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¿Quién publicará las cifras? Los datos de educación para sordos después del acuerdo del Departamento de Educación con el HHS

Heather Grizzle · October 8, 2026

El acuerdo entre ED y HHS sobre educación especial abarca el trabajo relacionado con los datos de Gallaudet, NTID e IDEA, pero nunca especifica quién se encargará de seguir publicando los archivos de la Sección 618.

Contenidos

1. Qué cambió en junio
2. La parte de la lista que los lectores Sordos no deberían saltarse
3. Donde los datos guardan silencio
4. Qué se ha sabido desde entonces
5. Por qué la educación de personas sordas lo siente primero
6. Qué debería quedar por escrito
7. Fuentes

The agreement that moved special education's daily work to HHS also covers Gallaudet, NTID and the Helen Keller National Center, and it never says who will keep publishing the numbers

EN RESUMEN

- On June 15, 2026, the Education Department and HHS signed an agreement under which HHS provides services to run IDEA's grant programs, monitoring, state performance determinations and data work.
- El mismo acuerdo abarca los programas de la Education of the Deaf Act, incluido NTID, junto con Gallaudet University, el Helen Keller National Center y el American Printing House for the Blind.
- It splits data between the two agencies, with the Education Department keeping "data collection" and HHS providing services to support "the collection, reporting, and analyzing of data." It never names the IDEA Section 618 data, the EDFacts system, or the Annual Report to Congress.
- Esos archivos federales son la única fuente que cuenta a los estudiantes sordos y con dificultades auditivas de la misma manera en todos los estados. Nadie ha dicho públicamente quién seguirá publicándolos.

Every state file in the National Deaf Education Data Index starts in the same place: a school district's own website, a state agency's own reports, and a federal spreadsheet. The first two vary wildly. Some states publish a careful count of deaf and hard of hearing students by district every fall; others publish nothing a parent could find. The federal spreadsheet is the constant. When NDEDI built its Nevada file in September, the clearest picture of where deaf and hard of hearing students actually learn came from that federal file: of 518 students aged 5 to 21 served under the hearing impairment category in 2024-25, 307 spent at least 80 percent of their day in a regular classroom, and none were reported in a separate school or residential setting. The state's own count could be checked against it. Without it, there would have been nothing to check against.

Esa hoja de cálculo forma parte de los datos de la Sección 618 de IDEA, los recuentos que cada estado informa al gobierno federal cada año sobre los niños a los que atiende bajo la Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, por categoría de discapacidad, edad, entorno y más. Los estados la presentan a través de un sistema federal llamado EDFacts. El Departamento de Educación la publica como archivos a nivel estatal en su plataforma de datos abiertos y la resume en un Informe Anual al Congreso. Para

quien intenta comparar cómo se educa a los niños sordos en Kansas y Kentucky, es la única fuente que cuenta a cada estado de la misma manera.

Qué cambió en junio

On June 15, 2026, the Education Department and the Department of Health and Human Services signed an interagency agreement on special education and rehabilitative services, announced the next day alongside a separate agreement moving civil rights enforcement to the Justice Department. The agreement is short, eight pages, and plain about what moves. Under section 3.A, HHS commits to provide services, "in coordination with and at the direction of ED-OSERS," supporting the administration of IDEA's grant programs under Parts B, C and D; enforcement, compliance and monitoring; the "annual performance determinations" that rate each state; fiscal audits; and "the collection, reporting, and analyzing of data for monitoring compliance with statutory and regulatory requirements and for improving outcomes for infants, toddlers, children, youth, and adults with disabilities."

The Education Department keeps statutory responsibility for IDEA. Under section 3.B, it retains "Management and leadership of OSERS' programs and activities," which the agreement says includes "but not limited to enforcement, compliance, monitoring, fiscal management and data collection," along with representation before its Data Governance Board, the Inspector General and the Government Accountability Office. The agreement took effect on the date of the last signature, has no end date, and can be terminated by either side on 90 days' written notice. The contact named for HHS sits in its Administration on Disabilities.

