

CIS Ethnicity and Race Data Guidance

The Children's Integrated Services (CIS) State Team created this document to help answer frequent questions from our partner agencies related to collecting race and ethnicity (see [Definitions](#)) information from CIS families.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

1. Why do we need to collect ethnicity and race data?

The State of Vermont, CIS Unit is committed to advancing equal opportunity for all children and families in Vermont. Collecting ethnicity and race information helps administrators make informed decisions about program design to ensure equal access to services.

CIS-Early Intervention (CIS-EI) is funded primarily by the federal government through the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Part C Grant. To receive these funds, Vermont must report on certain data points, two of which are ethnicity and race.

2. Why are the ethnicity and race categories the way they are?

The U.S. Department of Education has been collecting data on race and ethnicity since 1977. The current categories were established in 2007 after a ten-year review process.

3. How is the ethnicity and race data used in CIS?

The ethnicity and race data are aggregated (combined) at a statewide level and are never broken down by individuals. The data supports the equitable service delivery of CIS.

Some CIS programs are required to collect ethnicity and race data for Federal reporting. The data in these reports show the demographics of children/families in Vermont who are served compared to other states.

4. Why does Hispanic/Latinx override all?

According to the federal government, the 1970 census had a massive undercount of Americans of Spanish origin or descent. In the 20 years that followed, research suggested this group of people would appropriately self-identify if asked in a two-part question. When asked if this would result in an inaccurate overcount, the U.S. Department of Education wrote in 2007:

"...the Department [of Education] has determined that the best approach for racial and ethnic information to be reported by educational institutions and other recipients is to include individuals who are Hispanic/Latino of any race only in the ethnic category. The Department wants to minimize the reporting burdens for educational institutions and other recipients..."

For more information on how the categories got to be the way they are, a good resource to check out is [Policy Questions on the Department of Education's 2007 Guidance on Collecting, Maintaining and Reporting Data by Race or Ethnicity](#).

5. I am uncomfortable about asking for a family to identify their ethnicity and race. Can I just guess or not ask?

No. The family must be asked and given the opportunity to make their own determination to decide whether to provide the information.

6. I am uncomfortable asking this information of families. What is a script I can use to ask for this information?

“I am going to ask you some questions about yourself and your child, such as name, age, address, gender, ethnicity, and race. We use this data to ensure CIS is delivered equally across the state. The information is never broken down by region or individual records. Would it be ok to go through these questions together?”

Please reach out to your supervisor or [CIS State Technical Assistance \(TA\) Liaison](#) if additional resources could support having these conversations with families.

7. If a family does not see themselves in any of the race categories, what should I do?

To acknowledge this, the State has provided a write-in option for individuals to self-identify their race. Please share with families that information collected in the write-in option will only be used at the state-level. For federal reporting CIS is required to report the written responses into one of the [standard categories](#) using guidance provided by the U.S. Department of Education.

The family should review the categories carefully and choose or write-in the one they feel best represents them.

8. What do I do if a family wants to decline or has concerns about providing demographic information?

We are seeking legal and federal guidance on whether we can include an option for families to decline to respond.

If there are specific questions or concerns, please reach out to your supervisor or [CIS State TA Liaison](#) for additional guidance.

Efforts should be made to collect demographic information throughout your connection with the family if it is not collected at the point of referral or during the intake process.

Definitions

The definitions are from the [National Center for Educational Statistics](#).

- **American Indian or Alaska Native** - A person having origins in any of the original peoples of North and South America (including Central America) and who maintains tribal affiliation or community attachment.
- **Asian** - A person having origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia, or the Indian Subcontinent, including, for example, Cambodia, China, India, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Pakistan, the Philippine Islands, Thailand, and Vietnam.
- **Black or African American** - A person having origins in any of the black racial groups of Africa.
- **Ethnicity/Race** – Are Categories developed in 1997 by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) that are used to describe groups to which individuals belong, identify with, or belong in

the eyes of the community. The categories do not denote scientific definitions of anthropological origins.

- **Hispanic/Latinx** - A person of Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, South or Central American, or other Spanish culture or origin, regardless of race.
- **Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander** - A person having origins in any of the original peoples of Hawaii, Guam, Samoa, or other Pacific Islands.
- **White** - A person having origins in any of the original peoples of Europe, the Middle East, or North Africa.