



REGIONAL OFFICE OF EDUCATION #20

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REGIONAL SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS



Edwards, Gallatin, Hamilton, Hardin, Pope, Saline, Wabash, Wayne & White Counties

ROE #20 ALTERNATIVE SCHOOL PROGRAMMING

ELIGIBILITY and GUIDELINES

The Regional Office of Education operates the Learning Alternative Branch (LAB) school to meet the needs of non-traditional students needing alternative services. These programs are grant-funded and must adhere to specific guidelines outlined in the Illinois School Code.

The LAB school provides two alternative programming options:

- Truants' Alternative and Optional Education Program (TAOEP) -105 ILCS 5/2-3.66
- Regional Safe Schools Program (RSSP) - 105 ILCS 5/13A.

The Truants' Alternative and Optional Education Program (TAOEP) serves students with attendance issues, dropouts (grades 9-12), and/or potential dropouts up to and including those who are 21 years of age. The TAOEP grant assists in two areas, Supplemental Services and Optional Education Programs. Supplemental Services are designed to assist in truancy prevention and intervention by providing students enrolled in the regular or home school program with support services (e.g. tutoring, mentoring, health services, home visits, counseling). Optional Education Programs provide a modified instructional program appropriate to students' needs that may include work-based learning, and career development instruction and opportunities. Students may be served using a part-time or full-time option in place of regular or home-school attendance. Optional Education Programs are primarily designed to address chronic truants, or those students at most risk, and to prevent students from dropping out of school.

Due to the nature of the TAOEP grant, it is important to note that chronic truancy must be the primary reason for student referrals. The program is not an alternative site for students with chronic disciplinary problems or solely needing credit recovery.

The Regional Safe School Program (RSSP) serves expulsion-eligible and suspension-eligible students in grades 6-12. Because of the actions of a small number of students, local school districts face increasing problems in maintaining a safe environment for all students. Expelling or suspending students puts them on the street, which may increase safety and advance the learning environment on school premises, but does not serve the educational needs of the expelled or suspended students or the community's need for public safety. Behavior modification training and other counseling, life skills training, community service, and work-based learning experiences are aspects of RSSP. Computerized learning systems may supplement primary academic instruction or be used as the primary method of instruction.

The purpose of RSSP is twofold:

- 1) to increase safety and promote the learning environment in schools and
- 2) to meet the particular educational needs of identified students more appropriately and individually in alternative educational environments.

STUDENT ELIGIBILITY GUIDELINES

TAOEP:

Students enrolled in grades 6-12 must meet the following guidelines:

- Student must have already been referred to an ROE #20 Truancy Interventionist, using the ROE #20 Truancy Referral Form;
- Referral to the ROE #20 LAB School may begin after students have 9 or more Unexcused Absences and the District provides verification of at least two interventions to correct identified attendance issues;
- Enrollment is voluntary;
- **The primary reason for referral must be chronic truancy**

RSSP:

Students enrolled in grades 6-12 may be referred for potential enrollment if meeting the following criteria:

- Suspended at least twice for a period of 4-10 days **each time** for gross misconduct as defined by the RSSP Handbook;
- Expelled or ELIGIBLE for expulsion as a result of an expulsion hearing for gross misconduct or as the result of documented communication from the District Superintendent and Board of Education, as defined by the RSSP Handbook, but in lieu of expulsion has been referred for **consideration** to the LAB RSSP.
- Disclose any legal action taken or pending as a result of the expulsion-eligible incident(s).

STUDENT ADMISSION POLICY

Student admission to the TAOEP or RSSP program requires approval from the LAB administrator. After completing and returning all required documentation, the LAB Administrator An open-entry and open-exit procedure will be utilized. The local home school district Administrator or Guidance Counselor must refer students. **Criteria for entering the TAOEP program are first and foremost for a truancy referral.**

Attendance at the LAB is a privilege, not a right. It is a voluntary program to promote better attendance and help students regain credit which may be lacking as a result of truancy. Students at the LAB are expected to attend the program daily or according to their individual IOEP. There are certain rules and expectations for both attendance and behavior that must be maintained to remain enrolled in the program. If students cannot or do not intend to follow the attendance and behavior rules set by the program they are not good candidates for the LAB and will be transferred back to the home school.

REFERRAL PROCESS:

To be considered for attendance at the LAB, the following guidelines must be followed:

A home school counselor or administrators must refer students. Student documentation is complete and is sent with a referral to the LAB School to be reviewed by LAB staff. Additional documentation may be requested by LAB staff. *Please note: All students completing 8th-grade requirements will return to the Home School for High School.*

1. Required Documentation for Referral:

- Copy of Submitted ROE #20 Truancy Referral Form (TAOEP)
- Student Attendance Records - (TAOEP)must have at least nine (9) unexcused absences. verification of at least two interventions (ie. communication to partners, home visits, parent meetings, etc.) to correct identified attendance issues and previously referred to ROE #20 Truancy Interventionist;
- Student Grade Cards;
- Student Disciplinary Referrals;
- Student IEP or 504 Plan - Required if a student has a current IEP, has had an IEP within the last 3 years, or is on IEP monitor status; and
- Other documents, if requested

2. Student Observation:

Based on referral information and meeting participation, when applicable, LAB Staff may require observation of the potential student up to 3 times in the home school educational setting as availability allows. LAB staff will contact the home school to set up observations. After a review of documentation and observations, the LAB Staff will contact the home school with an initial eligibility determination. As mentioned above, students with significant behavior issues or chronic disciplinary problems may be determined ineligible due to the LAB school's lack of resources to serve the student's individual needs.

3. Required IEP or 504 Plan Participation:

If the student being referred has an IEP or 504 Plan, LAB staff must be invited to any meetings discussing alternative placement options at the LAB School. Please include LAB staff in an IEP or 504 Plan meeting to ensure the student is eligible for placement at the LAB school.

