



**Alternative Program Designation Guidance  
September 1, 2023**

Effective June 14, 2019 a new chapter titled “Alternative Program” was added to Subtitle A “Office of the State Superintendent of Education” of Title 5 “Education” in the District of Columbia Municipal Regulations. This chapter sets forth the eligibility criteria for a school or specialized program within a school to be designated as an alternative education program and establishes the application process.

The Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE) is releasing the below guidance to provide more information aligned with the above-noted chapter. This guidance provides further information on the following: 1) application process, 2) application timeline, 3) eligible school or program characteristics (including secondary credential, full-time instruction) and 4) eligible student characteristics.

**Application Process**

*2024-25 School Year Application Process:*

The application process for local education agencies (LEAs) requesting an alternative program designation for a school or program within a school involves three steps: 1) LEA completes the Alternative Program Designation Application and submits to OSSE, 2) OSSE reviews the application and 3) the designation is either granted or denied.

*New Applicants:*

On behalf of schools or specialized programs within a school under their jurisdiction, LEAs must submit an application to OSSE. That application must be approved in order to be eligible for alternative program designation. LEAs must use the Alternative Program Designation Application provided by OSSE and submit the completed application to Dr. Antoinette Mitchell, assistant superintendent of Postsecondary and Career Education with a copy to Dr. Chimere Jones, director of Policy and Planning, and Ryan Aurori, director of Budget and Finance (see below for contact information).

Via Email:

If emailing a completed application, the email must be sent to the following individuals: [Antoinette.Mitchell@dc.gov](mailto:Antoinette.Mitchell@dc.gov), [Chimere.Jones@dc.gov](mailto:Chimere.Jones@dc.gov) and [Ryan.Aurori@dc.gov](mailto:Ryan.Aurori@dc.gov). Please use the email subject line, “Alternative Program Designation Application.”

Via Mail:

If mailing a completed application, copies must be sent to all of the individuals below:

Dr. Antoinette Mitchell  
Assistant Superintendent of Postsecondary and Career Education  
Office of the State Superintendent of Education  
1050 First St. NE  
Fifth Floor  
Washington, DC 20002

Dr. Chimere Jones  
Director of Policy and Planning  
Postsecondary and Career Education  
Office of the State Superintendent of Education  
1050 First St. NE  
Fifth Floor  
Washington, DC 20002

Ryan Aurori  
Director, Budget and Finance  
Office of the State Superintendent of Education  
1050 First St. NE  
Third Floor  
Washington, DC 20002

Following the application deadline, OSSE has 30 calendar days to review the application and do one of the following:

- Determine that the information contained in the application is sufficient to approve alternative program designation;
- Determine that the information contained in the application is sufficient to deny alternative program designation; or
- Request an additional two-week window to collect additional information from an LEA including but not limited to, data verification of student population, verification of student full-time enrollment status and additional documentation of programmatic approach.

OSSE will notify LEAs in writing via email regarding the status of their request for alternative program designation.

*Process for Reapplying:*

An LEA with an alternative program designation shall re-apply during the final year of its designation period to ensure the ability to plan for the appropriate funding status and maintain continuity of services at the “Alternative Program” grade level for the upcoming school year. An LEA must follow the application process outlined above for new applicants when re-applying for alternative program designation.

**Application Timeline:**

<b>School Year</b>	<b>LEA Submission Window</b>	<b>Notification</b>	<b>Application Approval Duration</b>	<b>When to Renew</b>
2019-20*	June 14-July 15, 2019	By Aug. 8, 2019	Through SY 2022-23	Fall 2022
2020-21	Aug 1-Aug. 30, 2019	By Sept. 30, 2019	Through SY 2022-23	Fall 2022
2021-22	Aug. 3-Sept. 1, 2020	By Oct. 1, 2020	Through SY 2023-24	Fall 2023
2022-23	Aug. 5-Sept. 3, 2021	By Oct. 3, 2021	Through SY 2024-25	Fall 2024
2023-24	Sept. 6-Oct. 6, 2022	By Oct. 30, 2022	Through SY 2025-26	Fall 2025
2024-25	Sept. 1-Oct. 2, 2023	By Oct. 30, 2023	Through SY 2026-27	Fall 2026

\* SY 2019-20 will use a different timeline than subsequent academic years.

**Further Information on the “Alternative Program” Chapter:**

The chapter titled “Alternative Program” added to Subtitle A “Office of the State Superintendent of Education” of Title 5 “Education” in the District of Columbia Municipal Regulations provided guidance on eligibility criteria for alternative program designation. The below provides further information concerning Section 7502, “Eligibility Criteria for Alternative Program Designation.”

