

# TENNESSEE PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL COMMISSION

## Enrollment Procedures

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The purpose of these procedures is to lay out the minimum expectations regarding enrollment procedures for charter schools authorized by the Commission. Charter operators shall follow all federal and state laws, policies, and regulations even if it is not explicitly stated in these enrollment procedures. These procedures cover:

- [Application, Lottery, and Enrollment](#)
- [Identification of English Learners](#)
- [Enrolling Students with Disabilities](#)
- [Identification of Students Experiencing Homelessness](#)
- [Identification of Immigrant Children and Youth](#)
- [Enrolling Students in Foster Care](#)
- [Identification of Migrant Students](#)
- [Identification of Military-Connected Students](#)
- [Forms and Appendices](#)

### **Application, Lottery, and Enrollment**

- School Capacity and Enrollment Period
  - By November 30<sup>th</sup> of every year, each charter school shall notify the Commission of the enrollment period<sup>1</sup> and the number of available seats for the upcoming school year. If the school is still growing grades or capacity, the enrollment period and lottery must conclude by March 15<sup>th</sup> in order to provide timely enrollment estimates to the Department of Education.
  - Through this submission, the Commission shall identify each authorized charter school with the capacity to enroll additional students prior to the start of each school year. Capacities shall be posted on the Commission website at least fourteen (14) days prior to the beginning of the open enrollment period.<sup>2</sup>
- Application template
  - By November 30<sup>th</sup> of every year, each charter school shall provide to the Commission the application template that it plans to use during the enrollment period, and the Commission shall review, approve, or ask for revisions by December 31<sup>st</sup> of every year.
    - Charter schools shall ensure that the application does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, disability, and age.
    - Charter schools shall translate the application into the languages necessary for the community in which the school is located in, and the charter school shall be responsible for the costs of the translation.

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<sup>1</sup> The enrollment period shall be a defined period of time that the charter school will accept applications prior to conducting a lottery.

<sup>2</sup> T.C.A. § 49-2-128.

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- If a charter school receives more applications than the planned capacity, the charter school shall conduct a lottery in accordance with Tennessee Code Annotated (T.C.A.) § 49-13-113.<sup>3</sup>
- Enrollment of Students
  - As a part of the enrollment process, any student entering school for the first time must present:
    - A birth certificate or officially acceptable evidence of date of birth at the time of registration;<sup>4</sup> and
    - Evidence of state-required immunization.<sup>5</sup>
  - Any student enrolling in kindergarten, or any student enrolling for the first time in a US school, should provide evidence of a current physical examination dated within the last calendar year;<sup>6</sup> and
  - If a parent is unable to provide requested documentation:
    - If a parent does not have or cannot obtain a birth certificate, it is within the charter school's discretion to determine which documents are acceptable as proof of birth. A charter school cannot deny enrollment based on the inability to produce social security cards or numbers, health forms, birth certificates, or other information. A charter school can only require immunization records for enrollment.<sup>7</sup> Schools shall immediately enroll students in foster care or students experiencing homelessness even if the student cannot provide immunization records or other documents typically required for enrollment. Please see the Identification of Homeless Students section of this document for additional information regarding students who are homeless.
    - No family should be sent home to collect additional documentation prior to the enrolling the student, and if the charter school asks for this additional documentation, the school shall immediately state that no documentation will be used in relation to immigration status.<sup>8</sup>
    - If a student does not have the required immunizations, the school shall work with the family to schedule an immediate appointment for the student to receive the required immunizations.<sup>9</sup> Students may be exempt from immunization requirements due to medical or religious reasons. The school leader shall make the exemption determination and shall retain documentation of exemption from the parent/guardian.<sup>9</sup>
  - Proof of residency:

<sup>3</sup> Commission LEA Policy 6206 – School Admissions and Enrollment Period

<sup>4</sup> T.C.A. § 49-6-3008(b)

<sup>5</sup> T.C.A. § 49-6-5001(c)

<sup>6</sup> TRR/MS 0520-01-03-.08(2)(a); T.C.A. § 49-6-5004(a)

<sup>7</sup> T.C.A. § 49-3-5001, Commission LEA Policy 6203 – Physical Examinations and Immunizations

<sup>8</sup> Tennessee Department of Education, English as a Second Language Manual, September 2023

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Eligibility for exemption from immunization requirements is based on guidelines from the Tennessee Department of Health. More information about eligibility and required documentation can be found [here](#).

