

Executive Summary: Senate Bill 868 Report

Approach to Estimating the Costs of Serving Children with Low-Incidence Disabilities

Senate Bill 868 (2025) directs the Oregon Department of Education (ODE) to establish a transparent and consistent method for estimating the costs of Regional Inclusive Services (RIS), Oregon's statewide system of specialized supports for children with low-incidence disabilities. The bill does not fund services or change program operations; it provides a framework for reporting funding needs to inform future policy and budget decisions.

RIS serves children from birth through age 21 whose disabilities require specialized expertise, personnel, and resources that are often not feasible for individual districts to provide independently. Demand for these services has increased significantly over time, while staffing shortages and funding constraints have reduced service capacity across disability categories. As a result, RIS providers report higher caseloads, reduced service intensity, and challenges meeting growing statewide needs.

The report identifies several limitations in the current funding structure. Existing funding estimates are based on maintaining current service levels rather than addressing unmet need. Funding also relies on a combination of state and federal resources that can fluctuate based on district participation decisions. In addition, current child-counting methods do not fully capture service complexity, multiple disability eligibilities, or the broader impact of RIS consultation and technical assistance.

To improve transparency and planning, a Funding Taskforce developed a Statement of Need methodology that:

- Uses the 2009-11 biennium as the baseline for adequate service funding.
- Adjusts per-child costs for inflation.
- Applies those costs to actual and projected child counts.
- Produces consistent biennial estimates of statewide funding needs.

Using this methodology, ODE estimates that sustaining RIS services in the 2027-29 biennium will require approximately \$194.3 million, based on an estimated 39,890 children served and a projected per-child cost of \$4,871.

The report provides a standardized, data-informed approach to understanding the resources needed to maintain Oregon's regional service system and support equitable access to specialized services for children with low-incidence disabilities statewide.