

MAINE DEPARTMENT
OF EDUCATION

Cohort 3 & Cohort 4 Informational Meeting August 14, 2025

Presented by:

Office of Special Services & Inclusive Education



Why?

Transition of child find and FAPE responsibilities to SAUs –

Why? Why now?

Structure of existing system has been problematic:

- CDS responsible, but doesn't operate or oversee preschool programming
- Requires significantly more admin and overhead costs, which drive up cost of serving the children
- Separate early childhood programs for children with disabilities, which contributes to high numbers of placements in special purpose private preschools and more restrictive placements
- OSEP



**EARLY
INTERVENTION
FOR ME**

A Brighter Start, Birth to Three

Legislation

LD 345: *An Act to Transition the Responsibility for Child Find Activities and for Ensuring a Free, Appropriate Public Education for Eligible Children from the Child Development Services to School Administrative Units*

LD 2214: *An Act to Make Supplemental Appropriations and Allocations for the Expenditures of State Government, General Fund and Other Funds and to Change Certain Provisions of the Law Necessary to the Proper Operations of State Government for the Fiscal Years Ending June 30, 2024 and June 30, 2025*

LD 2214 became Public Law 2023, Chapter 643, Part W



Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE)

- **Section 619 IDEA**
- **Special education provided to Preschool age children**
- ECSE services are designed to help children with disabilities participate in activities that are typically appropriate for their developmental stage. Children who qualify for ECSE may receive services in a variety of settings, including Pre-kindergarten classrooms, The home, and Community settings like Head Start and pre-school.
- Early Intervention Birth to 3 years of age – system of support for children with developmental delays





Elements of the law:

Transition of child find and FAPE responsibilities to SAUs

- Responsibility for child find and free, appropriate public education (FAPE) for 3-, 4- and 5-year-old pre-K students with IEPs will transition to school administrative units (SAU) by July 1, 2028.
- SAUs may provide services directly or may contract with public or private providers to support services; the SAUs may also access their CDS Regional Site or other regional supports to provide services.
- Maine DOE will review each SAU's readiness plan before the Commissioner of Education approves the SAU to assume the child find and FAPE responsibilities.



Elements of the law

Funding

- "The funding may not be appropriated or allocated through general purpose aid for local schools and must be provided at 100% state share."
- The Maine DOE will implement a funding formula to fully fund SAUs for the assumption of responsibility for child find activities and for ensuring FAPE for eligible children.
- Funding also includes high-cost in- and out-of-district costs, similar to what is in place for K-12 students.
- Additional grant funding is available to SAUs assuming these responsibilities fall, 2024 (ESSER ARP funding)
- \$4 million – Revolving Renovation Fund
- Continuing Pathways certification initiative (282B)

Elements of the law, cont.