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- The charter school will use all resources available to them to assist in determining if enrolled students reside in the jurisdiction of the charter school, including but not limited to proof of residency, utility bills, real estate records, and home visits. It is within the discretion of the charter school to determine which documents are acceptable as proof of residency.
- In the event that a student resides with his/her parent(s)/guardian(s) in the home of another person, the school will follow the documentation standards outlined in the Commission's Shared Residency Verification Procedures.
- All student information must be complete and entered into the Commission's approved student information system by August 31 of each school year. Students enrolled after the start of a new school year must be entered into the Commission's approved student information system by the charter school within one (1) business day of a student's enrollment in the charter school.
- If the family of a student chooses to withdraw the student from the charter school, the school shall complete the following steps:
  - Have the parent(s)/guardian(s) complete the school's withdrawal document(s), indicating the reason(s) they are seeking withdrawal (a sample [Student Withdrawal Form](#) is contained within these procedures);
  - If possible, schedule a meeting with the student and parent(s)/guardian(s) to discuss the reason(s) for withdrawal and school options (a [Student Exit Interview](#) sample template is contained within these procedures);
  - Update the student's enrollment information and reason for withdrawal in the Commission's student information system within one (1) business day of the student withdrawing; and
  - Provide the student's records when requested by the school or district in which the student will be enrolling.
- Kindergarten Enrollment
  - In accordance with T.C.A. § 49-6-201 and Commission LEA Policy 6206, children entering kindergarten shall be five (5) years of age on or before August 15 of the new school year are eligible for enrollment.
  - If a child will be five (5) years of age on or before September 30, such child's parent(s)/guardian(s) may request that the child be admitted into kindergarten upon completion and passing of the Kindergarten Readiness Test. The authorized charter school shall receive approval of the test from the Commission prior to administering it and is responsible for administering and retaining all assessment documentation.
- Record request
  - Once a student enrolls in the charter school, the school shall immediately request the student's records from the student's previous school. The school shall follow the Commission's record request procedures and the record request processes for the LEA from which the student is transferring.

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- <sup>10</sup>
- Home Language Survey
  - The U.S. Department of Education requires that all school districts identify in a timely manner English Learner (EL) students who need language acquisition services.<sup>11</sup>
  - To do this, the Tennessee Department of Education requires districts in Tennessee to administer the Home Language Survey (HLS) to all students one time during their initial enrollment. For the HLS in Tennessee, three questions are required:<sup>12</sup>
    1. What is the first language the child learned to speak?
    2. What language does the child speak most often outside of school?
    3. What language do people usually speak in the child's home?
  - The charter school may also ask additional questions at this time such as the language in which the parent(s)/guardian(s) prefer to receive information from the school and about the services and education the student received at a previous school (if applicable).
  - The charter school shall translate the HLS into all languages necessary for the school's community and provide interpretation services, as necessary. The charter school is responsible for all translation and interpretation costs.
  - If possible, the Tennessee Department of Education recommends that the HLS is not included in the enrollment packet and is given to parent(s)/guardian(s) as a separate document so that its purpose can be thoroughly explained.<sup>13</sup>
  - The HLS should only be administered to a student one time in their academic career, and the original HLS should be in a student's cumulative record.<sup>14</sup>
  - Additional considerations on the HLS:
    - If the student has previously attended another LEA, the receiving charter school shall attempt to obtain the original HLS from the sending LEA. If the receiving charter school cannot obtain the original HLS after reasonable attempts to do so, including multiple, documented attempts to obtain the original HLS, the school may re-administer the HLS, but shall mark it as the secondary HLS. If the original is found, the charter school shall replace the secondary HLS in the student's file.
    - If there are discrepancies between the original HLS and the secondary HLS, the parent(s)/guardian(s) shall sign off on any discrepancies or changes.
  - A student's cumulative record shall only contain one HLS.
  - If a parent/guardian lists a language other than English in any of the three (3) required questions on the HLS, the charter school shall initiate the procedure for assessing a student's English proficiency.<sup>15</sup> However, prior to administering a screener assessment,

