 3	Verify and submit counts to ED.

The checklist is designed for Part D coordinators but can also be used by SA, LEA, and N or D facility administrators involved with the Annual Count process. The tool is formatted as a checklist so that it can be used as coordinators undergo the Annual Count process. It can also be copied, adapted, and/or shared during the Annual Count process.

Step 1 – Prepare for the Annual Count Process.

SEAs should prepare for the Annual Count process before or soon after ED releases the Annual Count documents. Since historically, child counts have been due to ED at the beginning of the calendar year (typically mid January), states can plan ahead and start the Annual Count data collection process early to ensure that accurate counts are collected efficiently and submitted on time.

1A. Understand the Purpose of the Annual Count and its Process

- Review and familiarize yourself with all ED instructions and guidance on the Annual Count. The most up-to-date instructions and guidance are available on the Annual Count topic page of NDTAC’s website ([NDTAC Annual Count Topic Page](#)). You can also refer to the resources included in the [Annual Count Resource Index](#) of the Annual Count Toolkit.
- If you are new to the Annual Count process, review your state’s previous count materials (i.e., surveys, counts) and reach out to colleagues in your state, in other states, and to NDTAC with any questions you have and for guidance.

1B. Plan for the Annual Count Process

- Since the Annual Count is due to ED each January and the process rarely changes, develop a timeline that includes important dates for each step of the Annual Count process (see Tool 3: Annual Count Timeline Template for a customizable template).
- Ensure that your timeline includes time to review submitted counts and to follow up with subgrantees if any questions or issues arise.
- If possible and appropriate, decide which SEA staff will be engaged in this year’s count process and hold meetings to discuss how your team will conduct the count.
- Update your list of subgrantees and facilities, including contact information (e.g., e-mail addresses if collecting counts electronically).
- Inform SAs and LEAs that you will be requesting counts from them.

1C. Prepare the Annual Count Surveys and Collateral Materials

- Update your state’s count guidance documents, data collection forms, and instructions from the previous year and distribute them to subgrantees.
- If possible, upload updated count documents to your SEAs website so that they are readily available to subgrantees and facilities.
- Ensure surveys include all requirements. Refer to [Tool 1: Annual Count Requirements Checklist](#) for a list of requirements and the Annual Count Resource Index for direct links to the related statute, regulations, and guidance as needed.
- Specify additional count window parameters if appropriate and desired.
 - For the SA count, if you think it would be beneficial for all SAs and their facilities to choose the same counting date, discuss this possibility with your SAs. SAs are not required to count on the same day; thus, each SA can choose a different date on which all its respective facilities and programs will conduct their count.
 - For the LEA count, the statute, regulations, and guidance do not indicate whether the 30-day count window must be the same for all facilities across the state. For example, as the SEA, you may:
 - Allow each facility to select its own count window.

- Establish that the window for reporting caseload counts be consistent for all facilities within an LEA. In this case, the 30-day window could then vary from LEA to LEA.
 - Allow a parent organization that operates several local N or D facilities in different LEAs across the state to use a uniform 30-day period for the facilities it operates. This means that other N or D facilities in the state or even in the same LEA could use a different 30-day window for reporting their caseload counts.
- Request resources or additional information to help verify submitted counts later, including potentially:
- Facility charters to check designation.
 - Descriptions of facility services and population, to check the designation if the charter is unavailable or to cross-check alignment with the facility charter.
 - Child and youth information (e.g., date of birth, entry and exit dates) that excludes identifying information (e.g., only initials or identification numbers) to cross-check counts.

Step 2 – Provide Training and Technical Assistance.

Since the Annual Count process includes many details and SAs, LEAs, and N or D facilities sometimes experience a high turnover of staff, it is helpful for SEAs to provide training and technical assistance (T/TA) to eligible SAs, LEAs, and their facilities on count requirements and how to coordinate the count.

NDTAC encourages states to revise any of the Center’s Annual Count Materials (i.e., webinars and toolkits) and adapt them to use compliment your other training materials.

2A. Plan how you will provide T/TA to your SAs, LEAs, and N or D facilities.

