

Open Enrollment in Arizona



What is Open Enrollment?

- Open enrollment allows Arizona students to attend public school outside of their regular attendance area, if there is space. ([A.R.S. § 15-816.01](#)).
 - Open enrollment is tuition-free.
 - Open enrollment applies to public school districts and charter schools.
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How Do I Apply for Open Enrollment?

- The application process varies by district.
 - Find open enrollment policies and applications on school district websites or ask the school district administrative personnel for a paper copy of the policy and application.
 - Complete the school district's application for open enrollment.
 - If the school district requires it, complete the general enrollment paperwork and provide information and supporting documentation (such as your child's immunization records and proof of residency).
 - If your child has an Individualized Education Program (IEP) or 504 plan, you may be required to provide a copy to the school district. The school district uses the IEP or 504 plan to determine if there is room in the program that would be the best fit for your child.
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When Can I Apply for Open Enrollment?

- Check the school district's open enrollment policies.
 - While some schools have deadlines to submit applications, other schools may accept students on a rolling basis.
 - Keep in mind that in some districts, open enrollment students must reapply every year – check with your specific school to verify whether this requirement applies.
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How is Acceptance through Open Enrollment Determined?

- Acceptance depends on school capacity and the capacity of the specific program/placement your child needs.
 - School districts may consider a variety of factors in determining whether a particular school or school program has capacity to accept students, such

as class size, physical facilities, staff availability, student/teacher ratios, and service provider capacity.

- The general rule is that if a school has capacity, they should permit open enrollment.
 - A school district may give enrollment preference to, and reserve capacity for:
 - children of persons who are employed by or at a school in the school district;
 - foster children.
 - Open enrollment is a year-to-year decision and a school may choose not to extend open enrollment acceptance for the next school year if it no longer has the capacity to serve an additional student.
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Can I Appeal A Decision to Deny Open Enrollment?

- If your child's open enrollment application is rejected, the school district should clearly explain its reason for the refusal.
 - Generally, refusals are only permissible if (1) the school is at capacity or (2) the student has a history of expulsion or is in the process of being expelled ([A.R.S. § 15-841\(C\)](#)).
 - If you believe a school district had capacity to serve your child but still rejected your child's open enrollment application, you can:
 - Ask for an explanation of the decision to reject your child's application.
 - Ask the school district to provide you with its open enrollment policy to ensure the policy was followed in your child's case.
 - If you have only communicated with a particular school, consider asking district-level staff or a governing board member for an explanation.
 - If you believe your child's application was rejected for discriminatory reasons, consider filing a complaint with the school district's Section 504 coordinator or [filing a complaint](#) with the U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights.
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How does Open Enrollment Impact Students with Disabilities?

- A school's or district's capacity for students with disabilities may be limited, particularly if the students' IEPs or 504 plans require they be educated in certain types of placements.
- If you believe the school denied your child open enrollment due to disability discrimination (and/or membership in another protected group such as race, gender, or national origin), rather than due to a lack of programmatic capacity or

other permissible reason, you may consider [filing a complaint](#) with the U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights.

- Generally, schools and districts are not required to provide transportation to students they accept through open enrollment.
 - However, for students with disabilities who reside outside of the district, the district must provide transportation if required by the student's IEP.
 - The transportation obligation is limited to 20 miles each way from the school to the location where the student's bus stops. ([A.R.S. § 15-816.01](#)).