
RSU 5 Early Childhood Programming Response

— Early Childhood Special
Education —

Purpose

This presentation is intended to briefly define what is required, outline options to meet those requirements, and offer preliminary information about funding options involved in assuming the responsibility to identify and serve 3-5 yo students with special needs in 2028 from Child Development Services (CDS).

RSU 5 Current Numbers | Met Need | Unmet Need

	Currently Served through RSU5	Served through CDS	Currently not served
4 yo	12	14	2
3 yo	0	2	5

Source: Maine Child Development Information Systems (CINC) as of September 23, 2025

Mandate: July 1, 2028

On July 1, 2028 RSU 5 will be responsible to identify and to provide Special Education services to young learners 3 - 5 years of age.

“Responsibility for Part B [Special Education for Students aged 3-5 yo], Section 619. Until June 30, 2028, the commissioner shall designate responsibility for child find activities and for ensuring a free, appropriate public education for children eligible under Part B, Section 619 to the Child Development Services System or to school administrative units in accordance with the transition schedule [“Cohorts”] and supports [Funding and Technical Assistance] under section 7209-A. **Beginning July 1, 2028, the commissioner shall designate responsibility for child find activities and for ensuring a free, appropriate public education for children eligible under Part B [Special Education for Students aged 3-5 yo], Section 619 to school administrative units.**”

(Sec. W-11. 20-A MRSA §7006)

Maine DOE has recently renamed “Part B” [Special Education for Students aged 3-5 yo] to “Early Childhood Special Education”

RSU 5 Options on Path to meeting 3-5 year old mandate

Now	2026 - 2027	2027 - 2028	2028 - 2029
Currently 8 General Education half day classes serving 4- 5 yo across RSU 5's 3 community schools Special Education services provided to enrolled 4-5 yo students through CDS contracts No 3yo Special Education Services	Option A - Cohort III 3 - 5 Year Old Students Option B - Cohort III 4 - 5 Year Old Students Option C - Cohort III Steps toward readiness	Option A - Cohort IV 3-5 Year Old Students Option B Steps toward readiness	RSU 5 Assumes Responsibility (3-5yo)

2026 - 2027

2026-2027 Option A: Cohort III with MDOE (3-5yo)

MDOE and RSU 5 partnership to identify and serve 3 -5 year old students residing within RSU 5 district limits.

Efforts moving forward are based on a clear understanding of what the Early Intervention team at RSU 5 has accomplished and continues to deliver.

MDOE provides 100% financial, technical, and service support as RSU 5 undertakes full responsibility to identify and provide special education services.

2026-2027 Option B: Cohort III with MODE (4-5yo)

MDOE and RSU 5 partnership to identify and serve 4 -5 year old students residing within RSU 5 district limits.

Efforts moving forward are based on a clear understanding of what the Early Intervention team at RSU 5 has accomplished and continues to deliver.

MDOE provides 100% financial, technical, and service support as RSU 5 undertakes full responsibility to identify and provide special education services.

2026-2027 Option C: RSU 5 Funded Growth (*3-5yo)

RSU 5 funds Early Childhood Special Education work as it grows to include additional programming and scope of services.

Growth based on the Early Intervention team at RSU 5 has accomplished and continues to deliver.

2027 - 2028

2027-2028 Option A: Cohort IV with MDOE (3-5yo)

MDOE and RSU 5 partnership to identify and serve 3 -5 year old students residing within RSU 5 district limits.

Efforts moving are based on a clear understanding of what the Early Intervention team at RSU 5 has accomplished and continues to deliver.

MDOE provides 100% financial, technical, and service support as RSU 5 undertakes full responsibility to identify and provide special education services.

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2027-2028 Option B: RSU 5 Funded Growth (*3-5yo)

RSU 5 funds Early Childhood Special Education work as it grows to include additional programming and scope of services.

Growth based on a clear understanding of what the Early Intervention team at RSU 5 has accomplished and continues to deliver.

MDOE provides 100% financial, technical, and service support as RSU 5 undertakes full responsibility to identify and provide special education services.

2028 - 2029

2028-2029 Mandate: RSU 5 Assumes Responsibility (*3-5yo)

RSU 5 funds Early Childhood Special Education work as it grows to include additional programming and scope of services.

Growth based on a clear understanding of what the Early Intervention team at RSU 5 has accomplished and continues to deliver.

MDOE provides K-12 levels of financial, technical, and service support as RSU 5 undertakes full responsibility to identify and provide special education services.

Legal Reference: Sec. W-19. 20-A MRSA §7303; Sec. W-20. 20-A MRSA §7304

What does this mean?

All Maine districts are mandated to identify students with disabilities (Child Find) and provide Free and Appropriate Education extended to 3 - 5 year olds **by July 2028**

Min - Max Service Requirements

	Gen Ed (3-5yo)	SpEd
2026-2027	3yo 6 hours per week 4yo-5yo 9 hours per week	3yo - 5yo IEP dependent
2027-2028	3yo 6 hours per week 4yo-5yo 9 hours per week	3yo - 5yo IEP dependent
2028-2029	3yo 6 hours per week 4yo-5yo 9 hours per week	3yo - 5yo IEP dependent

When Joining A Cohort...

RSU 5 assumes:

- 1.) Responsibility to provide or contract to provide all services determined in IEPs for students selected to serve: all 3-5 yo or solely 4-5 yo for the coming year.
- 2.) Legally responsible for any complaints brought forth specific to the a lack of service provision.
- 3.) Freedom to design, implement, and maintain a plan to meet the mandate while receiving the support: subsidizes a budget over two years @100% of actual cost based on an allocation model.

In Closing

- RSU 5 holds this obligation come July 2028
- At this time, we have options for stepping into compliance
- Special funding is available now to support materials and equipment - will not be replenished - further incentivizing joining sooner rather than later
- The earlier, the better for student growth
- Spend now, pay less later
- Staffing challenges, hire now before the pool is depleted

Definitions

Child Find - All Maine districts are mandated to identify students with disabilities (Child Find) Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) - Provision of Free and Appropriate Education (access through Special Education to General Education)

Office of Special Services and Inclusion Education (OSSIE) The Office of Special Services and Inclusive Education is oversees the provision of a free, appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment for children with disabilities (ages 3 to 22) as well as early intervention services to infants and toddlers (birth through age 2).

Child Development Services

- Early Intervention, CDS Part C serves children birth to 2 years of age
- Early Childhood Special Education, CDS Part B serves children 3 -5 years of age

Individual Education Plan (IEP) written, legally binding plan for a student with a disability who qualifies for special education services, outlining their current performance levels, annual academic and functional goals, and the specific special education, related services, and supports they will receive to ensure they make progress in the general curriculum.

Essential Programs and Services (EPS)

[Maine] Child Development Information Systems (CINC) Database System utilized by Maine CDC to track Child Development Needs

Planning Team

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