Section 7502, “Eligibility Criteria for Alternative Program Designation” reads as follows:

*To be a designated alternative program, the following criteria shall be satisfactorily demonstrated upon application and maintained throughout the designation period:*

- (a) *The school mission includes a focus on serving students meeting any of the criteria described in §7502.1(e);*
- (b) *The school or specialized program within the school provides programming, including but not limited to, instruction, and academic and non-academic supports targeted to students meeting any of the criteria described in §7502.1(e);*
- (c) *The school or specialized program within the school provides a full-time equivalent academic track culminating in the first-time completion of a secondary academic credential;*
- (d) *The students enrolled in the school, or in the specialized program within the school, include, but are not necessarily limited to, those who have reached the minimum age of 13 and who have not exceeded the maximum age of 24; and*
- (e) *Based on either the prior school year or an average of the previous two school years, 75 percent of the students between the ages of 13 and 24*

*enrolled full-time equivalent instruction in the school, or specialized program within school, identified as one or more of the following:*

- (1) At least one year older, or more, than the expected age for the grade in which the student is, or should be, enrolled;*
- (2) Qualifies for Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF);*
- (3) Qualifies for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP);*
- (4) Experiencing homelessness, as defined in 5A DCMR § 5099;*
- (5) Currently involved with or under the jurisdiction of the District of Columbia Child and Family Services Agency (CFSA);*
- (6) The student has been expelled from their prior school;*
- (7) The student has a history of being on short- or long-term suspension at prior school; or*
- (8) The student is under court supervision.*

*To be designated as an alternative program during the first year of a school or specialized program's operation, § 7502.1(a)-(d), shall be satisfactorily demonstrated upon application and maintained throughout the one-year designation period.*

**School or Program Eligibility:**

As detailed in the alternative program designation regulations, schools applying for alternative program designation must serve students enrolled full-time on an academic track working toward their first secondary credential.

*Clarification of Secondary Credential for Alternative Program Designation:*

- Consistent with other areas of state policy, the Spanish GED is recognized as a secondary credential for the purposes of alternative program designation.
- Students under the age of 22 who have received a certificate of individualized education program (IEP) completion but continue to work toward a high school diploma or GED will remain eligible for the first secondary credential criteria.

*Clarity on "Full-Time Equivalent instruction":*

The regulations require that schools designated as alternative programs will only receive funding for students receiving full-time equivalent instruction. Student schedules may vary based on the structure

of the school; however, students must be in an academic track that culminates in a secondary credential for five hours or more per school day for a minimum of 180 school days.

### **Student Eligibility for Alternative Program Designation:**

Additional guidance concerning student eligibility as outlined in Section 7502.1(e):

- *Section 7502.1(e)(1): “At least one year older, or more, than the expected age for the grade in which the student is, or should be, enrolled.”*
  - For students assigned to a grade-level, this definition includes students who were at least one year older than the expected age for the grade in which they are enrolled.
  - Students assigned to a grade-level but are over compulsory age are included in the above definition.
  - Students enrolled in a GED program are reviewed based on their previous grade level and current age.
  - Characteristic applied only if student met this characteristic prior to enrollment at school seeking alternative program designation.
- *Section 7502.1(e)(6): “The student has been expelled from their prior school.”*
  - For these purposes, “expelled” is defined as an action taken by the LEA removing a child from his/her regular school for disciplinary purposes for the remainder of the school year or longer in accordance with LEA policy.
- *Section 7502.1(e)(7): “The student has a history of being on short- or long-term suspension at prior school.”*
  - For these purposes, “history” is defined as a short- or long-term suspension having occurred within the prior two school years. The suspension must have occurred at the student’s prior school.
  - In-school suspension is defined as instances in which a student is temporarily removed from his/her regular classroom(s) for disciplinary purposes but remains under the direct supervision of school personnel. Direct supervision means school personnel are physically in the same location as students under their supervision.
  - Out-of-school suspension is defined as instances in which a student is temporarily removed from his/her regular school for disciplinary purposes to another setting (e.g., home, behavior center). This includes both removals in which no IEP services are provided because the removal is 10 days or fewer as well as removals in which the student continues to receive services according to his/her IEP.
  - The duration of short- or long-term suspension is defined as anything greater than one day.

### **Contact Information**

For questions about alternative program designation, contact:

Ryan Aurori

Director, Budget and Finance  
Office of the State Superintendent of Education  
1050 First St. NE, Third Floor  
Washington, DC 20002  
Email: [Ryan.Aurori@dc.gov](mailto:Ryan.Aurori@dc.gov)