

# Compliance is the Floor.

## Student Outcomes Are the Goal.

The Michigan Department of Education Office of Special Education’s (MDE-OSE) work on behalf of students with disabilities goes far beyond federal mandates. We are **partners** — working alongside intermediate school districts (ISDs) and districts to ensure every child with a disability can access, participate in, and make progress in a meaningful education. Compliance is not the destination; it is the minimum expectation. Our actual purpose goes well beyond this and is focused on ensuring students are not denied access or discriminated against because of their disability, so all learners can achieve results that lead to successful post-school outcomes.

### Michigan Department of Education Office of Special Education

Michigan is currently rated “Needs Assistance” by the federal government, meaning the state’s districts are not yet consistently meeting the minimum requirements of the *Individual’s with Disabilities Education Act* (IDEA). When a district falls short of meeting the requirements of IDEA, **a real child is being denied something they are legally and morally entitled to**. Correcting identified noncompliance is not punitive—it is OSE fulfilling its legal and moral responsibility to students with disabilities who cannot wait.

#### Why Compliance Matters

##### Protecting every child’s right

IDEA establishes non-negotiable protections to ensure individuals with disabilities are entitled to not just access to school – but to **meaningful, equitable education with dignity, inclusion, and legal protections**. These protections are not bureaucratic check boxes—they are the legal guarantee that a child with a disability cannot be denied access or discriminated against.

**OSE’s oversight role exists to ensure that right—for every student, in every district.**

#### The Work Beyond Compliance

##### FAPE in LRE: intent, not just paperwork

OSE’s renewed focus on Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) is not a compliance initiative. It is the state engaging districts in a deeper question: Are we genuinely serving this child? Placement in the right environment, with the right supports, is the student outcome we are working toward—together.

**LRE is not a setting. It’s a commitment to educating students with disabilities alongside their peers to the maximum extent appropriate.**

## What MDE OSE Provides to Support Districts and Students

- Family voice and access — Michigan Alliance for Families**  
 Information and resources designed to enable parents to meaningfully participate in education-related activities for their child. Informed families are a student’s best advocate.
- Conflict resolution — Special Education Mediation Services**  
 Free mediation services help families and districts reach constructive resolutions to disagreements—reducing adversarial outcomes for everyone, especially students.
- Due process and state complaints**  
 When systemic or individual disputes arise, OSE ensures impartial investigation and, when necessary, corrective action—not to penalize districts, but to help them improve while protecting students’ rights.
- Fiscal resources for districts**  
 IDEA flowthrough and General Supervision System grants to ISDs, tuition reimbursement for appropriately certified special education personnel, including school social workers—maximizing the resources available to serve students.
- Early childhood support — Build Up MI**  
 Serves 3–5-year-olds, because the earlier we engage children with disabilities in appropriate supports, the better the outcomes throughout their educational careers.
- Statewide technical assistance and professional learning**  
 Evidence-based practice support via documents, webinars, virtual meetings, in-person convenings, and grant-funded initiatives, and other types of programs and services available to districts.

MiMTSS TA Center	Alt+Shift	START
Resource for Blind/Low Vision	Resource for Deaf/Hard of Hearing	Michigan Alliance for Families
Michigan School for the Deaf	Indigenous Education Initiative	

### MDE OSE Information Line

Questions about special education? Contact us Monday-Friday, 9:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m. at 888-320-8384 (Toll free). Interpreter services are available. Or email us at [mde-ose@michigan.gov](mailto:mde-ose@michigan.gov).

### OSE is not watching ISDs and districts — we are working with them.

The MDE OSE compliance role exists because the federal government requires state education agencies to monitor districts and issue corrective action when students are denied their rights. But the reason we show up every day is simpler than that: **students with disabilities deserve access, opportunity, and a real education.** Every mediation service, every technical assistance visit, every grant dollar— is all in service of each child.