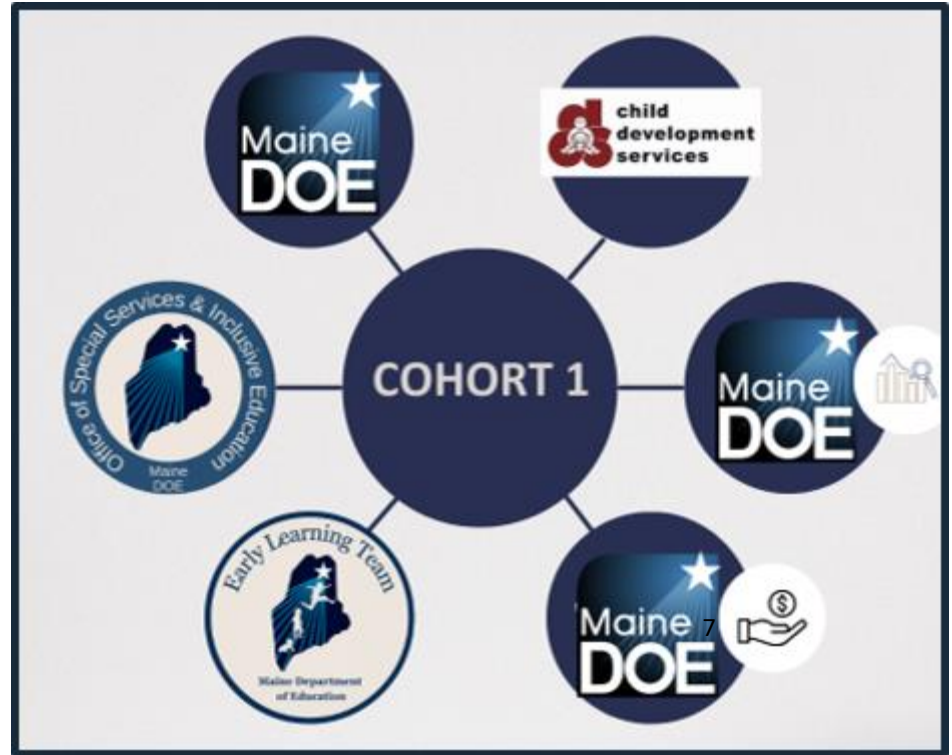
CDS

- Over the next 4 years, transition of CDS regional sites to regional support and service hubs aligned with the superintendent regions.
- The CDS System will have minimum service offerings and guiding principles for the regional support and service hubs
- Each CDS regional hub may appoint a parental advisory committee to seek input and feedback on the implementation of child find activities and provision of FAPE.
- The CDS System is responsible for due process and for paying 100% of the costs for compensatory services for children who have been underserved through the Child Development Services System.



Implementation Teams

- Commissioner's Office
- Data
- Fiscal
- OSSIE
- CDS Team members
- Early Learning
- Certification (HEES)
- School Facilities



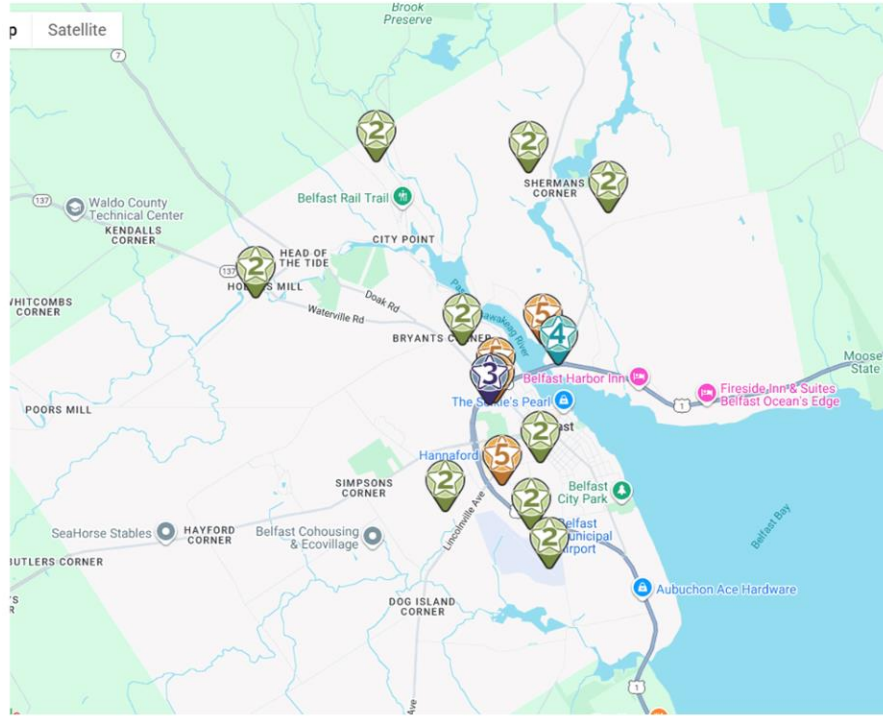
Initial Work

- Information gathering
 - Attend general information sessions
 - Individual meetings with DOE/CDS team
 - Learn about the students in your catchment area
 - Understand students' service needs
 - Learn about private providers
 - Learn about the funding
- Assemble local team
 - Superintendent
 - Special Education Director
 - Transition Lead
 - Business Manager



Initial Work

child care programs found.