<sup>10</sup> Charter Commission LEA Policy 4207 – English Learners

<sup>11</sup> English Learner Tool Kit, USDOE, <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/oela/english-learner-toolkit/chap1.pdf>

<sup>12</sup> TDOE, ESL Program Guide; English Learner Tool Kit, USDOE, <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/oela/english-learner-toolkit/chap1.pdf>

<sup>13</sup> TDOE, ESL Program Guide

<sup>14</sup> Charter Commission may randomly audit students' cumulative records to ensure that the original HLSs are included in the records.

<sup>15</sup> TDOE, ESL Program Guide

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the school shall initiate a conversation with the parent and student to determine whether or not the student has any special education needs (e.g. severe cognitive delays, hearing impairment, etc.) which may be adversely affecting the student's language acquisition.

- **Assessing Eligibility for Language Services**
  - If a student is identified as non-English Language Background (NELB), the charter school should immediately review the student's cumulative record to find any documentation on previous screenings, assessments, or services received.
  - If no documentation is available or if after attempting to access proficiency documentation from the student's previous school or district, the charter school receives no information on the student in a timely manner, then an ESL teacher trained to give the screener assessment should administer the WIDA Kindergarten Screener or WIDA screener (second semester 1<sup>st</sup> grade and above) assessment within 30 calendar days.<sup>16</sup>
  - See Commission English Learner Monitoring procedures for additional information about assessing eligibility for language services.
- **Maintaining Records on English Learners**
  - The Tennessee Department of Education requires all school districts to maintain a current list of all NELB students.<sup>17</sup>
  - In order to comply with this requirement, by September 1<sup>st</sup> and February 1<sup>st</sup>, each authorized charter school shall ensure all NELB students are accurately coded in the Commission's student information system including names, immigrant status selected as "yes" if applicable, their home languages, their school grade levels, and any other information TDOE requires to be reported. The Commission will pull this information from EIS, but the school will be required to submit additional details as necessary.
  - For additional information about the required information for a student's permanent record, see the Commission's English Learner Monitoring Procedures.

### **Enrolling Students with Disabilities**

A charter school may not deny enrollment to any student because of a disability nor may they ask if a student has an IEP until the student is accepted in the school through the lottery process. After the student is accepted in the school, the charter school shall take the following steps to obtain the necessary documentation to appropriately serve all students:

- Ask the parent(s)/guardian(s) through enrollment forms or through an enrollment meeting if the student has an IEP or has received special education services. If yes, the school can ask the parent(s)/guardian(s) for copies of the IEP and any supporting documentation.
- Call the case manager from the student's previous school to set up a transition meeting, if possible.
- Immediately initiate the records request process to receive the student's cumulative records.

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<sup>16</sup> TDOE, ESL Program Guide

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

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- Immediately initiate the IEP team process and schedule an IEP team meeting within 10 days of the first day of school or within 10 days of the student’s enrollment at the school (if the student enrolls after the first day). The charter school shall complete the IEP development within 30 days of the first day of school or within 30 days of the student’s enrollment at the school (if the student enrolls after the first day), or as soon as possible after the student’s enrollment at the school.
- If the student was previously enrolled in a school out of state, the school must hold an eligibility meeting with a school psychologist within 30 days of the student’s enrollment at the school.

Once a student enrolls in the charter school, the school shall immediately begin compiling and uploading all necessary documentation, including signature pages, to TN PULSE. The Commission’s Special Education Monitoring Procedures outline all the documents that are required to be uploaded.

### **Identification of Students Experiencing Homelessness**

A charter school may not deny enrollment to any student because of their homeless status, nor may they ask if a student lacks a permanent residence until after the student has enrolled in the school, nor may the school deny enrollment to a student experiencing homelessness who is unable to provide documentation typically required for enrollment. After the student is enrolled in the school, the charter school shall take the following steps to quickly identify homeless students and provide access to education and support services:

- Include a student residency questionnaire<sup>18</sup> as a part of the school’s enrollment packet.
- If a parent/guardian indicates that the student’s residence is not fixed, regular, or adequate, initiate the determination of status process under McKinney-Vento.
- Please see the Commission’s Students Experiencing Homelessness Procedures for additional information about this process.

