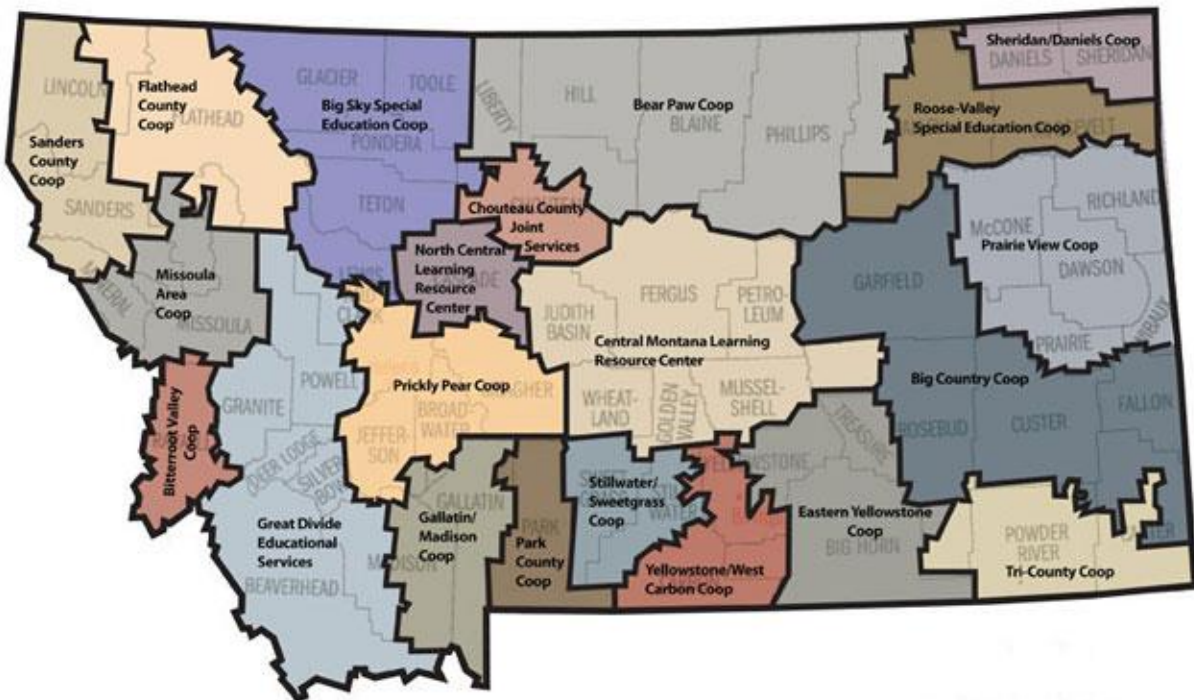


Special Education Cooperatives in Montana

Montana has many small, rural school districts. The costs of providing a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) to students with disabilities in these small districts can be overwhelming, and recruiting and retaining qualified special education staff can be very difficult. The special education cooperatives are designed to address these issues. There are currently twenty-one (21) special education cooperatives operating in Montana. A cooperative is made up of the school districts within the cooperative boundaries that choose to participate. Participation in the cooperative is voluntary for most school districts (those districts receiving less than \$7500 in IDEA funds must join the cooperative) and is at the discretion of the local school board. The cooperative structure allows the school districts to pool the limited resources to employ special education staff that provide services to children on an itinerant basis. The staff typically employed by the cooperatives are the special education director, school psychologist, speech/language pathologist, occupational therapist and physical therapist. Several cooperatives also employ itinerant special education teachers. Additionally, the special education cooperative structure allows the cooperative to maintain carryover funds that can serve as a source of contingency funds if one of the small districts suddenly must deal with a very high cost student.



Because it is not possible to provide exact detail to this Special Education Cooperative Map, questions regarding Cooperative Boundaries should be directed to the Division of Special Education at 406-444-5661.

Montana Office of Public Instruction
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