- [Pre-K Program Self-Assessment Tool](#)
- Space capacity/needs
- Staffing capacity/needs
- Identify potential community partners
- Childcare Choices in ME: [Child Care Choices for Maine](#)
- Preschool consultation
- [Early Childhood Special Education website](#)
- Early Childhood Special Education Coordinators



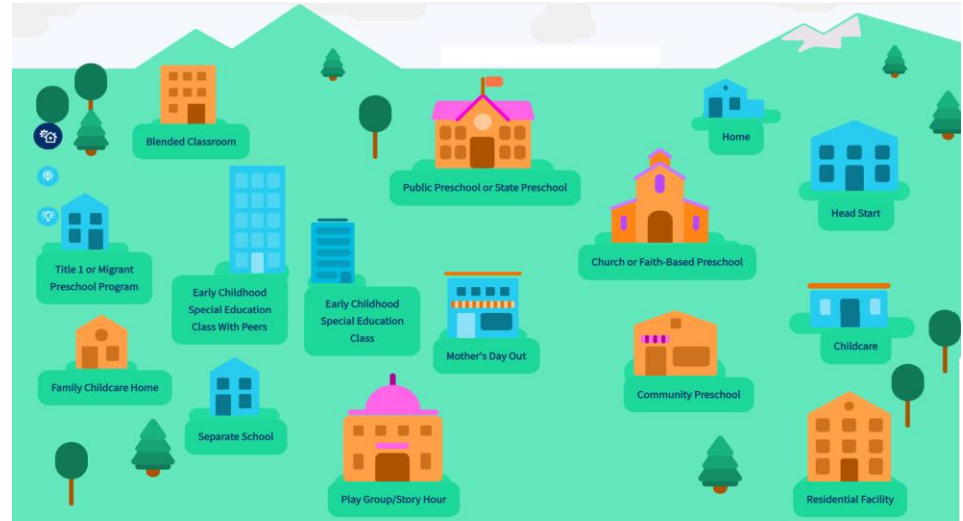
Fiscal Information

- Per pupil allocation for PK children with IEP
 - SAU's unique EPS rate + special ed additional weight
 - Additional allocation for children in Child Find process
- Not a reimbursement model
- July 1 - First allocation count date
- Oct 1 – Second allocation count date
 - "True count" - Funding can go up or down
 - This is the only qtr. that funding *could* go down.
- Fully funded
 - Allocation can be reviewed and adjusted

Community Partnerships and FAPE in a Mixed Delivery System

Effective Partnerships:

- Common goals and understandings
- Mutual benefit
- Dialogue and collaboration
- Clear language





Serving ECSE students – District Boundary

SAU's **are** responsible for ECSE for children who reside within their SAU boundary.

- Attend the SAU Pre-K programs
- Attend a collaborative program in the SAU community

SAU's **are not** responsible for ECSE when children

- Attend a program out of state
- Attend a program out of the SAU boundary *and* there is programming available in the SAU.



Serving ECSE Students – District Boundary, cont.

For SAU's that do not have programming/ space within their Pre-K programs nor any collaborative programs in the SAU community, the resident SAU would do one of the following options:

- Superintendent's agreement with the SAU where student is in a program
- Develop partnerships with the childcare/ preschool program where the child attends
- Provide telehealth in the childcare/preschool program where the child attends
- Offer that the child participate in drop-in services already provided in the SAU
- If the IEP agrees, the child can access services at the service provider location
- Or another solution that is specific to your area

Child Care Providers as Essential Partners in Child Find and FAPE

Child Find during the transition:

- The CDS referral number and online form remain in place.
- The referral destination is based on where the child resides.
 - Cohort 1 & Cohort 2 SAUs are accepting referrals

What can childcare programs continue to do?