4. Enrollment Meeting

Enrollment meetings will be scheduled once all required documentation for referral has been received and the student has been deemed eligible for either the TAOEP or RSSP. Please note, that the scheduling of enrollment meetings is directly impacted by the referring schools' ability to provide the required documentation. In addition to the home school staff, parent(s)/guardian(s), students, and any other entities deemed necessary will be invited to participate in the enrollment meeting.

5. Individualized Optional Education Program (IOEP) Document

IOEPs are written documents that outline an individual student's academic, vocational, and/or life skills needs, as well as goals and objectives and various educational and social experiences needed to reach those goals and objectives. Creation of an IOEP is required for each student at the enrollment meeting and per SB0183, the IOEP for each student must include:

- Development of the plan must include school officials, the student, and the student's parents or legal guardians if the student is less than 18 years of age;
- The basis upon which the student referred to the program;
- Learning objectives or individual outcomes, such as increased school attendance, course credit, graduation, gains in achievement level, or employment will be identified; Successful completion of all identified graduation requirements will qualify the student for graduation.
- The educational, social, and/or career development services that will be provided to achieve the learning objectives or individual outcomes identified for that student;
- Assessment procedures to determine the degree to which the student is progressing or achieving his or her learning objectives or individual outcomes;
- A time period sufficient to allow the student to achieve identified objectives or outcomes will be included and a specific date of the duration of the plan will be identified and verified by the home school representative through signature.
- The LAB Administrator or designee will schedule a transition meeting to be held at least 30 days prior to the student's return date to the home school district.
- **A statement that the student, parent, or guardian has the ultimate choice of whether to accept the IOEP that is offered or to return to, or remain in, the regular education program of the school district attended.**

6. Administrative Transfer Back to Home School:

Students exhibiting significant behavioral issues and/or chronic disciplinary problems that frequently disrupt the educational setting may be transferred back to the home school, due to the LAB school's inability to provide appropriate services. If the LAB staff believes a student may benefit from referrals to other entities or agencies, the home school staff will be notified.

Prior to Administrative Transfer, the following interventions will be utilized when applicable:

Tier 1: School-wide Behavior Incentives, Group Counseling, Individual Counseling, Loss of Privileges

Tier 2: Targeted Behavior Incentives, Individual Counseling, Loss of Privileges, Referral to Outside Agencies, Meeting with Parent/Guardian, 1-3 days of In-School Suspension

Tier 3: Behavior/Attendance Contract; Continued Incentives, Continued Counseling, Continued Loss of Privileges, 4-10 days of In-School Suspension with integration back to general classes as earned.

IDEA CONSIDERATIONS

1. Service Requirements for Students with Disabilities:

- The student's IEP must identify enrollment of the student in the TAOEP or RSSP Program as the least restrictive placement for the student pursuant to the State Board's rules for Special Education (see 23 Ill. Adm. Code 226.210, 226.230, and 226.240), as well as federal regulations found at 34 CFR 300.550 through 300.554.
- The district of residence shall ensure that the student receives **ALL** of the special education and related services listed in his or her IEP and provide a case manager for each student to communicate with the LAB administrator, at a minimum, weekly.
- The district case manager shall ensure related services are properly scheduled, documented, and provided for each student with an IEP.
- All services required by the student's IEP shall be delivered by properly qualified personnel. Districts **MUST** provide properly qualified personnel in the event the TAOEP or RSSP program does not have appropriately qualified personnel.
- The student's district of residence remains responsible for ensuring that the IEP is fulfilled while the student is enrolled in a TAOEP or RSSP program.
- **Failure to comply with service requirements may result in a student being administratively transferred back to the Home School.**
- If a student enrolled in a TAOEP or RSSP program is referred for an evaluation to determine whether he or she is eligible for special education, the evaluation and eligibility determination shall be conducted in accordance with the State Board's rules for Special Education (see 23 Ill. Adm. Code 226, Subpart B).

2. Interim Placement and Change of Placement:

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) allows school personnel to consider unique circumstances on a case-by-case basis when determining whether to order a change in placement for a child with a disability who violates a code of student conduct, as well as sets out specific procedures which must be followed when a change in placement is made 20 U.S.C. 1415(k):

- Children with disabilities may not be removed from their current placement to an interim alternative education setting (IAES), which must be determined by the IEP team, for more than 10 school days. To transfer to the RSSP, the student must be eligible and all other procedural steps for placement in an RSSP must be followed.
- If a district is seeking a change in placement for more than 10 school days, the district must convene a manifestation determination meeting within the first 10 days, consisting of district staff, parent(s), relevant IEP team members, and LAB staff, if considering an alternative placement at the LAB School.
- Districts may remove a student to an IAES not more than 45 school days, regardless of behavior manifestation, if the IAES is determined by the IEP team and all other procedural steps for placement in an RSSP are followed as a result of the following student behaviors:
 - a. Carries or possesses a weapon to or at school, on school premises, or to or at a school function;
 - b. Knowingly possesses or uses illegal drugs, or sells or solicits the sale of a controlled substance, while at school, on school premises, or at a school function;
 - c. Inflicts serious bodily injury upon another person while at school, on school premises, or at a school function.

3. Denial of Enrollment

- A student doesn't meet TAOEP or RSS Guidelines for enrollment
- Steps for referral and/or required documentation have not been completed
- Student "is deemed to cause a threat to the safety of students or staff in the alternative program" [105 ILCS 5/10-22.6(a)]
- The LAB School cannot provide appropriate services and/or services required in a student's IEP
- The LAB School is at full capacity and cannot accept any more students

For questions or additional information, please contact:

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