

NDTAC | Tip Sheet

Tips for Subgrantee Monitoring

The development of this tip sheet stems from a request made by State Title I, Part D (Part D), coordinators during the 2012 NDTAC Conference. The goal of the tip sheet is to embed a “youth- and staff-centered” framework in the monitoring process. It serves to provide a guideline to capture student and teacher perspectives and to help Part D coordinators secure additional information relevant to subgrantee monitoring, which may enhance the assistance they can provide to subgrantees. Youth and educational staff’s opinions and perceptions of programs are critically important in strengthening the capacity of programs to provide the best education for youth served by Title I, Part D.

Monitoring Responsibility: Who Does It and Why

Title I, Part D, programs are monitored to ensure compliance with applicable State and Federal laws. Monitoring occurs at three different levels (see NDTAC’s *A Guide to Meeting Compliance Requirements for the Title I, Part D, Program*, <http://www.neglected-delinquent.org/resource/guide-meeting-compliance-requirements-title-i-part-d-program>). Although there has been some reduction in the frequency of monitoring in recent years, the U.S. Department of Education typically monitors state education agencies (SEAs) every 3 to 5 years. In turn, as the SEA, you are responsible for monitoring state agency (SA) and local education agency (LEA) subgrantees, which are then responsible for monitoring their respective programs and facilities (not less than once every 3 years). Monitoring visits are often scheduled in advance; however, unannounced visits are not prohibited and generally occur in reaction to issues raised during onsite or desk audits.

There are many reasons why monitoring activities are important across all levels of programming. As outlined in the presentation given by Dr. Peter Leone at the 2012 NDTAC Conference (*Monitoring & Evaluation: Best Practices*, http://www.neglected-delinquent.org/sites/default/files/docs/2012_Conf_Presentation-Monitoring_Eval-Best_Practices.pdf), results of effective monitoring might include: accountability, support to programs and facilities, improved outcomes for youth who are system-involved, and the technical assistance that you as a State Title I, Part, D, coordinator can provide.

Challenges to Successful Monitoring

To engage in successful monitoring, it is important to be consistent in what is monitored, which serves to remove the subjectivity of monitoring and has a leveling impact on the field. It is also important that you strategically plan and review existing documentation. For example, as outlined in the presentation by Dr. Leone, you have to determine whether onsite review, desk review, or both processes are appropriate for your monitoring process. You must prepare in advance for monitoring visits to the SEA by the Office of Student Achievement and School Accountability Programs (SASA) and for your monitoring review of SAs and LEAs. Part of this preparation includes gathering information to facilitate your monitoring review. You can effectively gather information through various means. For example, you can use one-on-one interviews during onsite visits with youth or staff; disseminate Web-based or pen and paper questionnaires to large groups of staff and/or youth; and hold focus groups or interviews with a small number of individuals simultaneously. With any of these particular methods, it is necessary to keep in mind the importance of language, which, when used as a mechanism for cooperation, can establish relationships and create a positive environment for the soliciting and sharing of information. Additionally, it is critical to include a range of respondents and examine patterns across responses to avoid biased data or collection of skewed information.

Effective Use of Language to Develop Relationships and Gather Information

Drawing upon Louisiana’s Program Improvement Instruments (Office of Youth Development, 2007¹), Table 1 provides the types of techniques you can use to gather information and examples of language of cooperation that you may consider utilizing during interviews, questionnaires, and focus groups with youth and staff in SAs and LEAs. You can also share this information with SAs and LEAs so that they may incorporate similar language and conversation in their information gathering techniques during the monitoring of programs and facilities.

¹ Office of Youth Development. (2007). *Quality Assurance Plan for Educational Services in Secure Placement*. Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

Table 1. Types of Techniques to Gather Information and Examples of Questions

Technique	Definition	Examples of Questions
Interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involve one-on-one questioning of individuals • Can be structured (all participants receive the same questions in the same order during each respective interview, with questions focused on a specific goal) or unstructured (questions are not presented in any specific order or format and, although the interviewer may have a specific goal or focus, participants are allowed to speak openly about any issue they wish to discuss) • Can be conducted face-to-face (with staff and youth) or over the telephone (with staff) 	<p>School/Program Administrators</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do you monitor special education-related services, interventions, and support? • How do you ensure that all cumulative records are accurate and up-to-date? • How do you monitor transition services, inclusive of Transition Coordinators, to ensure that transitions occur effectively? • Do you have any suggestions for improving transition services? • What are some ways in which positive behaviors are reinforced? Is there a schoolwide or facilitywide behavioral management system operating in the school or facility? If so, please describe. • How do you ensure youth are enrolled in appropriate credit-bearing courses? • How do you ensure quality education services are offered to all students?
Questionnaires	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Also referred to as surveys • Involve the random selection of approximately 20–30 percent of students and 50 percent of teachers • Can be by either pen and paper or online • Should have only small groups (15 or less) of students take it at once to minimize misbehavior or disruptions • Should be read by a facilitator to students to ensure that they are understood 	<p>Students</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you feel your teachers are teaching you what you need to know? • Do you feel teachers in your school try to help you? • Was your class placement or schedule discussed with you on your first day of school? • Do you receive a copy of your report card? • Have you talked to someone about how you will transition to or return home and re-enroll in school? • Do you expect to continue your education when you are released? <p>Teachers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are you certified by the State Educational Agency to teach in the area of instruction that is assigned to you? • For this school year, how many hours or days have you participated in inservice or professional development training? • Do you look forward to reporting to work? • Would you say that, in this school, teachers are encouraged and have the opportunity to support and challenge students to achieve? • Do you encourage your students to aspire to go to college, vocational training, or some other form of higher education? • Do you use interventions to help students with their behaviors? • Are career and technical education (vocational education) portfolios developed for all of your students?
Focus Groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Require participation of at least 5–10 individuals randomly selected to participate in a group discussion • <i>Student</i> focus groups should include most academic placement groups (e.g., high school, GED, special education, career/technical/vocational education) • <i>Teacher</i> focus groups should represent most instructional groups (e.g., high school, GED, special education, career/technical/vocational education) 	<p>Students</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you feel your school is preparing you for life, a job, and further education? • How would you improve discipline in your school? What incentives are there to encourage positive behaviors? • What would you do to make the school better? • Do you know the principal of the school? • Is there an adult in the school or facility that you can go to if you have a problem? (the intent is to determine if there is an adult in the school or facility that the student trusts) <p>Teachers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are you doing to prepare each of your students for statewide testing? • What are you doing to enhance and supplement classroom instruction? How do you motivate your students? • What suggestions do you have for improving the instructional process? • How are transitional needs being addressed for regular as well as special populations? • Do you have any suggestions for how to improve transition services? • How are inservice training needs being met? What has been most beneficial?