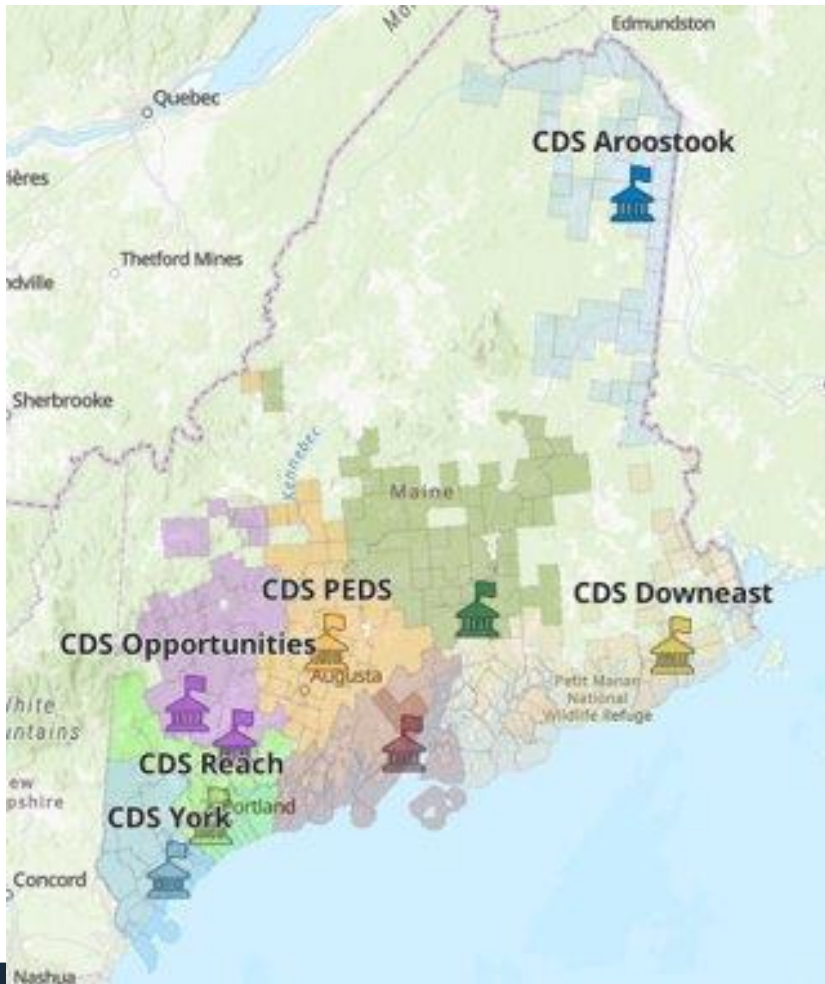
- Monitor developmental milestones and behaviors in daily care. Share insights to inform IEP development.
- Document and discuss concerns with families.
- Collaborate with CDS and SAUs to make timely referrals and support evaluations.
- Be an active participant in transition planning meetings with CDS, SAUs, and families.
- Coordinate with service providers who may now be employed by the SAU.



CDS Site Realignment

[Click Here to See the Map](#)

[PRIORITY NOTICE: Restructured CDS Regional Site Boundaries](#)



CDS Service and Support Hubs

- CDS Sites continue to provide services to children in their regions.
- MOUs are developed with each Cohort SAU.
 - Detail Service and Supports
 - Monthly meeting
 - Individualized for each SAU
- Service and Support Hub
 - Preschool Programming
 - Related Services
 - Itinerant 282B services
 - Case Management
 - Professional Development