If a student is identified as experiencing homelessness, the school should use the student classification of (H) in the student information system and must select the student’s nighttime residence in their profile. Schools should also use the student classification of (J) Direct Certified Economically Disadvantaged as well with the start date of both (H) and (J) to coincide with the date of identification. Students maintain both the (H) and (J) codes for the duration of the school year in which they were identified as experiencing homelessness regardless of if their residency status changes.

### **Identification of Immigrant Children and Youth**

Students who are immigrants to the United States are not necessarily English Learners, and federal law requires the Commission to maintain accurate data related to immigrant students. As a part of the enrollment process, authorized charter schools are required to develop procedures for the identification

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<sup>18</sup> A sample student residency questionnaire is available in the McKinney-Vento Operating Procedures document. Schools may adapt this sample for their use.

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of immigrant students (which should not be misconstrued as identifying the status of immigrant students) and enter the accurate information in the student information system.

To gather this information, below are two questions to include as a part of a school’s enrollment forms that are considered best practice for the identification of immigrant students:

- Country of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_
- Date the student first enrolled in a U.S. school: \_\_\_\_\_

A student is considered an immigrant if they were not born in one of the fifty U.S. states, the District of Columbia, or Puerto Rico. Each authorized charter school must accurately enter the information into the Commission’s student information system and ensure that it is correctly reported in EIS. The Commission will monitor this data for accuracy on an ongoing basis.

**Enrolling Students in Foster Care**

Students in foster care shall be immediately enrolled if accepted through the enrollment period or lottery, even if the student is unable to produce records normally required for enrollment (i.e., academic records, immunization records, health records, proof of residency). After enrolling a student, the charter school shall then contact the student’s prior school for relevant records. Enrollment is defined as the child or youth in foster care regularly attending and fully participating in school while having their educational needs met.

Outside of the lottery window, applications for students in foster care must be accompanied by an Education Passport and signed consent for placement in a school of choice by the DCS Director of Education.

Students in foster care may be identified at the time of enrollment by the DCS Education Specialist or their current guardian, or through the School Nutrition List. If a student is identified as being in foster care, the school should use the student classification of (FOS01) in the student information system and the classification of (J) Direct Certified Economically Disadvantaged with the start date of both (FOS01) and (J) to coincide with the date of identification. Students maintain both the (FOS01) and (J) codes for the duration of the school year in which they were in foster care regardless of if their custody or placement status changes.

For additional information about educating students in foster care, see the Foster Care Procedures.

**Identification of Migrant Students**

- Screening of students
  - All authorized charter schools shall screen all enrolled students annually using the Occupational Survey to identify any students that may qualify for services through the Tennessee Migrant Education Program.

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- At the beginning of each school year and if new students enroll during the school year, all new and previously enrolled students shall complete the occupational survey. Required forms are included in the Migrant Education Program Procedures document.
- Schools shall keep all completed occupational surveys for the duration of the school year in one location and the Commission will regularly audit for compliance.
- Submission of Occupational Surveys
  - If the first question on the occupational survey has a response of “yes”, a copy of the survey with the student’s information must be securely sent to the Commission’s Migrant Education Liaison.
  - The Commission Migrant Education Liaison will submit the completed form to the Tennessee Migrant Education Program for further review.
  - If a student is identified as qualifying for services through the Migrant Education Program, the Commission Migrant Education Liaison will be notified and receive a Certificate of Eligibility for the student through the TNMigrant online system. In turn, the Commission contact will notify the school’s migrant education coordinator that a student has qualified for services.
  - The Certificate of Eligibility (“COE”) shall be kept on file in a student’s cumulative record and with the Commission’s migrant education liaison.
  - Within seven (7) business days of notification that a student qualifies for services, the school must code the student with an (I) in the Commission’s student information system.
  - The Commission Migrant Education Liaison will verify the free-reduced price lunch status of any student with a COE with the department of school nutrition for the qualifying time period (36 months from the Qualifying Arrival Date (QAD) noted on the COE).
- Individual Student Record
  - If a student receives services from the Migrant Education Program and withdraws from the school, the school leader or designee is responsible for completing the Individual Student Record (ISR) before withdrawing the student.
  - The completed ISR shall be sent to the Commission’s Migrant Education Liaison within fourteen (14) days of the student being withdrawn from the student information system.
  - The Commission’s Migrant Education Liaison will send the completed ISR to the Tennessee Migrant Education Program.
- For additional information about serving migrant students, see the Migrant Education Program Procedures.