- Determine if and when you will conduct face-to-face workshops, web-based seminars (webinars), or conference calls, and/or provide direct assistance via e-mail and phone.

2B. Make needed process improvements.

- Refer to evaluation results and other feedback based on previous T/TA, if available, to make improvements to upcoming T/TA.

2C. Address Annual Count issues that may arise.

- Maintain a working list of the common issues and questions subgrantees have had during the count process and the responses your state has provided in the past.
- Determine which facilities have had issues/concerns in the past to proactively address them when providing them with TA.
- Provide T/TA on the following issues, as necessary and appropriate.

1. The relationship between counting and serving.

- Refer to the section on this relationship, on page 4 of the The Annual Count Toolkit: Determining Formula Counts for Title I, Part D Funding Allocations.
- Clarify that for a facility to be eligible for inclusion in the SA count, it does not matter whether an SA has subcontracted with another entity to provide education services at a facility or if the facility itself provides direct services to children and youth.
- Clarify that to have an accurate local educational agency count, states ideally want to report (although not required) the number of eligible children in locally operated delinquent institutions

for all LEAs within the state even if the LEA ultimately does not receive funds under Title I, Part D, Subpart 2. States will then award subgrants to LEAs with high numbers or percentages of children who are delinquent, in accordance with [Title I, Part D, Statute Section 1422](#).

- Explain that, although the LEA count involves counting students who are both neglected and delinquent, counting students who are delinquent will not affect their Title I, Part A count or funding.
- Explain that LEAs that submit a count for a facility do not necessarily have to serve that facility, depending on how the SEA awards funds and on the LEA’s application (see [section N](#) and [section O](#) of ED’s Nonregulatory Guidance).

2. Identifying and counting all students in all eligible facilities.

- **Recommend that SEAs identify and count all students in all eligible facilities. This can be challenging if facilities close, open, or reorganize without notice. Some suggestions for identifying eligible facilities are to:**
 - **Review and verify the current list of eligible facilities.** SEAs should keep a list of the most recent count-eligible and funded facilities from the previous year. Using the list, monitor openings, closings, or other changes at those facilities.
 - **Investigate other potential facilities to count.** Even if SEAs have kept their lists of eligible facilities current, there is still a possibility that not all eligible facilities are identified. Consider contacting state licensing boards for information about other facilities that meet the eligibility criteria and local community agencies and foundations that serve children and youth who are neglected, delinquent, or at-risk. If it is difficult to get lists of institutions with licenses from other state agencies, SEAs can confirm the current list with subgrantees to ensure that subgrantees work with all eligible facilities to submit their counts.

3. Confirming the count eligibility of different facility types.

- Explain that, although [Title I, Part D Statute Section 1432](#) of the ESEA statute lists **overarching eligible facility types**, some facilities do not fall neatly within the types of facilities defined or they use different terminology. To confirm facility eligibility for counting for a facility type that is not identified in the statute, consider requesting that subgrantees and facilities submit (to the SEA) relevant facility information with the Annual Count survey. For example, request the (1) charter or mission statement, (2) information about the type of children and youth typically served, (3) the category under which the facility was counted in previous year(s), and (4) whether the facility’s regular program of instruction is funded with state, local, or private funding.
- Clarify that, if a **group home** fits the definition of an eligible institution – per [Title I, Part D, Statute Section 1432](#), then eligible students who reside there can be counted. Please note that children and youth who reside in neglect institutions cannot be counted under the delinquent count (for Part D, Subpart 2). If students and the facility meet the criteria for being reported under the neglect count (for Part A funding purposes), then the students can be counted there.
- Explain that students in **religiously affiliated local facilities** can be counted under the Subpart 2 delinquent count if the facility is designated as a delinquent institution. Private facilities are eligible under the definition of “delinquent institution,” as defined in Section 1432 of [Title I, Part D Statute Section 1432](#). No exceptions are made for faith-based institutions.
- Explain that, for the LEA count, a **county jail** may be considered a juvenile detention center (JDC) and is eligible to submit a count through the LEA in which it is located. In some states, however, the SA has direct oversight of all JDCs, in which case, the count would go through the SA (under Subpart 1) instead.

