

# Strengthening Connecticut's Special Education System

## Update on WestEd Special Education Systems Review (2026)

Following the independent WestEd review, the Connecticut State Department of Education is taking deliberate, transparent action to strengthen systems, improve responsiveness, and better support students with disabilities, families, and districts.

### Where We Are Now (Key Progress to Date)



#### Leading with Vision

Proactive Involvement in Special Education Legislative Workgroups to share data and current initiatives to inform legislative process

Monthly dispute resolution update meetings with parent and board attorneys

[The Bureau Bulletin](#) – Bureau of Special Education newsletter



#### Activating Strategies for Instructional Impact

##### Addressing Persistent Shortages

- Bureau of Special Education and Talent Office meet regularly to plan and implement pathways to expand special education certification opportunities and recruit highly qualified candidates to enter the field.

##### Strengthening Capacity Through High-Quality Professional Learning

- High Quality IEP Training
- Progress Monitoring Extended Training
- Foundational Special Education Procedures Extended Training



#### Improving Infrastructure

##### Improved Complaint Process Timeliness and Responsiveness

- 96% of complaints resolved within the 60-day federal timeline (up from prior delays identified in the review)
- 100% of March 2026 complaints resolved on time
- Complaints now assigned within 1–2 business days

##### Strengthening Systems and Processes

- New complaint tracking system implemented (Aug. 2025)
- Formal sufficiency letter process established to better guide families
- Two-tier review process (legal + supervisor) for consistency and quality

##### Aligning Work Across the System

- Process mapping (April–May 2026) to examine and improve existing systems and processes (e.g., to streamline the process and timeline for disseminating guidance documents to the field)
- Talent mapping (May 2026) to align staff expertise & capacity to key roles and responsibilities required of staff in the Bureau of Special Education

- Ongoing coordination with districts and partners to align:
  - Federal requirements
  - State priorities
  - Local implementation



#### Ensuring Effective Accountability and Improvement

##### Strengthening Accountability and Oversight

- 231 complaints addressed (July 1, 2025–March 27, 2026)
- 67 cases resulted in corrective action, ensuring districts address identified issues

##### Building System Capacity

- Special Education Attorney position established to strengthen legal oversight and complain resolution
  - Recruitment in progress
- Additional staffing added to support complaint investigations
- Expanded use of data analysis (including trend review) to guide technical assistance activities for the field



#### Our Focus Moving Forward

**Continue improving complaint timeliness toward 100% compliance.**

**Use data to drive improvement and proactively prevent issues—not just respond to them.**

**Strengthen systems for cross division collaboration and coordination to ensure:**

- Professional development is comprehensive and responsive to current best practice, data and needs identified by districts
- Proactive guidance and support is provided in a timely manner to build local capacity to improve student outcomes