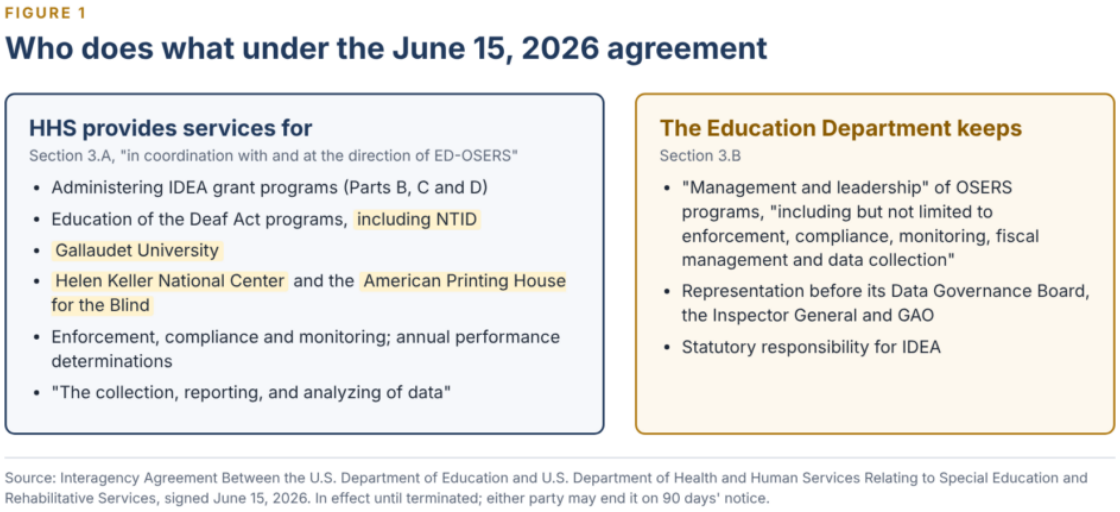


Figura 1. Quién hace qué bajo el acuerdo del 15 de junio de 2026. Los elementos destacados son los más cercanos a la educación de personas Sordas y sordociegas.

La parte de la lista que los lectores Sordos no deberían saltarse

Most coverage of the agreement has focused, reasonably, on IDEA and on what it means for students' individualized education programs. Further down the same list are four items that bear directly on Deaf and DeafBlind education. HHS will provide services supporting "the administration of program components authorized under the Education of the Deaf Act of 1986, including the National Technical Institute for the Deaf"; supporting "the administration of Gallaudet University," described in the agreement as "intended to provide education and training to individuals who are deaf and otherwise to further the education of individuals who are deaf"; supporting the Helen Keller National Center Act programs; and supporting the American Printing House for the Blind.

The agreement does not change what any of these institutions are, and it does not say what "services supporting the administration" of a university means in practice. It does mean that the federal relationship with the two national institutions of Deaf higher education, and with the national center for DeafBlind adults, now runs in part through a health department rather than an education department. In the coverage NCG reviewed, that has drawn far less attention than it deserves.

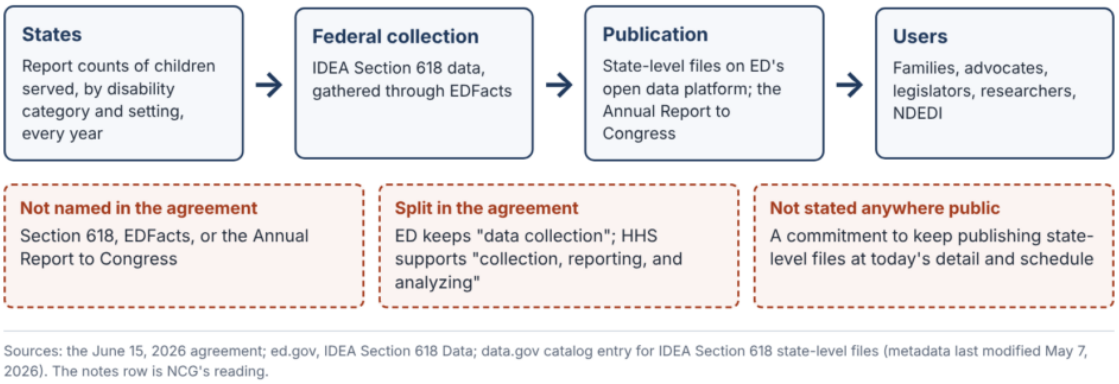
Donde los datos guardan silencio

Read closely, the agreement splits the data work between the two departments without saying how. The Education Department keeps "data collection" as part of its management and leadership. HHS provides "services to support the collection, reporting, and analyzing of data." Who designs the collection, who runs EDFacts, who checks the states' submissions, who publishes the state-level files, and who writes the Annual Report to Congress are not stated. The agreement never uses the words "Section 618," "EDFacts" or "Annual Report to Congress," and it contains no commitment to keep publishing the data at its current level of detail or on its current schedule.

Puede que así se redacten simplemente los acuerdos interinstitucionales. Describen servicios y financiación, no cada producto. Pero el vacío importa por lo que ocurrió antes del acuerdo. En octubre de 2025, durante el cierre del gobierno, avisos de reducción de personal se propagaron por el Departamento de Educación, y K-12 Dive informó que los líderes de asociaciones de educación especial creían que la mayor parte de la Office of Special Education Programs había sido despedida. En noviembre, una ley de financiación temporal restituyó provisionalmente al personal de la Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services. Siete meses después, el trabajo diario pasó a HHS. Un sistema de datos puede sobrevivir a mucho, pero sobrevive gracias a personas que lo conocen, y el registro público no indica dónde se encuentran ahora esas personas.

