Zeros, Blanks (i.e., Nulls) and NS

The purpose of this document is to demonstrate how to accurately report zeros, blanks (i.e., nulls), NA and NS using manual data entry or by flat file submission via CSV file or CRDC Excel Data Collection Template(s). With common real-life scenarios as examples, this document provides data submitters with information on the following sections:

- When to Report Zero (0)
- When to Use Blanks (i.e., null values)
- When to use NS (Not Submitted)
- When to use NA (Not Applicable)

When to Report Zero (0)

An LEA should only submit zero "0" when they **do collect data regarding the topic** in question but **did not count any** students, instances, etc. as pertaining to the element for the current collection year.

Do not report a "0" for data not collected! Zeros represent an actual count or number for fields that are applicable to a given school or LEA. Zeros do not represent a scenario where data were not collected.

- Inputting a "0" indicates that the data element is applicable to a school or LEA. **This would mean that there is a count available, and that count is truly zero.**

- Zeros are included in calculations for averages, percentages, and other statistical measures.

> Example:
>
> An LEA practices Mechanical Restraint and collects data on Mechanical Restraint as instructed in **RSTR-2, RSTR-3, and RSTR-4.** However, there were no incidents of Mechanical Restraints in any of those categories.
>
> This LEA should confirm the submission system reported "0" inputs correctly for the following items:
>
> **RSTR-2**: Instances of Restraint or Seclusion (Mechanical Restraints category)
>
> **RSTR-3**: Non-IDEA Students Subjected to Restraint or Seclusion – Mechanical Restraint
>
> **RSTR-4**: IDEA Students Subjected to Restraint or Seclusion – Mechanical Restraint

Figures 1, 2, and 3 show how zeros are reported for RSTR-2 directly into the online forms, in a flat file, and via the Excel Data Collection Template(s).

	Students without Disabilities	Students with Disabilities (IDEA)	Students with Disabilities (Section 504 Only)
Number of instances of mechanical restraint	0	0	0
Number of instances of physical restraint	0	0	0
Number of instances of seclusion	0	0	0

Figure 1. Submitting Zeros in the CRDC Submission System.

Figure 2. Submitting Zeros in the Flat File.

Figure 3. Submitting Zeros in the Excel Template.

When to Use Blanks (i.e., Null Values)

The submission of a blank (i.e., null) value should be used when the amount asked for in the question is **unknown**, if the data is **not collected**, or if the data **does not apply** to the LEA.

Example:

The school only offers remote instruction where students are not physically in the school building, and therefore the Restraint and Seclusion module does not apply.

OR

The school practices mechanical restraints. However, the data are not available, or not collected.

These schools should leave the cells blank in the following items:

RSTR-2: Instances of Restraint or Seclusion;

RSTR-3: Non-IDEA Students Subjected to Restraint or Seclusion – Mechanical Restraint;

RSTR-4: IDEA Students Subjected to Restraint or Seclusion – Mechanical Restraint

> **Note: This indicator is an example of when zeros are automatically filled into applicable cells.**
> RSTR-1: Restraint or Seclusion Indicator. Schools should report the use of mechanical restraint, physical restraint, or seclusion for students regardless of whether there is a law, statute, regulation, rule, guidance, and /or policy that prohibits its use. Prohibition of mechanical restraint, physical restraint, or seclusion does not preclude its use.

Figures 4, 5, and 6 show Blanks (i.e., null values) for RSTR-2 being submitted directly into the online forms, in a flat file, and via the Excel Template.

> **Note:** When values in the cells are blank, the submission system will trigger errors indicated by an ⊗ symbol by design. If the LEA has missing data, the LEA must submit an action plan. Please refer to the Resource Document on how to Create and Submit an action plan.

Figure 4. Submitting Blanks (nulls) in the CRDC Submission System.

Figure 5. Submitting Blanks (nulls) in the Flat File.

Figure 6. Submitting Blanks (nulls) in the Excel Template.

Note: When submitting data through a flat file, leave the cells in the file blank (i.e., nulls) if data are missing or not applicable.

When to use NS (Not Submitted)

Not Submitted or "NS" should only be used in situations where a data value was incorrectly uploaded and needs to be deleted. **NS only applies to flat file uploads and is not used in the online data entry tool**. It does not apply to the Excel Data Collection Template(s).

Note: Submitting **NS** overrides an existing value in a field and returns the data to a 'not submitted' or blank status. This option is not applicable when using the Excel Template, and only applies when submitting a flat file.

Figure 7. Submitting NS in Flat File.

NA (Not Applicable)

Not Applicable or NA fields are generated by the CRDC Submission System based on the data submitted in a related table. 'NA' cannot be entered directly by users into the site. 'NA' is used only in the submission system to indicate fields that are not applicable via skip logic (i.e., users have entered a response that makes certain fields not applicable based on the system's internal business logic). Data submitters that are submitting file uploads should leave all fields blank that should be skipped in the Excel Data Collection Template(s) and the excel template will change to red cells to indicate 'NA').

For example, an Elementary School that has submitted that there are students enrolled from Preschool through Grade 6 only (**shown in Figure 8**) will have 'NA' fields in tables that collect High School data, such as AP Enrollment and Algebra Enrollment, etc. (**shown in Figure 9**).

The system will automatically skip the fields that are not applicable to the school, as shown in graphic below.

Figure 8. Grades Offered.

Figure 9. 'NA' fields prepopulated by the Submission System in AP.

Attempts to change default NA values for skipped fields without first changing the value of the indicator question that originally caused them to be set are not permitted. Note: If an indicator question is answered as 'No,' indicating subsequent related data elements as not applicable, then the related cells will be automatically set to 'NA'. These 'NA'/skipped fields will not be editable unless the indicator question answer is modified. When modifying the indicator, a popup notification will appear like the one displayed below (**shown in Figure 10**).

Warning!
If you change your response to an indicator question from "yes" to "no", then your responses to all subsequent questions linked to this question will be removed.

If you change your response to an indicator question from "no" to "yes", then you will be required to provide responses to all subsequent questions linked to the question.

Changing the indicator from "**Yes**" to "**No**" will override any related data entered to N/A

OR

Changing the indicator from "**No**" to "**Yes**" will require you to enter data in additional questions.

OK

Figure 10. Skip Logic Warning Message.

These warnings are intended to flag the response for review. For more guidance regarding skip fields and blanks (nulls), see the technical assistance document for Skipped Field Warnings and Skip Logic.

Please refer to the chart below for more examples on the use of zeros, blanks (i.e., nulls), and NS.

Data Scenario	Submission System	Flat File	Excel Template
"My school district does not collect data on this topic."	Leave cell blank.	Leave cell blank.	Leave cell blank.
"My school collects data on this topic; but counted zero students."	Enter **0** in the cell.	Enter **0** in the cell.	Enter **0** in the cell.
"My school normally collects data on this topic, but it is missing."	Leave cell blank.	Leave cell blank.	Leave cell blank.
"We believe this is an error and would like to change the entry."	*Contact PSC for support.*	Enter **NS** to return data to "not submitted"	*Contact PSC for support.*

Figure 11. Examples on the use of zeros, blanks (i.e., nulls), and NS.

If a school is supposed to collect data but did not have the data to report to the CRDC (the first and third rows in **Figure 11**), the LEA will need to create an Action Plan in addition to leaving the cell blank.

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