### **Identification of Military-Connected Students**<sup>19</sup>

Pursuant to the requirements of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), authorized charter schools shall collect information regarding military-connected students. Such information shall be collected during

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<sup>19</sup> While schools are required to collect this information, students and parents are not required to respond. For additional guidance, see [TDOE Military-Connected Student Identifier Guidance, January 2018](#).

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enrollment and may be contained as part of the enrollment packet. The school shall provide an opportunity for enrolling students to indicate which of following apply to them:

- Not a military student
- Active Duty-Student is a dependent of an active-duty member of the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, or Coast Guard
- National Guard-Student is a dependent of a member of the Tennessee National Guard (Army National Guard or Air National Guard)
- Reserve-Student is a dependent of a member of a reserve force in the United States Military (Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, or Coast Guard)

The school shall report military-connected student data in the student information system.

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**Forms and Appendices**

- [Student Withdrawal Form](#) – *sample template*
- [Student Exit Interview Form](#) – *sample template*

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## Student Withdrawal Form

Please complete all the fields below to request withdrawal for your student. Once complete, the school will complete the withdrawal process for the student. Prior to the student withdrawing, an exit interview will be scheduled with school administrators.

Student Information				
<b>Last Name:</b>	<b>First Name:</b>	<b>Middle Initial:</b>		
<b>School Name:</b>	<b>Grade Level:</b>	<b>Gender:</b>		
<b>Current Address:</b>				
<b>New Address (if different):</b>				
<b>Parent/Guardian Name:</b>		<b>Phone Number:</b>		
<b>Student Services:</b> <input type="checkbox"/> IEP <input type="checkbox"/> 504 <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify):				
Withdrawal/Transfer Information				
<b>Reason for Withdrawal:</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Moving/Relocation <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation Issues <input type="checkbox"/> Academic Concerns <input type="checkbox"/> Culture/Discipline Concerns <input type="checkbox"/> Safety Concerns <input type="checkbox"/> Unknown <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify):				
<b>Explanation:</b>				
<b>Transferring to: District:</b> <input type="checkbox"/> SCS <input type="checkbox"/> MNPS <input type="checkbox"/> ASD <input type="checkbox"/> Out of State <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify):				
<table style="width: 100%; border: none;"> <tr> <td style="border: none; width: 20%;"></td> <td style="border: none;"><b>School Name:</b></td> </tr> </table>				<b>School Name:</b>
	<b>School Name:</b>			
Acknowledgement				
<p><b>By signing below, I affirm that I am requesting a withdrawal for the above named student. I certify that the withdrawal information and reason(s) provided above are accurate. I understand that the school will finalize the withdrawal and conduct an exit interview with me prior to the withdrawal.</b></p>				

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent/Guardian Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

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## Student Exit Interview Form

1. Attendee Information		
Student:		
Parent/Guardian:		
Principal or designee:		
Other (specify relationship):		
Other (specify relationship):		
Other (specify relationship):		
2. Withdrawal Information		
Reason(s) for Withdrawal (Please be specific):		
What specific actions has the school taken to support your child?		
What more could the school have done to support your child?		
3. Transfer Information		
New School and District:		
What made this school a better fit for your student?		
4. Acknowledgement		
<b>I affirm that this withdrawal request was initiated by the parent/guardian of the above named student and the above named persons participated in an exit interview.</b>		
Parent/Guardian Name:	Parent/Guardian Signature:	Date:

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Principal Name:	Principal Signature:	Date: