



# Why Access to IDEA Data Matters

## THE POWER OF ACCESSIBLE IDEA DATA

---

**Authors:** Renee Eckles-Hardy, Tony Ruggiero, Charlie Silva, Norah M. Sinclair, and Sarah Walters

**Issued:** March 2025

Access to education and early intervention services is a cornerstone of the **Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)**. When IDEA data is accessible, it helps families, educators, and advocates make informed decisions to support infants, toddlers, and students with disabilities.

### What It Means to Make Data Accessible?

When data is accessible, it can be used and understood by everyone, including people with:

- blindness,
- visual impairments,
- motor impairments,
- learning disabilities, and
- intellectual disabilities.

### How Inaccessible Data Creates Barriers:

- **People who are Blind** may use assistive technology, such as screen readers or refreshable braille displays, to access documents. Screen readers are applications that read text aloud and can convert text to braille output. Refreshable braille displays provide tactile access to digital information by electronically raising and lowering different combinations of pins in braille cells. When data, documents, and other information posted on websites are not accessible, individuals who use screen readers for audio output or braille output will not have access to the information.
- **People with Color Blindness or Low Vision** may have difficulty seeing low-contrast text or certain color combinations in charts and graphs.
- **People with Motor Disabilities** may use speech-to-text software, or alternative input devices such as switches, and may have limited tools to interact with the data.
- **People with Learning Disabilities**, such as Dyslexia, and **People with Intellectual Disabilities** may struggle to read complex reports with dense sections of text. These



individuals benefit from plain language summaries and audio versions of text that make the information easier to understand.

## Key Reasons Why IDEA Data Matters

When data is presented in accessible formats, it ensures that everyone can access, understand, and use this information effectively, regardless of their abilities. Ultimately, this empowers individuals with disabilities and their families to:

- **Be informed** – Gives families information so they can support their children’s education.
- **Ensure children get the help they need** – Tracks services like speech therapy, physical therapy, and classroom support.
- **Help improve programs** – Identifies gaps and areas where schools can do better.
- **Ensure access for all** – Makes sure all children with disabilities, no matter their background, get comparable access to education.

When IDEA data is not accessible, people with disabilities miss out on accessing and understanding the information needed to participate in informed decision-making and advocacy.

## Why All of This Matters?

Making IDEA data accessible means **everyone** — parents, educators, advocates, and others — can use it to support children with disabilities. By improving accessibility, IDEA data becomes a powerful tool. The **Weiss Center** helps states make IDEA data accessible so everyone, especially people with disabilities, can easily access and use it.

## Resources Provided by the Weiss Center

- **Accessible Data Analysis and Publishing Tool (ADAPT)** – A freely available, web-based tool for states to create and publish IDEA data reports in accessible formats.
- **Accessibility Maturity Roadmap** – A guide for state education and lead agencies to develop accessible Part C and Part B data systems. The roadmap offers flexibility, allowing agencies to prioritize components based on current needs, ensuring accessibility and quality across all stages of system development.
- **Training and Guides** – Webinars on IDEA data accessibility, accessibility guides for Microsoft applications, and accessibility best practice resources.
- **Technical Assistance** – Support for states to implement accessibility best practices to make IDEA data and related resources accessible.

For more information and resources, visit WeissTA.org at <https://www.weissta.org/>.