



# Exceptional Student Services

## Frequently Asked Questions

### *Residential Vouchers*

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## Why must the district or charter conduct an evaluation?

**A.R.S. §15-765(E)** requires the home school district to conduct an evaluation under §15-766 or review the educational placement of a student previously determined eligible for special education when a state placing agency places a student in a private residential facility.

**A.R.S. §15-1183(B)** further specifies that when a student is placed for care, safety, or treatment reasons, the home school district must complete all screening or identification procedures to determine whether the student qualifies as a child with a disability and whether a residential special education placement is required.

## Who is responsible for monitoring the educational services while a student is at an ADE-approved residential treatment center (RTC)?

The Home School District (HSD) is responsible.

- **A.R.S. §15-1183(B)**: The HSD must monitor educational services and plan for the student's transition back to public school.
- **A.R.S. §15-1185(A)**: The HSD must review educational progress and coordinate reintegration when appropriate, in collaboration with the RTC and the state placing agency.
- **A.A.C. R7-2-404(6)(a)**: The HSD must regularly monitor progress, ensure annual IEP reviews, and complete three-year reevaluations as required.

## Why is the public education agency (PEA) responsible for payment if the required documentation is not submitted?

Under A.R.S. §15-1183(C), if an extension is denied or the HSD fails to meet requirements for a continuing voucher, the district or charter becomes responsible for educational costs until all requirements are met. In cases of seriously delinquent applications, a PEA's IDEA Entitlement Grant funding may be suspended due to failure to provide FAPE.

## How many students are placed through the residential voucher system each year?

Approximately 1,500 students are placed annually by state placing agencies for care, safety, and treatment reasons. Historically, 55% are found not eligible for special education, while 45% are eligible.

## Who should participate in the Review of Existing Data (RED)?

The group of people who would comprise a child's individualized education program (IEP) team per IDEA 300.321 are:

1. The parents of the child
2. Not less than one regular education teacher of the child (if the child is, or may be, participating in the regular education environment)
3. Not less than one special education teacher of the child, or where appropriate, not less than one special education provider of the child
4. A representative of the public agency who
  - i. Is qualified to provide, or supervise the provision of, specially designed instruction to meet the unique needs of children with disabilities
  - ii. Is knowledgeable about the general education curriculum
  - iii. Is knowledgeable about the availability of resources of the public agency
5. An individual who can interpret the instructional implications of evaluation results, who may be a member of the team described in paragraphs (a)(2) through (a)(6) of this section
6. At the discretion of the parent or the agency, other individuals who have knowledge or special expertise regarding the child, including related services personnel as appropriate
7. Whenever appropriate, the child with a disability

## Can the review of existing data be completed without parent consent?

Yes. Parent participation is highly recommended, but parent consent is not required before a review of existing data as part of an evaluation or reevaluation per IDEA 34 CFR §300.300. If, after the review of existing data, the team determines that more data is needed, then parent consent is required for the team to proceed.

If the parent cannot be located, must the PEA request a surrogate?

Yes, for complete multidisciplinary evaluations.

No, for a review of existing data only.

Surrogate parent information is [located on the Surrogate Parent website](#).

Is the RTC representative a part of the multidisciplinary evaluation team?

Yes. Per A.R.S. §15-765, the RTC representative should contribute input, although a written section of the evaluation report is not required by them.

What if the student has no special education history?

An evaluation is still required. A PWN alone, stating that a student has no special education history, will not suffice. Per A.R.S. §15-765(E) and §15-1183(B), ADE approval cannot occur without a proper evaluation.

For non-SPED students, the HSD must submit:

- Review of Existing Data
- Non-Eligibility determination (with team member names)
- PWN for Non-Eligibility

Guidance is located at [Required Documents for HSDs \(opens in new window\)](#).

Must PEAs report all residential voucher students, including non-SPED students in their Student Information System (SIS)?

Yes. All students must be entered in the PEA's Student Information System (SIS).

- Tuition Payer Code 7 – Special Education
- Tuition Payer Code 4 – Non-Special- Education

Reporting guidance is available at [Reporting Special Education Students Who Attend Residential Treatment Centers \(opens in new window\)](#). If additional information is needed, please [email the ESS Data Management team](#).

## How does an HSD complete a RED for a student with limited educational history?

If you have limited data, please allow the RTC approximately three weeks to get to know the student. Then, the RTC can provide input for the evaluation. The depth of the RED is up to the team, the [Required Documents for HSDs \(opens in new window\)](#) will provide additional information.

