

Illinois Catholic voucher school policies (Not a comprehensive list)

Pregnancy and marital status

The [Diocese of Peoria's policy](#) for all schools is that a student who is known to have had an abortion may be required to withdraw from school. In addition, students may not be married. The [Diocese of Rockford](#) also bars married students from enrolling or staying enrolled. There are numerous examples of schools that restrict a pregnant or parenting student's participation in academic and other school activities.

LGBTQ+ students

Diocese of Springfield -The Diocese has a [detailed policy and guidance](#) prohibiting the recognition of transgender students, including the following:

- 1. All students and their parents will be addressed and referred to with pronouns in accord with their biological sex;*
- 2. All school correspondence, documents, and records will reflect the student or parent's biological sex;*
- 3. Students will participate in competitive athletics in accord with their biological sex;*
- 4. Catholic schools will not allow, or otherwise cooperate in, the administration of puberty-blocking or cross-sex hormones on school property;*
- 5. All students will use bathrooms and locker rooms that correspond with their biological sex. Students who have been clinically diagnosed with gender dysphoria, however, may request the use of a single-person, unisex facility. Such requests will be assessed on an individual basis by the appropriate school administrator.*

If students and their parents do not comply with these policies, the student may be expelled.

Diocese of Joliet -

The [Diocese of Joliet's policy](#) on transgender students and other members of the Diocese states:

The diocesan school will interact with students according to their biological sex as based upon physical differences at birth. A member of the diocesan school community who wishes to express a gender other than his or her biological sex is understood as operating outside of the "reality deeply inscribed" within. Assisting the person in his or her disconnection with this reality, however sincerely experienced, by agreeing to participate in any efforts to change natural gender expression is contrary to the pursuit of the truth.

It also contains homophobic statements and directs LGBTQ+ students and their families to make use of counseling services to address their gender identity and sexual orientation:

While homosexual acts are always objectively wrong, same-sex inclinations are not in themselves sinful or a moral failing.

To the extent that a same-sex attraction is not freely chosen, there is no personal culpability in having such an inclination. Nonetheless, when oriented toward genital activity, this inclination is “objectively disordered.” [...]

Labels can falsely promote a lasting identification or enduring notion of self, therefore, the diocesan school avoids labeling individuals with such terms as “gay,” “lesbian,” “bisexual,” or “queer,” even when the individual might desire such identification.

(Note: This policy is part of [a directory of policies compiled by a Catholic school teacher researching anti-LGBTQ+ policies of Catholic institutions](#).)

Diocese of Peoria -

The Diocese of Peoria’s [policies require](#) that schools will “integrate programs of virtue formation and chastity education into all areas of the curriculum.” And “[i]nstruction in virtue formation and chastity education shall follow guidelines that are consistent with the traditions of the Roman Catholic Church as stated in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*.” The [Catechism of the Catholic Church](#)’s section on

“Chastity and Homosexuality” includes statements such as the following:

“Basing itself on Sacred Scripture, which presents homosexual acts as acts of grave depravity, tradition has always declared that “homosexual acts are intrinsically disordered.” They are contrary to natural law... Under no circumstances can they be approved. The number of men and women who have deep-seated homosexual tendencies is not negligible. This inclination, which is objectively disordered, constitutes for most of them a trial.”

and

“Among the sins gravely contrary to chastity are masturbation, fornication, pornography and homosexual practices.”

Students with disabilities

Fewer than 13% of schools receiving Invest in Kids voucher money in 2022-2023 reported serving any special education students. Three of four schools receiving voucher money are Catholic schools. When asked, Empower IL provided a list of only 20 schools that support IEPs in their database of more than 400 schools. Almost all Diocese policies in Illinois allow schools to discriminate on the basis of disability.

Archdiocese of Chicago - [Inclusive Education” webpage](#): No requirement that schools serve students with disabilities:

“A number of archdiocesan schools work to include students with various learning needs. How those learning services are provided vary from school to school.

The best way to determine if an archdiocesan school is a good fit for your special needs child is:

- *Determine which schools you are interested in attending. Review each school’s website for available information about Special Education Services.*

- *Contact the enrollment team at your preferred schools to learn more. Request a meeting with the school principal to discuss your child's specific learning needs.*
- *Contact the Office of Catholic Schools for additional information, if needed, at 312.534.5200"*

Diocese of Peoria -

[Guidelines and Resources for Inclusive Education](#): Schools will "make every effort to obtain the necessary resources and talent to successfully educate all students," but also states that schools can terminate enrollment of a student if they do not have the resources to accommodate the student or misunderstood what the student needed or decide that the student is disrupting the learning of others.

[Inclusion Of Students With Exceptional Needs](#): Families may need to bear the cost of supports like a one-on-one aide.

Diocese of Joliet - No information at all on students with disabilities on their website.

Diocese of Springfield - [Admissions Policy](#): Students who "cannot be fully integrated into the total regular school program," i.e. a school can't accommodate are "encouraged" to enroll part-time in a public school:

"Present state statutes require that public school districts accept in part-time attendance, via dual enrollment procedures, students who are enrolled in non-public schools and who are in need of special education and related services not available in the non-public school. These students do not need to withdraw from the non-public school. Once enrolled part-time in the public school, they have all the rights, responsibilities and privileges of special education and related services as any student in the public school."

Diocese of Rockford - [Policy 5156 Disabled Students p.157](#)

"A disabled student or disabled prospective student will not be denied a Catholic education in a Diocese elementary or secondary school, on the basis of that student's or prospective student's disability, if the school, with minor adjustments, is able to provide the individual an appropriate education within the School's program or activity."

What constitutes "minor adjustments" is to be determined on a case-by-case basis, examining the needs of the particular individual, and the operations of the school.

There is no requirement that a Catholic school provide an aide, attendant, or tutor for the individual, or mechanical or electronic devices or appliances personal to the individual, or educational auxiliary aids.

If the school determines it is able to make minor adjustments that will allow the individual to receive an appropriate education in the school, the school may not charge more for the provision of an appropriate education to a disabled student than to nondisabled students, except to the extent that any additional charge is justified by a substantial increase in cost to the school.

Schools are encouraged to consult with the Diocese's General Counsel for assistance in determining whether an "appropriate education" can be provided to a disabled individual, and what actions constitute "minor adjustments" in a particular situation."

Diocese of Belleville - [Policy 6310 Special Needs](#):

"All persons have the right to the full practice of, participation in, and growth in their faith in God. A person's abilities or disabilities should not be a deciding factor in these issues. Therefore, it needs to be recognized that persons with disabilities and their families have the right to expect religious education, preparation for and full participation in the sacramental celebrations of the Church and the experience of being warmly welcomed as members of the people of God."

However, the Diocese [non-discrimination policy does not include disability status](#), and individual schools are discriminating on the basis of disability (e.g. ["Although students of all ability levels are accepted, Mater Dei does not possess the personnel to serve all students with special needs."](#))