

# Family Education Sheet

## Frequently Asked Questions: What is Out-of-District Placement?



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This family education sheet gives answers to questions we often hear parents ask about out of district placement for their child.

### What is "out-of-district placement," and who can request it?

Out-of-district placement happens when a child's educational needs can't be met by their local schools, and they are 'placed' out of that school. Out-of-district placement students may be placed in a public collaborative, private day-long program or residential program.

In some cases, the child's school proposes out-of-district placement. But in most cases, a parent/caregiver needs to request that the school consider out-of-district placement during an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) meeting.

For an overview on understanding what out-of-district placement looks like, visit:

<https://www.understood.org/articles/en/out-of-district-placement-how-it-works>

### Who pays for out-of-district placements?

Your child's school district is responsible for paying the costs, including transportation, for your child to attend a school if they agree that the placement is appropriate or through a hearing process. Families can choose to place their child in an out-of-district placement on their own, but the family would be responsible for the cost of school tuition and transportation. This can be very expensive.

### How long will it take for my child to be placed in the new setting?

The process can take 2 – 3 years (or more) to finalize. There are many different reasons why it may take so long. For this reason, it's important to bring your concerns to the school district as soon as you are considering an out-of-district placement.

Common reasons this process can take such a long time include:

- Finding a right fit school. This may include referrals from your child's current school to the out-of-district school(s), observations and assessments.
- Availability of openings and school staff in the new setting
- Attempts may be made for the current school to revise the current IEP in order to try and meet the child's

needs. This includes meetings with the school and parent/caregiver(s) to discuss changes.

### How is a new school chosen?

The process for choosing which school is best for a child is different for every family, depending on your school district and recommendation for your individual child's school setting.

While some special education schools may be open to speaking with families ahead of speaking with your school district, it's more common for the local school district to make the first contact.

For more information on placement considerations visit:

<https://www.doe.mass.edu/lawsregs/603cmr28.html?section=06>

### I am considering a special education advocate or special education attorney. What is the difference?

Finding the right placement for a child's academic needs can be a complex process. The school district and family may disagree about appropriate placement and services throughout the process. There are supports available for families to help navigate this process.

Both educational advocates and educational lawyers can negotiate with your child's school on your behalf, help write letters to your school on your behalf, review your child's IEP or 504 plan, attend IEP or 504 meetings and give you information about your child's rights.

There are differences between advocates and lawyers and each offers a different type of service.

For an overview on understanding the differences between special education advocates and special education attorney, visit:

[https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5eba93aff8ad71474552da2d/t/5ec6998b6a81fb28a7df16b3/1590073740372/Special\\_Education\\_in\\_MA\\_Feb2013.pdf](https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5eba93aff8ad71474552da2d/t/5ec6998b6a81fb28a7df16b3/1590073740372/Special_Education_in_MA_Feb2013.pdf)

### Helpful tips

- Keep a copy of all of your child's IEP and other documents referenced during all IEP meetings.
- Make all requests for IEP revisions and IEP reviews in writing so that you can create a chronological timeline of interactions with the school.
- Consider bringing someone with you to your child's IEP meeting\* to take notes so that you can focus on conversation with the IEP team and ask questions.

*\*You need to tell the school if you plan to bring someone with you to an IEP meeting. Tell them before the meeting.*

For more tips and strategies to help guide you through the IEP process, visit:

<https://www.massadvocates.org>

## Links for more information

Children's Law of Massachusetts Special Education in Massachusetts

<https://www.clcm.org/>

Wrightslaw

<https://www.wrightslaw.com/>

A Parent's Guide to Special Education in Massachusetts

<https://www.doe.mass.edu/sped/videos/parents-guide/index.html#/>

Massachusetts Association of Approved Special Education Schools

<https://maaps.org/>

<https://mhlac.org/wp->

[content/uploads/2018/10/ed\\_sped\\_placement.pdf](content/uploads/2018/10/ed_sped_placement.pdf)