## What is required for a student found ineligible under IDEA (Non-SPED), but eligible for a 504 Plan?

The documents to submit are:

- Review of Existing Data
- Non-Eligibility determination (with team member names)
- PWN for Non-Eligibility
- The 504 Plan

The required documents are located at [Required Documents for HSDs \(opens in new window\)](#).

## Does the HSD have educational obligations for a student with a GED?

Yes. A GED is not considered a recognized high school diploma. If a student with a GED wants to continue his or her education at the RTC, the student is eligible for funding. A.R.S. §15- 821 states, “all schools shall admit children who are between the ages of six and twenty-one years who reside in the school district and who meet the requirements for enrollment in one of the grades or programs offered in the school. A school may refuse to admit a child who has graduated from a high school with a recognized diploma.”

## How are evaluations, IEPs, and PWN documents uploaded?

Documents must be submitted in HSD Applications. Instructions are available in:

- [Creating an HSD Application and Uploading Documents \(opens in new window\)](#)
- [Training for HSDs \(opens in new window\)](#)

Creating an HSD application is also the process for submitting a new IEP or reevaluation for students with current HSD applications. A new HSD application overrides the previous

one. Please make sure to change the new IEP and/or reevaluation date in the drop-down calendar within the application.

## When are evaluation documents due?

Evaluation documents must be submitted by the Initial application expiration date, which is:

- 60 days from RTC entry date, or
- 90 days with an approved extension

## How does the HSD submit an extension application?

An extension provides 30 additional days to evaluate. Initial applications are valid for 60 days; approved extensions extend the evaluation timeframe to 90 days. Instructions are available at [Extension Application Instructions \(opens in new window\)](#). If the evaluation documentation is complete, it must be uploaded in an HSD application, not in an extension.

## How do PEAs align their calendars with RTC calendars?

RTCs submit their calendars to ESS. Calendars are located at [RTC Calendars \(opens in new window\)](#). PEAs may download these calendars to enter into their Student Information System (SIS).

## What is the exit date when a student transfers between RTCs on the same day?

The exit date is the day before the new facility's entry date.

## What if the parent revokes consent?

The HSD should select Non-Special Education (NSE) in the HSD application and upload:

- The prior MET
- The signed revocation-of-consent documentation from the parent
- The associated PWN

## What happens when a student has been promoted to high school while at the RTC?

The RTC must exit the student and use the flowchart to determine the next listed age-appropriate district or charter from the enrollment history, then notify the state placing agency (SPA) for Initial application submission. This typically occurs with 8th graders being promoted from an elementary district (K-8). The previous HSD will send a copy of the promotion certificate to the RTC and the new HSD. It is the responsibility of the elementary school district to forward all documents to the new HSD.

## What should an IEP team do if considering an RTC placement for a student?

If residential placement is considered by an IEP team, please [email the ESS Vouchers team](#). We will provide the contacts for the ACC-RBHA (AHCCCS Complete Care-Regional Behavioral Health Authority). The ACC-RBHA will become part of the IEP team and conduct a behavioral health assessment. The placement must be in an ADE-approved RTC for voucher funding. The documentation must be approved by ADE prior to placement at the RTC and the IEP must include exit criteria and a reintegration plan. Additional information for Residential Special Education (RSE) placements is located at [RSE Placements \(opens in new window\)](#).

## Who processes High-Cost Child (HCC) claims?

High-Cost Child (HCC) claims are processed through the ESS Vouchers and Claims system by ESS Program Management, not the ESS Vouchers team. Please make sure that you do not have the RTC, SPA, or Institutional Voucher role assignments, as those roles will prevent you from accessing the ESS Vouchers and Claims system. For questions about HCC, [email ESSProgMgmt@azed.gov](mailto:ESSProgMgmt@azed.gov).

## How do RTCs become ADE-approved?

Residential treatment centers (RTCs) apply for annual approval through the ESS Special Education Program Approvals (SEPA) application. Here, RTCs provide their curriculum, SPED policies and procedures, liability insurance, First Aid/CPR information, and SPED-certified teacher(s) verification. In addition, RTCs sign the [RTC Agreements \(opens in new window\)](#).

For questions, email us at [ESSVouchers@azed.gov](mailto:ESSVouchers@azed.gov).