



Guidance for Private School Equitable Share Services as Affected by the Coronavirus Outbreak of 2020

The Coronavirus pandemic has caused many governors and school districts to close for the near future. These school closures have impacted equitable share services agreements between public and non-public schools that participate in federal programs. This guidance has been developed to assist public and non-public schools in navigating the complex issues surrounding these circumstances. This document has been set up in a Question and Answer format.

Q-Can the district provide services to the non-public school if the public schools are closed?

A-Yes, the district can continue to provide services, however, it is not required to. The district should meet with the non-public school to discuss the situation. A district hired staff person or third-party provider could come in as long as the district and/or contracted party agree.

Q-Is the district allowed to use a virtual platform to provide services?

A-This is allowable. The agreement on the how, where, and when to provide services is between the district and the non-public school. The ESSA does not state any restrictions on the format of services.

Q-Due to school closures, the district will not be able to provide all the services under the equitable share agreement by the end of school. What are our options?

A-There are a several options to use. First, both parties could agree to extend services as many agreements end several weeks before the official end of school. Next, the hours of service could be lengthened during the day or by adding before and/or after school programs. The district and private school could also run a summer school program. Finally, the ESSA does allow the district to carryover funds into the next school year if there are extenuating circumstances.

Q-If services are extended into the next school year, how does the district budget this in Egrants?

A-Egrants only provides a basic budgeting procedure for private schools. The Private/Non-public participation tab in the Consolidated Application show how much each private school has in equitable share funds. The district is required to keep an exact accounting of all funds set aside and expended for each private school in its own books. If a district will need to carry over funds, the total amount of funds carried over must be shown under Targeting Step 4 in the Consolidated application. The amount of funds for the upcoming year in Egrants under the Private/Non-public school tab will only reflect the total dollars for the present year. The district will use the new set aside amount for the current year and add in the funds that were carried over from the previous year to adjust the overall amount. This combined amount will be shown in Egrants under the Title I-Basic budget detail page on Topic 8. The district will

not be able to adjust the amount for each non-public school under the Participating Private/Non-public school tab. The district is required to keep track of this in their books.

Q-Does the district need to keep track of these meetings?

A-As always, it is the responsibility of the district to keep a record of all meetings with the non-public school. This will include following the Montana Open Meetings law-a posted agenda, sign-in sheet, and minutes. The district and the non-public school must also complete the notice of consultation and equitable share services agreement forms if and where needed. These will need to be submitted to the private school ombudsman for review.

If you have further questions, contact Jack O'Connor, Private School Ombudsman, at joconnor2@mt.gov or 406-444-3083.