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Chi pubblicherà i numeri? I dati sull'istruzione per Sordi dopo l'accordo del Dipartimento dell'Istruzione con l'HHS

Heather Grizzle · October 8, 2026

L'accordo tra ED-HHS per l'istruzione speciale copre il lavoro sui dati di Gallaudet, NTID e IDEA, ma non specifica mai chi continuerà a pubblicare i file della Sezione 618.

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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

IN BREVE

- 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.
- Lo stesso accordo copre i programmi dell'Education of the Deaf Act, incluso l'NTID, insieme a Gallaudet University, il Helen Keller National Center e l'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.
- Quei file federali sono l'unica fonte che conta gli studenti Deaf e con difficoltà uditive allo stesso modo in ogni stato. Nessuno ha dichiarato pubblicamente chi continuerà a pubblicarli.

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.

Quel foglio di calcolo fa parte dei dati della Sezione 618 dell'IDEA, i conteggi che ogni stato riporta ogni anno al governo federale sui bambini che segue ai sensi dell'Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, per categoria di disabilità, età, contesto e altro. Gli stati lo inviano tramite un sistema federale chiamato EDFacts. Il Dipartimento dell'Istruzione lo pubblica come file a livello statale sulla sua piattaforma di dati aperti e lo riassume in una Relazione Annuale al Congresso. Per chiunque voglia confrontare

come vengono istruiti i bambini Deaf in Kansas e in Kentucky, è l'unica fonte che conta ogni stato allo stesso modo.

Cosa è cambiato a giugno

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.

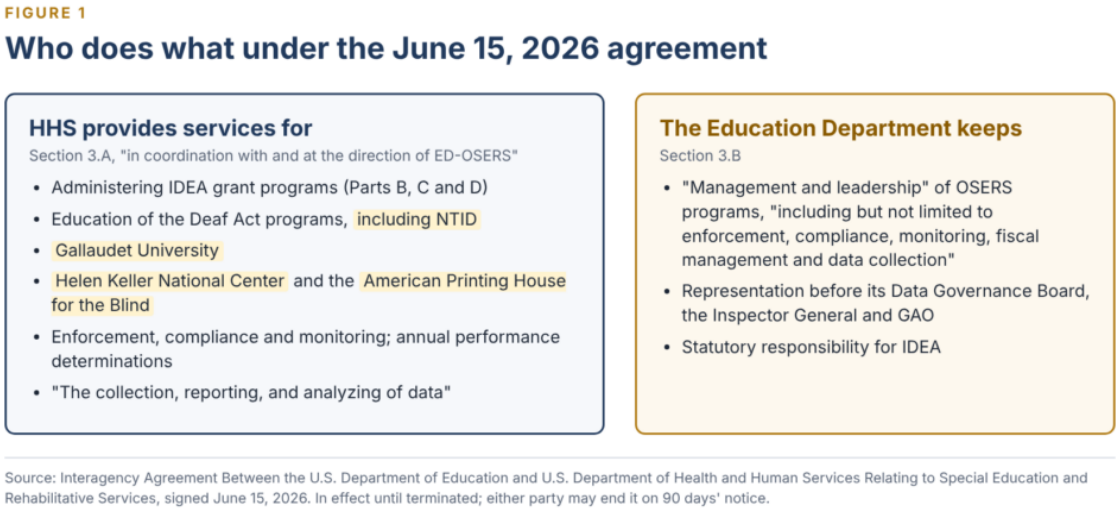

Figura 1. Chi fa cosa secondo l'accordo del 15 giugno 2026. Gli elementi evidenziati sono quelli più direttamente legati all'istruzione Deaf e DeafBlind.

La parte dell'elenco che i lettori Deaf non dovrebbero saltare

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.

Dove i dati tacciono

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.

Potrebbe semplicemente essere così che vengono redatti gli accordi interagenzia. Descrivono servizi e finanziamenti, non ogni singolo prodotto. Ma la lacuna conta per ciò che è accaduto prima dell'accordo. Nell'ottobre 2025, durante la chiusura del governo, le notifiche di riduzione del personale hanno travolto il Dipartimento dell'Istruzione, e K-12 Dive ha riferito che i leader delle associazioni per l'istruzione speciale credevano che la maggior parte dell'Office of Special Education Programs fosse stata licenziata. A novembre, una legge di finanziamento tampone ha temporaneamente ripristinato il personale dell'Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services. Sette mesi dopo, il lavoro quotidiano è passato all'HHS. Un sistema di dati può sopravvivere a molto, ma sopravvive grazie alle persone che lo conoscono, e il registro pubblico non dice dove si trovino ora quelle persone.