FIGURE 2

The chain that produces the national numbers, and where the agreement goes quiet



Sources: the June 15, 2026 agreement; ed.gov, IDEA Section 618 Data; data.gov catalog entry for IDEA Section 618 state-level files (metadata last modified May 7, 2026). The notes row is NCG's reading.

Figura 2. La cadena que produce las cifras nacionales, y dónde el acuerdo guarda silencio. La fila inferior es la interpretación de NCG.

Qué se ha sabido desde entonces

The record since June is mixed, not alarming. The Office of Special Education Programs held its annual conference in August, with sessions on "high-quality section 618 data." Its September 9 bulletin announced that the 47th Annual Report to Congress on IDEA had been released, with a companion fact sheet, and a panel at the conference said IDEA rights "cannot and will not change through our partnership." The federal catalog entry for the state-level 618 files was last updated on May 7, 2026, before the agreement was signed. Nothing NCG located says the next files will be late, or thinner, or published somewhere else. Nothing says they won't be, either. And K-12 Dive's reading of the agreement in June found that states and districts were still asking which HHS office would oversee the work and who would send them guidance.

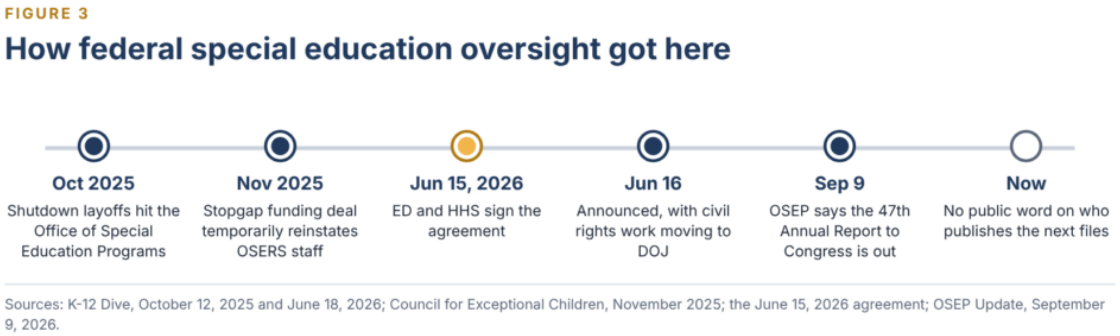


Figura 3. Cómo llegó hasta aquí la supervisión federal de la educación especial.

Por qué la educación de personas sordas lo siente primero

Cada categoría de discapacidad depende de estos archivos, pero la educación de personas sordas depende de ellos de una manera particular. Los estudiantes sordos y con dificultades auditivas son una población de baja incidencia, una pequeña proporción de niños dispersos por muchos distritos, que es exactamente la población que los informes estatales y distritales tienden a omitir. Los recuentos pequeños se suprimen por privacidad. Los distritos que atienden a dos estudiantes sordos a través de una cooperativa o un programa regional a menudo no publican nada en absoluto. En ese panorama, el archivo federal es con frecuencia el único lugar donde existe una cifra a nivel estatal, y el único lugar donde se puede comparar un estado con otro. Si los datos de la 618 se deterioran, los estudiantes con más probabilidades de desaparecer del registro público son precisamente los que ya eran más difíciles de ver.

Qué debería quedar por escrito

Nada de esto requiere suponer mala fe por parte de nadie. Requiere unas pocas frases que el acuerdo no contiene. El Departamento de Educación y HHS podrían resolver la cuestión públicamente declarando:

- That the IDEA Section 618 collection through EDFacts will continue on its existing schedule, at its existing level of detail, including disability category by state.
- Which department, and which office, publishes the state-level files and the Annual Report to Congress from now on, and where.
- That historical files will stay available at their current addresses.

- Who to contact with questions about the data, now that the HHS contact for the agreement sits in the Administration on Disabilities.

Families, state special education directors, state deaf commissions and legislators can ask for exactly that, in writing, through the Education Department's Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services. NDEDI's state files cite the federal data by school year and source, so any change in what is published will show up in the record rather than disappearing into it. NDEDI's state release schedule is at ndedi.org.

Fuentes

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- U.S. Department of Education, OSEP Update, September 2026, September 9, 2026.
- U.S. Department of Education, IDEA Section 618 Data, page last reviewed April 2, 2026.
- Data.gov, IDEA Section 618 State Level Data Files, metadata last modified May 7, 2026, retrieved October 8, 2026.
- National Deaf Education Data Index, Nevada state file, September 2026, using the IDEA Section 618 Part B educational environments file for 2024-25.

TIPS

Know something about a sign language AI system that the public should know? Send it to tips@novaracg.com. Every tip is read by me and kept confidential. If you work in the UK, writing to us is not by itself a protected disclosure under the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998, so before you share employer information, check your options with Protect (protect-advice.org.uk), the free whistleblowing advice line.

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