Cohort 1

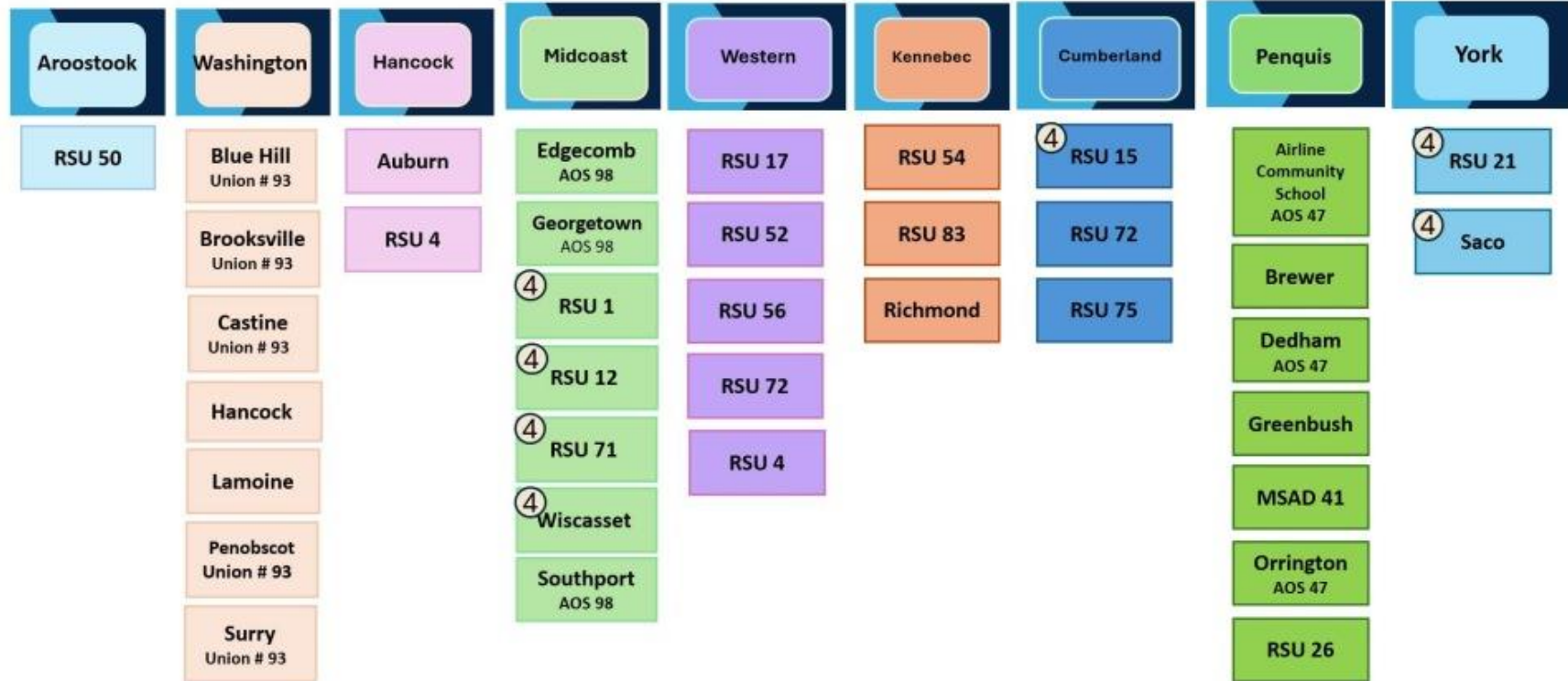


Preschool Cohort I

CDS Aroostook	CDS Downeast	CDS Midcoast	CDS Opportunities	CDS Two Rivers	CDS York
RSU 29	Calais	AOS 98 Boothbay, Boothbay Harbor	Andover Schools	MSAD 4 RSU 80	Kittery School Department
	School Union #103 Jonesport, Beals	AOS 93 Great Salt Bay		RSU 68	York
		RSU 13		SAD 12	RSU 35
		St. George		Veazie School Department	
				RSU 19	



Cohort 2 2025-2026



Feedback from Cohort 1 SAU's

1. Readiness and commitment

- Happy to have "just done it"
- Good to see the numbers of children get needed services

2. Support and collaboration

- Regular meetings with CDS and DOE staff allowed for tailored support
- Having a dedicated coordinator, sometimes shared between SAUs, was a key factor in success.
- The partnership with another SAU fostered collaboration across the region.

3. Building systems and capacity

- The transition sparked important conversations across different departments within schools.
- SAUs valued the ability to reach out to CDS Service Hubs for resources and guidance when needed.

Lessons Applied to Cohort 2

Cohort 1 Feedback

- Begin implementation on the first day of school to ensure alignment with district operations
- Provide funding earlier to help SAUs hire staff in advance of the transition
- Provide clear guidance on the transition out of Early Intervention into Early Childhood Special Education
- Support CDS and SAUs regarding registering children and engaging with families early in the process
- Consider allowing SAUs the option to assume FAPE for four-year-olds only in their first year of implementation

Lessons Applied to Cohort 2, cont.

Cohort 2 Application


- Date of assumption of FAPE obligation is on SAU's first student day of school
- Cohort 2 SAUs can ask for a portion of their 1st quarter allocation in April to pay staff involved in the transition in the spring and summer before the start of the school year
- Technical assistance provided to SAUs starting in March
- Beginning with Cohort 2, SAUs can have a 2-year transition, starting with 4-year-old students in year one and assuming the FAPE obligation for 3-year-olds in year two

More Lessons Applied to Cohort 2

Technical Assistance Topics

- Part C to Part B transition and the role of the SAU
- Enrollment in SAU for all children, regardless of their placements
 - Technical assistance
 - Best practices for engaging families during the transition
- Reporting responsibilities
 - Child outcome survey
 - Quarterly financials



A young boy with light brown hair is running towards the camera with a wide, joyful smile. He is wearing a brown, white, and red striped sweater. The background is a blurred outdoor setting, likely a park or schoolyard, with green trees and a wooden fence. The overall scene is bright and cheerful.

What's Next?

Outreach and supporting readiness for SAUs in
Cohorts 3 and 4



Questions?



Contact information:
Megan.welter@maine.gov
Erin.Frazier@maine.gov
J.sandy.flacke@maine.gov

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