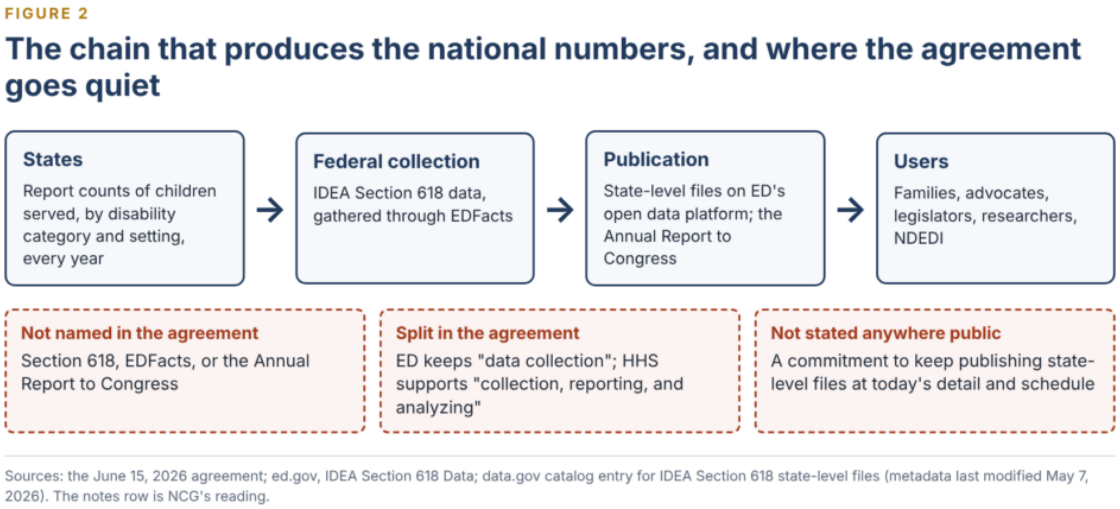

Figura 2. La catena che produce i numeri nazionali, e dove l'accordo tace. La riga in basso è l'interpretazione di NCG.

Cosa è emerso da allora

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.

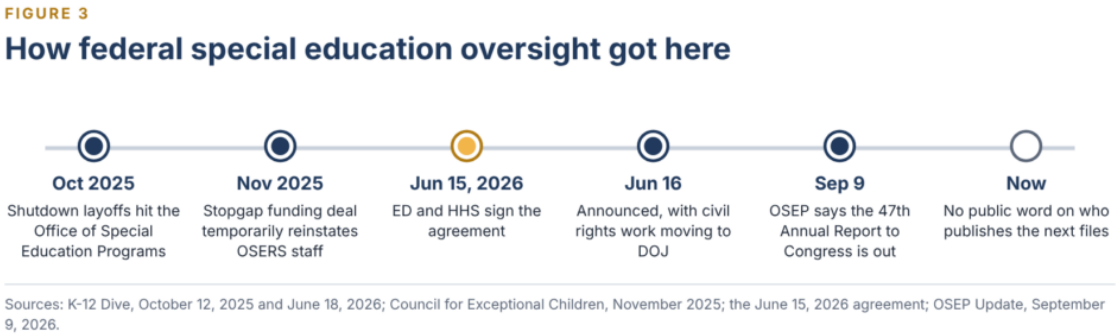

Figura 3. Come si è arrivati a questo punto nella supervisione federale dell'istruzione speciale.

Perché l'istruzione Deaf lo avverte per prima

Ogni categoria di disabilità dipende da questi file, ma l'istruzione Deaf dipende da essi in modo particolare. Gli studenti Deaf e con difficoltà uditive sono una popolazione a bassa incidenza, una piccola quota di bambini distribuiti in modo sottile tra molti distretti, che è esattamente la popolazione che la rendicontazione statale e distrettuale tende a tralasciare. I conteggi ridotti vengono soppressi per motivi di privacy. I distretti che servono due studenti Deaf tramite un programma cooperativo o regionale spesso non pubblicano nulla. In questo panorama, il file federale è spesso l'unico luogo in cui esiste un numero a livello statale, e l'unico luogo in cui uno stato può essere confrontato con un altro. Se i dati della Sezione 618 vengono meno, gli studenti più propensi a sparire dal registro pubblico sono quelli che erano già più difficili da vedere in primo luogo.

Cosa dovrebbe essere messo per iscritto

Nulla di tutto ciò richiede di presumere malafede. Richiede poche frasi che l'accordo non contiene. Il Dipartimento dell'Istruzione e l'HHS potrebbero risolvere pubblicamente la questione dichiarando:

- 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.

Fonti

- Interagency Agreement Between the U.S. Department of Education and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Relating to Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, signed June 15, 2026, retrieved October 8, 2026.
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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.
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- 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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