



# Exceptional Student Services

## Certificate of Educational Convenience Frequently Asked Questions

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# Certificate of Educational Convenience – A (Unorganized Territories)

## What does the Certificate of Educational Convenience (CEC) do for families in unorganized territories?

The CEC allows pupils who reside in an unorganized territory to enroll and attend an Arizona public school under a prescribed process.

## What are unorganized territories?

Unorganized territories are geographic areas not represented by any school district boundary as recognized by the United States Census Bureau nor the Arizona Department of Education.

## How does CEC enrollment work?

CEC enrollment for pupils in unorganized territories allows pupils to be admitted into school districts throughout the state. The process is similar to open enrollment but contains a significant distinction. The definition of open enrollment references "nonresident pupils," which does not include pupils residing in unorganized territories. Rather, nonresident pupils only represent those who reside in this state and are enrolled in or are seeking enrollment in a school district other than the **school district in which the pupil resides**<sup>1</sup>. Given that pupils in unorganized territories do not reside in a school district, this means that while the enrollment is procedurally similar to open enrollment, it is not recognized using the same selection criteria. Capacity is an integral part of the CEC enrollment for pupils in organized territories, with school districts and the county school superintendent's offices having roles to play regarding this criterion. The enrollment of a pupil from an unorganized territory is deemed, for the purpose of determining student count, to be enrolled in the school district of actual attendance.

## What are the responsibilities of parents?

Parents residing in unorganized territories must enroll within a school district they wish their child to attend, and in tandem, provide the necessary information required by the school district for enrollment for the CEC to be completed. The parent is also required to work through any procedural components of the CEC with the county, such as reconciling which school the child

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<sup>1</sup> A.R.S. § 15-816

will attend if the county determines that a child shall attend a different school or from a selection of feasible schools to educate the child.

### What are the responsibilities of school districts?

Parents residing in unorganized territories seeking enrollment within a neighboring school district must be afforded the opportunity to enroll and file a CEC. Both processes are implemented in parallel, and traditional open enrollment will not be used in lieu of the CEC. School districts should also discuss capacity issues with the county and communicate when submitting the CEC so that the county can consider whether it is necessary to change or offer a selection of different schools for a pupil to attend.

### What are the county's responsibilities?

The county (through the county school superintendent's office) determines the feasibility of the pupil attending the school selected and enrolled in by the parent. If it is determined that it is not feasible for the pupil to attend a school in the school district or county of residence, the county school superintendent shall issue a CEC authorizing the pupil to attend a school in an adjoining school district or county, whether within or outside of this state. The county may offer alternative enrollment options at school districts that are feasible (i.e., respecting school capacities) for parents. **Counties must work with school districts on the CEC in a timely fashion** to ensure that the child has no unreasonable delay in enrollment or educational processes. If the county provides choices to the parent that are declined, there is no further obligation for the county and the school district to continue any enrollment for the pupil.

Furthermore, If the annual number of CECs or students attending through open enrollment into any adjacent school district from a single unorganized territory exceeds one hundred fifty, the Arizona superintendent of public instruction shall notify the county school superintendent, who will then notify the residents of the unorganized territory that the residents are required to join an adjacent school district. If the adjacent school district is a common school district within the boundaries of a union high school district, the unorganized territory shall join both the common school district and the union high school district. If the adjacent school district is a common school district that is not within the boundaries of a high school district, the unorganized territory shall join the common school district, and high school pupils who reside in the previously unorganized territory shall be educated in the same manner as high school pupils who reside in

the common school district. This is voted on by the residents of an unorganized territory by a ballot prepared by the county superintendent's office.

## Certificate of Educational Convenience – A (Residence in a School District)

### What does the Certificate of Educational Convenience (CEC) do for families already residing in school district boundaries?

The CEC allows pupils precluded by distance, lack of adequate transportation facilities, or a parent's or guardian's employment from attending a school in the school district or county of the pupil's residence to enroll and attend another school under a prescribed process.

### How does enrollment work?

Pupils already residing within school district boundaries are considered nonresident pupils for open enrollment and this type of CEC. If a CEC is issued to allow a student to attend school out of state, the student is enrolled in the school district of the student's residence or, potentially, a school operated by the county (as applicable).

### What are the responsibilities of parents?

Parents must enroll within a district they wish for their child to attend, and in tandem, provide the necessary information required by the school district for enrollment and for the CEC to be completed. The parent is also required to work through any procedural components of the CEC with the county, such as reconciling which school the child will attend if the county determines that a child shall attend a different school or from a selection of feasible schools.

### What are the responsibilities of school districts?

Parents residing in school districts other than the one where the parent seeks enrollment must be afforded the opportunity to enroll their child and file a CEC. This scenario is procedurally identical to open enrollment. If a CEC is applied for, the school districts should also discuss capacity issues with the county and communicate when submitting the CEC for the county to consider whether it is necessary to change or offer a selection of different schools for a pupil to attend.

### What are the county's responsibilities?

The county (through the county school superintendent's office) determines the feasibility of the pupil attending the school selected and enrolled in by the parent. If it is determined that it is not

feasible for the pupil to attend a school in the school district or county of residence, the county school superintendent shall issue a CEC authorizing the pupil to attend a school in an adjoining school district or county, whether within or outside of this state. The county may offer alternative enrollment options at school districts that are feasible (i.e., respecting school capacities) for parents. **Counties must work with school districts on the CEC in a timely fashion** to ensure that the child has no unreasonable delay in enrollment or educational processes. If the county provides choices to the parent that are declined, there is no further obligation for the county and the school district to continue any enrollment for the pupil.

## Certificate of Educational Convenience – B (Unique Scenarios)

### What are the unique scenarios for a Certificate of Educational Convenience (CEC)?

A CEC shall be issued by the county superintendent's office for a pupil to attend school in the school district or an adjoining school district if a child is placed by an agency of this state or a state or federal court of competent jurisdiction for any of the following scenarios:

- a) A state rehabilitation or corrective institution
- b) A foster home or child care agency, or an institution that is licensed and supervised by the Department of Child Safety or the Department of Health Services
- c) A residential facility that is operated or supported by the Department of Economic Security or the Department of Health Services
- d) Under the supervision of the Department of Juvenile Corrections, a residence pursuant to the Interstate Compact on Juveniles

A pupil cannot be issued a CEC in this section if the pupil is:

- a) placed in the same district as the pupil's parents' or legal guardians' residence; or
- b) placed without a court order, and the pupil's parents or legal guardians are not residents of this state.

### How does enrollment work?

Enrollment operates similarly to standard admissions for the pupil, and the pupil is determined and counted as enrolled in the school district of attendance.

## What are the responsibilities of parents?

Parents and legal guardians are required to work with school districts as necessary, similar to standard admissions requirements.

## What are the responsibilities of school districts?

School districts receiving CECs under any of the relevant scenarios in this section are required to enroll the child and work with the appropriate bodies relevant to each scenario.

## What are the county's responsibilities?

The county (through the county school superintendent's office) is required to issue a CEC for pupils meeting the requirements for the respective scenarios in this section. The county must work with the school district where the facility resides or with neighboring school districts to determine the school the pupil will attend.

## How are group home placements pertinent?

Group home placements are only recognized if the placement meets the following requirements:

- a) A pupil must be placed by an agency of the state or by a state or federal court
- b) Group home must meet any licensing or support requirements as outlined under the scenarios (e.g., operated or supported by the Department of Economic Security, etc.)

"Supported by an agency" may mean they are recognized for third-party placements for pupils by the respective department. Any pupil who does not meet these requirements shall not have a CEC issued, and standard residency requirements apply for the school district where the pupil must enroll.