



**U.S. Department of Education  
Office for Civil Rights**

**2020–21 Civil Rights Data Collection  
Data File User's Manual**

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**U.S. Department of Education**

Miguel Cardona  
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September 19, 2023

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## 1. Purpose

This manual provides data users with details regarding the 2020–21 Civil Rights Data Collection (CRDC). It provides general information about the CRDC and describes different aspects of the 2020–21 collection, including response rates, data quality concerns, data file details, collection procedures, and privacy protection methodology. This manual also includes an overview of post-submission data corrections, outreach efforts, and any subsequent updates made to the data files. It is intended to be used in conjunction with both the public-use and restricted-use data files.

## 2. About CRDC Data

The CRDC is a mandatory survey of public school districts and schools in the 50 states, Washington, D.C., and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico. The CRDC collects information about student enrollment, access to courses, programs and school staff, and school climate factors, such as harassment or bullying and student discipline. Most data collected by the CRDC are disaggregated by race/ethnicity, sex, disability, and English Learner status.

The collection is an important part of the [U.S. Department of Education \(Department\) Office for Civil Rights' \(OCR\)](#) strategy for administering and enforcing civil rights laws in the nation's public school districts and schools. OCR may use CRDC data as it investigates complaints alleging discrimination, determines whether the federal civil rights laws it enforces have been violated, initiates proactive compliance reviews to focus on particularly acute or nationwide civil rights compliance problems, and provides policy guidance and technical assistance to educational institutions, parents, students, and others.

Section 203(c)(1) of the 1979 Department of Education Organization Act conveys to the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights the authority to “collect or coordinate the collection of data necessary to ensure compliance with civil rights laws within the jurisdiction of the Office for Civil Rights” (20 U.S.C. § 3413(c)(1)). The civil rights laws enforced by OCR for which the CRDC is used to collect data include:

- Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibits discrimination based on race, color, and national origin;
- Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, which prohibits discrimination based on sex; and
- Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, which prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability.

OCR's implementing regulations for each of these statutes requires recipients of Department's federal financial assistance to submit to OCR “complete and accurate compliance reports at such times, and in such form and containing such information” as OCR “may determine to be necessary to enable [OCR] to ascertain whether the recipient has complied or is complying” with these laws and implementing regulations (34 C.F.R. § 100.6(b), 34 C.F.R. § 106.81, and 34 C.F.R. § 104.61). In addition, pursuant to a delegation by the Attorney General of the United States, OCR shares in the enforcement of Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, which prohibits discrimination based on disability. Any data collection that OCR has determined to be necessary to ascertain or ensure compliance with these laws is mandatory.

Since the 2011–12 school year, OCR has collected data from all public school districts and their schools in the 50 states and Washington, D.C. Over time the CRDC’s collection universe has grown to include long-term secure justice facilities, charter schools, alternative schools, and schools that focus primarily on serving students with disabilities. OCR added the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico to the CRDC, beginning with the 2017–18 CRDC. From 1968 to 2010, civil rights data were collected from a sample of public school districts and their schools, except for the 1976 and 2000 collections, which included data from a universe of school districts. Prior to the 2004 CRDC, the survey was administered as the Elementary and Secondary School Civil Rights Report. For access to historical civil rights data from 1968 through 1998, visit the [CRDC Archival Tool](#).

## 2.1 CRDC Respondents

For the CRDC, the local educational agency (LEA), which is most often the school district, serves as the primary responding administrative unit.<sup>1</sup> LEAs are responsible for reporting data for themselves and their schools. Some state educational agencies (SEA) submit some or all data on behalf of their LEAs, but LEAs are required to certify the data. Florida is the only SEA that certifies data for all of its LEAs. Eighteen SEAs provided all or partial data for the 2020–21 CRDC on behalf of their LEAs.<sup>2</sup>

## 2.2 Survey Forms and Reporting Categories

The CRDC is comprised of LEA- and school-level data. Prior to administration of the survey and pursuant to the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, OCR’s proposed CRDC must undergo two public notice and comment periods—an initial 60-day period followed by a 30-day period—and receive the U.S. Office of Management and Budget’s (OMB) approval. To help OCR prepare the initially proposed CRDC that undergoes the 60-day public comment period, OCR gathers information about emerging civil rights issues from program offices, stakeholders, and the public. After the 60-day comment period, OCR reviews the comments received, prepares responses to the comments, and depending on the comments, may or may not make changes to the proposed CRDC. The responses and the proposed CRDC then undergo a 30-day public comment period. After that comment period, OCR considers the comments received, crafts responses to the comments, and revises the proposed CRDC, if deemed appropriate. OCR then submits the responses and the proposed CRDC to OMB, for review and approval. After OMB approves the CRDC, OCR develops the LEA-level and school-level CRDC survey forms.

The LEA-level and school-level 2020–21 CRDC survey forms are available at <https://civilrightsdata.ed.gov/data>.

In general, for reporting of race/ethnicity data to the Department, recipients of Department financial assistance are required to follow ED’s “Final Guidance on Maintaining, Collecting, and Reporting Racial and Ethnic Data to the U.S. Department of Education” dated October 2007 (72 Fed. Reg. 59,266). The

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<sup>1</sup> An LEA is “a public board of education or other public authority legally constituted within a State for either administrative control or direction of, or to perform a service function for, public elementary schools or secondary schools in a city, county, township, school district, or other political subdivision of a State, or for a combination of school districts or counties as are recognized in a State as an administrative agency for its public elementary schools or secondary schools.” See [34 CFR § 303.23](#).

<sup>2</sup> SEAs providing all or partial data for the 2020–21 CRDC include: Arkansas, Colorado, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Maine, Massachusetts, Nebraska, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Puerto Rico, Utah, West Virginia, and Wisconsin.

Department’s guidance requires recipients to report race data by seven major racial/ethnic categories (i.e., American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, Black or African American, Hispanic or Latino of any race, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, Two or more races, and White). Under current Department guidance, recipients may choose to disaggregate these categories further to address their own needs at the state level but must categorize race data according to these seven categories for the purposes of the Department’s data collections, such as the CRDC and *EDFacts* collections. The best way for users to understand the specifics of disaggregation is to review the LEA-level and school-level survey forms as well as [Appendix Sheet B. CRDC Data Dictionary](#) in the accompanying 2020–21 Appendix Workbook.

### 2.3 New Data Elements for the 2020–21 CRDC

Most of the data elements that were collected for the 2017–18 CRDC continued to be collected in the 2020–21 CRDC. However, OCR did introduce new data elements for the 2020–21 CRDC, and retired others. New data elements introduced for the 2020–21 CRDC were optional for LEAs to report and are only available in the CRDC restricted-use data file. To view the data elements for the 2020–21 CRDC, see [Appendix Sheet B. CRDC Data Dictionary](#) in the accompanying 2020–21 Appendix Workbook.

### 2.4 *EDFacts* and CRDC

[EDFacts](#) is a centralized data collection through which SEAs submit pre-K through grade 12 data to ED to enable better data analysis and data usage in policy development, planning, and management. OCR co-stewards the collection of some *EDFacts* data files related primarily to Title I status, educational environments for students with disabilities, counts of students by disability type, and chronic absenteeism. In the data file, OCR is including data for two *EDFacts* data topics—educational environments for students with disabilities and chronic absenteeism. *EDFacts* data files are included in the 2020–21 CRDC public-use data files (See Section 5.2 of this manual for more information). See [Appendix Sheet J. EDFacts File Structure](#) and [Appendix Sheet K. EDFacts Data Dictionary](#) in the accompanying 2020–21 Appendix Workbook for additional details.

## 3. Overview of the 2020–21 CRDC Submission Process

### 3.1 Online Data Submission and Response Rate

The CRDC’s online data submission system opened on December 13, 2021, and closed on April 8, 2022. LEAs submitted data into the submission system by manually keying the data directly into the system, uploading files of the data into the system, or both. LEAs could opt to use either method or a combination of the two methods. All data reported were stored in the same data repository and were visible in the online data entry screens and all system-generated reports. For more details on manual data entry in the submission system and flat file submission see the [CRDC Submission System User Manual](#).

The CRDC online data submission system included a resources page, accessible from every screen in the system, to provide data submitters with guidance on survey items and tips on how to avoid data submission mistakes. These resources were also available outside of the online system via the [CRDC Resource Center](#).

For the 2020–21 CRDC, 1,797 LEAs (10.1%) used the online data entry method only, while 16,024 LEAs (89.9%) used the flat file submission method for at least part of their data entry. OCR achieved 100%

reporting and certification from required data submitters for the 2020–21 CRDC, which included 17,821 LEAs and 97,575 schools.

### 3.2 CRDC Partner Support Center

For the 2020–21 CRDC, the CRDC Partner Support Center (PSC) provided ongoing support to data submitters. The PSC responded to telephone calls and e-mails from data submitters who needed technical and, in many cases, substantive assistance. Examples of technical assistance provided include logging into the online submission system, creating additional accounts, explaining the different navigation methods in the online submission system, helping to enter the data manually and via the file upload tool, resolving errors, and helping with certifying data. Examples of substantive assistance provided include explaining survey questions, definitions, and other topical content related to the CRDC.

In addition to fielding initiated contact, the PSC conducted outreach that included frequent e-mails to communicate important dates and provide helpful tips about the collection process. During the data submission period, the PSC followed-up with uncertified LEAs on a weekly basis to offer assistance and conducted intensive outreach efforts to unresponsive LEAs. Also, the PSC conducted outreach to LEAs after the data submission period ended to request data corrections for some data quality errors.

### 3.3 Addressing Errors

OCR implements real-time, automatic data quality checks in the submission system to help data submitters correct potential errors prior to completing the submission data. For the CRDC, these checks are commonly referred to as “business rules” and are categorized as either an error or a warning. Errors require data submitters to correct or in some cases submit a reason code in order to certify their data. Reason codes allow submitters to explain why the value submitted was valid. Warnings remind data submitters to review their data submissions but do not require data corrections. In the submission system, data submitters could view errors and warnings on a summary page that displayed all data errors, warnings, and pending data quality checks. Data submitters had the opportunity to correct errors in the submission system prior to certifying the data. If an error could not be corrected, then the data submitter was instructed to enter a reason and/or comment, or in the case of missing values, provide an action plan for reporting the required data in the next collection.

### 3.4 Certification

To complete the submission of data for the CRDC, either the LEA superintendent or another person designated by the LEA superintendent is required to certify the data. Certification attests that the data are “true and correct” to the best of the certifier’s knowledge.

LEAs have to submit all required data and resolve all errors prior to certification. Submissions that do not meet these criteria cannot be certified. Data submitters that had trouble resolving errors, received help from the PSC.

#### 3.4.1 Force Certification

For the 2020–21 CRDC, some data submissions required force certification. Force certification occurs when a data submitter is unable to resolve a submission system business rule error. When this occurs, the PSC manually reviews the data submission and certifies the data on the data submitter’s behalf. For



a full list of force certified LEAs, see [Appendix Sheet E. Force Certification](#) in the accompanying 2020–21 Appendix Workbook.

### 3.4.2 Certification with an Action Plan

In cases where an LEA is unable to report data, OCR requires the LEA to submit an action plan. In an action plan for the CRDC, LEAs are required to describe the specific steps and timeline that they will follow to ensure that the data are collected for future CRDCs. To submit an action plan, LEAs had to first contact the PSC, and then once the plan was approved by OCR, the LEA could certify its data. For the 2020–21 CRDC, 19 LEAs submitted action plans. See [Appendix Sheet D. Action and Quick Plans](#) in the accompanying 2020–21 Appendix Workbook for a full list of LEAs that submitted action plans for the 2020–21 collection.

### 3.4.3 Certification with a Quick Plan

Quick plans are a shorter version of CRDC action plans and allow LEAs to provide an explanation for missing data and an abbreviated plan of action for collecting and submitting the data for the next CRDC. For the 2020–21 CRDC, quick plans were limited to the following topic areas: harassment or bullying, offenses, and restraint and seclusion. LEAs were not required to contact the PSC for assistance prior to creating and submitting a quick plan. Also, OCR did not review the quick plan prior to certification. See [Appendix Sheet D. Action and Quick Plans](#) in the accompanying 2020–21 Appendix Workbook for a full list of LEAs that submitted quick plans for the 2020–21 collection.

## 4. Post-Collection Overview

### 4.1 Data Quality Outreach and Corrections

After the close of the 2020–21 CRDC, OCR performed a series of post-submission data quality checks to identify issues in data submissions. These checks focused on issues of internal consistency and overall data reasonableness (e.g., duplicate data, summation to totals, zeros, and comparison with other data sources). A total of 273 post-submission data quality checks were performed to identify these issues. OCR selected 38 data quality checks to include in the post-submission data quality outreach and corrections period, see [Appendix Sheet G. Data Quality Checks in Outreach](#) in the accompanying 2020–21 Appendix Workbook. From June 29, 2022, to July 29, 2022, LEAs identified as failing one or more of these data quality checks were given the opportunity to review and correct their data in the online submission system. In total, 7,696 LEAs were selected for this data quality outreach. Of these LEAs, 6,648 (86.4%) responded to the corrections process.<sup>3</sup> Additionally, some LEAs requested to correct their data after the close of the corrections process. For a full list of LEAs requesting data corrections after the close of the corrections process, see [Appendix Sheet N. LEAs Requesting Corrections](#) in the accompanying 2020–21 Appendix Workbook.

### 4.2 Data Quality Corrections and Explanations

Responding LEAs submitted data corrections, submitted an explanation about their reported data, or both. About 32% (2,139/6,648) of responding LEAs corrected a portion of their submitted data during the

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<sup>3</sup> Responding LEAs submitted data corrections, submitted an explanation about their reported data, or both.

outreach period, and 96% (6,406/6,648) of responding LEAs submitted at least one reason code<sup>4</sup> or explanation for issues included in outreach.<sup>5</sup> LEAs submitting reason codes or explanations indicated that they: corrected their data; were unable to correct their data; or believed their data were correct as originally reported.

If an LEA indicated that they were unable to correct their data, they were prompted to provide an additional written explanation. These written explanations were categorized by OCR using the following categories: 1) LEA is unable to verify, 2) LEA did not understand analysis or process, and 3) school or LEA type is justification for data.

Of the LEAs that provided a reason code or explanation, the majority indicated their data were correct as reported. About 28% (1,820/6,406) of LEAs submitting reason codes or explanations noted that at least some of their data were not correct and corrected the issue. Less than 10% (430/6,406) of LEAs submitting reason codes or explanations indicated that they were unable to correct at least some of their data. For more details on reason codes and explanations submitted by LEAs during the data quality outreach and corrections period, see [Appendix Sheet H. Explanations from LEAs](#) in the accompanying 2020–21 Appendix Workbook. .

## 5. Overview of CRDC Data Files and Data Elements

For the 2020–21 CRDC, OCR released two data files: a restricted-use data file and a public-use data file.

### 5.1 Restricted-Use Data File

The restricted-use data file is the primary analysis and investigative file primarily used internally by OCR. This file is the basis for enforcement research, as well as for internal program and policy analysis. In addition, the restricted-use data do not undergo any data quality suppression and privacy protections are not applied. The data in this file are minimally edited to preserve the original, certified data as submitted. All CRDC data are included in the file, including both required and optional data. [Appendix Sheet B. CRDC Data Dictionary](#) in the accompanying 2020–21 Appendix Workbook lists all data elements, both required and optional, for the 2020–21 CRDC.

The Department’s Institute for Education Sciences is responsible for granting access to the restricted-use data file. For information on how to request access to the restricted-use data file, see [Restricted Use Data Licenses](#).

### 5.2 Public-Use Data File

The public-use data file is intended for public-use. It is released to maximize the use of statistical information while protecting the disclosure of student information. The data file only includes required data elements for the 2020–21 CRDC. Some of the data have been suppressed due to data quality or perturbed to protect the identity of the students for whom these data were reported. For more

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<sup>4</sup>A reason code is a LEA-provided explanation during the corrections period, in response to an identified data quality issue.

<sup>5</sup> LEAs could submit reason codes or explanations that did not align with their identified issues or data corrections.

information on data included in the public-use data file, see [Appendix Sheet B. CRDC Data Dictionary](#) in the accompanying 2020-21 Appendix Workbook.

### 5.2.1 Data Quality Suppression

Prior to its release, OCR applied data quality suppression to the public-use data file. Data quality suppression is a standard methodology used to improve both the reliability and usability of the data. This process applies data quality checks to identify data that appear to be erroneous or of poor quality. OCR implemented data quality suppressions as a small pilot for the 2017–18 CRDC, and more broadly for the 2020–21 CRDC.

All of the data submitted by LEAs was subject to data quality suppression based on the results of the post-collection data quality checks (See Section 4.1 of this manual for more information). Data were suppressed when it did not meet the standards set by the data quality check. Any data suppressed due to data quality concerns has a -11 as the reserve code in the public-use data file. This means the -11 replaces the LEA's submitted data and the data are not available in the public-use data files. More details on the data quality checks used for data quality suppression can be found in [Appendix Sheet I. DQ Suppression Details](#) in the accompanying 2020–21 Appendix Workbook.

### 5.2.2 Privacy Protection

To prevent the disclosure of identifying information, student counts in the public-use data file were privacy protected by making small, random adjustments to the data. This process, also called perturbing, used a low-frequency perturbation routine. The methodology added or subtracted one case to blur the data and used random data swapping. The routine protected true zeros, except for outcome data (e.g., Algebra passing), for which zeros were included in the perturbation routine. The routine was applied to all student count data elements. It is important to note that the perturbation routine aggregates to the specified change thresholds at the state and national levels, but there is no threshold for aggregation at the LEA-level. Caution should be taken when making comparisons between LEA- and school-level form information as these may not align due to perturbation methods.

In addition, data for some data elements were adjusted to minimize inconsistencies introduced by data perturbations. However, some inconsistencies may remain. Finally, the margin of difference between perturbed and unperturbed counts varied by the size of the data sample being perturbed.

## 5.3 Data File Types and Structure

The CRDC collects data at two levels—the LEA-level and the school-level—using two different survey forms, referred to as the LEA Form and the School Form, respectively. Each form contains survey questions relevant to the reporting level. Copies of the 2020–21 CRDC survey forms are available at the following links:

- LEA Form: [2020–21 CRDC LEA Form \(PDF\) \(ed.gov\)](#)
- School Form: [2020–21 Civil Rights Data Collection – School Form \(PDF\) \(ed.gov\)](#)

There are 34 topical data files for the 2020–21 CRDC—3 LEA-level files and 31 school-level files. These files correspond to the topical modules in which the 2020–21 CRDC data were reported.

For more information on how the restricted- and public-use data files are structured, see [Appendix Sheet A. CRDC File Structure](#) in the accompanying 2020–21 Appendix Workbook.

#### 5.4 Reserve Codes and System Errors

In some instances, special or reserve codes were assigned to the data. Reserve codes provide information on variables that do not have reported values, or the reported value was removed by OCR. For the CRDC, reserve codes are standardized and do not represent an actual reported count or value.

The table below lists the reserve codes and their definitions for the 2020–21 CRDC.

Reserve Code Value	Definition
-3	Skip Logic Failure
-4	Missing Optional Data <sup>6</sup>
-5	Action Plan/Quick Plans
-6	Force Certified
-8	EDFacts Missing Data
-9	Not Applicable/Skipped
-11	Suppressed Data
-13	Missing DIND skip logic

For the CRDC data files, missing values are represented with a -5 (action plan or quick plan) or -6 (force certified). In the EDFacts data files, missing data is assigned a -8. Schools that offered virtual instruction only and whose students were not physically in the school setting (See the [2020–21 CRDC school-level form DIND: COVID-related Directional Indicators module](#)) were allowed to automatically skip some questions in the CRDC data submission system. In these instances, the data is assigned a -13 in the CRDC data files. Data that were suppressed due to potential data quality issues were assigned a -11.

##### 5.4.1 System Submission Errors

There were instances when the CRDC data submission system did not function as expected. In these cases, the data is assigned -13 in the CRDC data file. A select summary of those issues follows.

###### 5.4.1.1 Skip Logic Failure

There were instances where the skip logic failed to update related data fields. This functionality failure allowed data elements to require data entry when, according to their skip flag, those elements should have been skipped. The skip logic failure also allowed LEAs to skip data entry, even when their skip flag showed that those elements were required. The failure in the skip logic occurred due to intense system load, which may have caused the system to slow down and not update skip logic flags effectively. Values for data elements that had a skip logic failure were represented with a -3 reserve code.

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<sup>6</sup> The “-4” reserve code is only in the restricted-use data file because it only applies to optional data elements.

### 5.4.1.2 ERR9105 Misfire

In the CRDC data submission system, an error code, ERR9105, appears when the count of students reported as restrained or secluded is greater than the count of instances reported within the same category. The count of students reported as restrained or secluded must always be less than or equal to the count of instances reported. However, this error misfired in the submission system due to a formula error. As such, there remained a misalignment between instances of restraint and seclusion and students reported as restrained or secluded for the 1,315 LEAs impacted with this issue. Upon discovery of this misfire, the formula was rewritten to match the intended purpose of the original error. The error ran as intended for the remainder of the collection.

## 5.5 Data Types

There are three types of variables in the CRDC data files: reported data, calculated totals, and identifiers.

### 5.5.1 Reported Data

The majority of data in the CRDC data files were reported by the LEA directly into the CRDC submission system. The CRDC data submission system auto-calculated values based on the reported data. All system-calculated data were visible to the LEA and could be changed.

### 5.5.2 Calculated Totals

Calculated totals are values that were computed after the submission system closed and were subsequently added to the data files. Initially, totals were calculated by summing disaggregated data (e.g., White female enrollment) greater than or equal to zero and treating reserve code values as zeros. With the exception of the -11 reserve code, in instances when all disaggregated values had a reserve code the calculated total was assigned the most negative reserve code reported in the group of disaggregated values. When a disaggregated value was suppressed and subsequently assigned a -11 reserve code, then the resulting calculated total was assigned a -11. See the table below for an example of how calculated totals were computed in the CRDC data file.

School	AM_F	AS_F	BL_F	HI_F	HP_F	TR_F	WH_F	LEP_F	IDEA_F	504_F	TOT_XX_F
<b>A</b>	2	1	2	4	2	3	2	2	3	3	16
<b>B</b>	-11	4	2	1	3	2	0	0	1	1	-11
<b>C</b>	-5	-6	3	2	1	6	3	1	2	2	15
<b>D</b>	-5	-5	-6	-6	-5	-5	-5	-5	-5	-5	-6
<b>E</b>	2	1	2	4	2	3	2	-11	3	-11	-11

LEAs are unable to view or change calculated totals. Some examples of calculated totals include: total overall enrollment by sex; total number of students who passed Algebra I in grade 7 or 8 by sex; and total number of single-sex interscholastic athletics teams. Calculated totals and variable names are shown in [Appendix Sheet C. Calculated Totals](#) in the accompanying 2020–21 Appendix Workbook.

### 5.5.3 LEA and School Identifiers

The table below describes the three main identifiers (IDs) used in the data files.

Identifier	Definition
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<b>LEA ID</b>	7-digit district identification code
<b>SCH ID</b>	5-digit school identification code
<b>COMBOKEY</b>	Combined LEA ID and SCH ID, which often matches ED’s National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) ID

Generally, OCR utilizes the Department’s National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) school and LEA IDs to identify schools and LEAs. However, there are cases where the CRDC and NCES IDs differ due to differences in definitions and collection procedures. For more information about these differences, and to link the CRDC to other Department data collections, read the NCES blog, [“Building Bridges: Increasing the Power of the Civil Rights Data Collection \(CRDC\) Through Data Linking With an ID Crosswalk”](#). LEAs that did not have an existing NCES ID were issued a new CRDC LEA ID which consisted of the 2-digit state federal information processing series code followed by a 5-digit ID assigned by the PSC. Schools that did not have an existing NCES ID were issued a new ID that consisted of the CRDC LEA ID and a temporary 5-digit school ID assigned by the PSC. A crosswalk to link the CRDC to other ED data collections is available in the accompanying Appendix Workbook under Items [Appendix Sheet L. Crosswalk Information](#) and [Appendix Sheet M. CRDC and ED\*Facts\* Crosswalk](#).