- Explain that, for the LEA count, a facility should be counted by the LEA in which the facility’s **attendance zone** lies. For instance, if a regional facility is in the attendance zone of the county LEA, the county LEA should count the eligible students who reside in this facility.

4. **Communicating the purpose and importance of the count with reluctant LEAs and facilities.**

- Explain that, while LEAs are not required to count, accurate counts help ensure that the state and LEA receive resources that are sufficient to serve students who are neglected, delinquent, or at-risk.
- Explain that submitting a count does not mean that a program is required to apply for or receive Part D funding. However, any LEA/SEA submitting a neglect count must ensure that children and youth who are neglected receive comparable services through a Title I, Part A reservation.
- Request that LEAs include annual count requirements as a condition for receiving the funds in their formal agreements.³

5. **Designating LEA facilities as either neglect or delinquent**

- Inform SAs, LEAs, and facilities that the way a facility is categorized should be consistent from year to year. Changing a facility’s category from year to year may affect the Title I, Part D, Subpart 2 allocations and the allocations and LEA eligibility under the Title I, Part A formulas. For accuracy and consistency, ED strongly recommends that a facility not change its N or D designation unless there has been an official change in its charter (purpose for operating).⁴ ED expects that changing the status of local institutions is rare. Changes in the classification of institutions as either neglect or delinquent institution will significantly affect the Title I, Part A allocations to LEAs and the amount made available for Title I, Subpart 2 purposes. Thus, ED recommends keeping funding streams consistent.
- Explain that if a facility has not previously participated in the count and does not have a charter available (or it is unclear how to designate it on the basis of its license), then the designation should reflect the majority of children and youth served (see [Nonregulatory Guidance, Section K-2](#)). For example, a facility should designate itself as delinquent if a greater percentage of students residing in that facility during the past year were delinquent; the same would hold true for a “neglect” designation.
- Acknowledge that there are several valid reasons for a change to the child count from one year to the next. Examples include the opening or closing of eligible facilities or a clarification of the count procedure. However, individual facilities should not be reclassified (from neglect to delinquent or vice versa) from one year to the next without a valid reason.

³ Every locally operated correctional facility is required to have a formal agreement with its LEA, but other types of facilities (e.g., neglect facilities) are not required to have formal agreements. It is good practice for subgrantees to have formal agreements with all their facilities. For more information see Tool 4: Formal Agreement Resources ([Title I, Part D Program Administration Planning Toolkit](#))

⁴ ED compares count data from current and previous years. If there is a large increase or decrease in the student count from the previous year, then the SEA should indicate the reason when it submits the survey. It is not necessary to provide additional documentation with the submission. However, ED may contact States for more information during the verification process; so it is important to understand the reason for the change and to have related records available. Also, see “Guidance for Identifying Eligible Institutions and Counting Children” ([Eligible Institutions and Child Count](#)).

6. Understanding how to identify which eligible students to count in eligible facilities.

- Explain that, even if a child or youth is released from a facility soon after the intake process and even if he or she hasn't resided in the facility for a full night because of early release, as long as the intake process was completed, a child or youth may be counted on the basis of his or her intake completion, since there was an intention to admit or enroll the child.

SA Count

- State that students in facilities run by an SA (under Subpart 1) may not be counted if they have earned their **high school diplomas**, even if they meet the age criterion, because they have already passed Grade 12 and would no longer be enrolled in a regular program of instruction (see ED's Instructions for Identifying Eligible Institutions and Counting Children).
- Explain that students who have already earned their **GEDs** who are in facilities run by an SA (under Subpart 1) may be counted if they meet the criteria for eligible students, including being under 21 years of age and enrolled in a regular program of instruction; in some states students who have received GEDs can still work toward obtaining their high school diploma and thus still be enrolled in a regular program of instruction.
- Clarify that all students, including those who are not N or D, can be counted if they are enrolled in a **community day program** at a state-run facility. Section 1432 ([Title I, Part D Statute Section 1432](#)) of the ESEA defines community day program as a regular program of instruction provided by an SA at a community day school operated specifically for children and youth who are N or D. If the community day school is specifically established to serve children and youth who are N or D, for example, as documented by its charter, then the children and youth in this program or school may and should be included, provided they are enrolled for the required hours per week in a regular program of instruction.
- Explain that students enrolled in a **community day program** at an SA-run facility who do not reside in this *facility* may be counted as long as the average length of stay (i.e., enrollment) for the community day program is at least 30 days and the other eligibility criteria are met; students need not reside in the community day program to be counted.

LEA Count

- Explain that students with a **high school diploma** can be counted under Subpart 2 if the student is 5 to 17 years old (inclusive) and meets the eligibility criteria outlined in ED's instructions (see also [Nonregulatory Guidance, Section K](#)). The regular program of instruction requirements do not apply in Subpart 2.
- Explain that students who have already obtained their GEDs can be counted under Subpart 2 if these students are 5 to 17 (inclusive) years of age and meet the eligibility criteria outlined in ED's instructions (see also [Nonregulatory Guidance, Section K](#)).
- Clarify that, **although students who are homeless** should be identified or eligible for services through Title VII, Subtitle B, of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, they are not eligible to be counted under Subpart 2 as students must live in a locally operated facility that meets the definition of an institution for delinquent children and youth or an adult correctional institution as provided in Section 1432(1) or (4)(B) ([Title I, Part D Statute, Section 1432](#)) of the ESEA.
- Ensure that students who attend but do not reside at **community day schools** are not included in the local educational agency count. The count only includes youth who reside in local institutions. However, once funding is determined, community day school students can be served by the LEA with a Subpart 2 grant.

- Clarify that an SEA can include in the count **children and youth who are from out-of-state** and reside in locally operated institutions, since the count is based on the October caseload count of any children and youth who reside in the facility, regardless of their state of origin.
- Explain that the caseload count refers to unique committals and not to each physical entry of the youth. For example, if a child or youth is enrolled in an eligible institution during the 30-day count window but runs away and then returns on the same committal, the LEA cannot count the student again. For a youth to be counted twice, he or she would have to have gone through a formal exit process, followed by a subsequent formal entry process.

Step 3 – Verify and Submit Counts to ED.

SEAs should verify the completeness and accuracy of counts and submit counts and related calculations to ED in January of each year. SEAs can submit counts to ED before the submission deadline, if available.

3A. Review submitted counts.

- Compare counts submitted by the SAs and LEAs with counts received the previous year. Since ED uses a 25 percent change when cross-checking current data against the previous year’s data, SEAs can determine the percent of change from the previous year’s data before submitting counts to ED. If the change is greater than 25 percent, states should identify the fluctuation and, if need be, contact subgrantees or facilities to get more information about the discrepancies in their counts.
- Ensure that facilities are designated appropriately by checking facility charters or program descriptions.
- Verify that students were counted appropriately by checking their ages and entry and exit dates.
- Confirm that all eligible facilities submitted counts, as possible. Are new facilities included? Were students of closed facilities captured in counts from other facilities?

3B. Submit counts to ED.

- Complete ED Form 4376 ([Annual Count Reporting Form 4376](#)). Note: For the SA count, counts can be entered as fractions (e.g., 122.2), or rounded to the nearest whole number. If an SEA chooses to round the value, it should follow the usual rules for rounding (e.g., up from 0.5).
- Prepare an explanation if any counts are significantly different from the previous year.
- Send a signed original of the certification page of ED Form 4376 ([Annual Count Reporting Form 4376](#)), any explanations for notable changes/issues, and other requested information to ED.

Tool 3: Annual Count Timeline Template

Purpose of this Tool

This tool offers a checklist and timeline template for states to use to ensure that the Annual Count data is submitted on or before the submission deadline established by the U.S. Department of Education (ED).

How to use this Tool

This table can serve as a template to cut or expand, as appropriate, to ensure that all count processes are completed in an efficient manner and to ensure that counts are submitted to ED on time.

- Insert deadlines and date ranges for each step in the timeline column.
- Including detailed status notes to track the progress of each step.