

Wisconsin National Guard Challenge Academy

Program Description

The Wisconsin National Guard Challenge Academy is a residential program committed to improving the quality of life for 16.9 to 19 year old teens who are at-risk of not graduating from high school. The program consists of two phases:

The Residential Program Phase is located at Fort McCoy in a quasi-military environment. Cadets attend the residential phase beginning in July or January. Cadets engage in many activities including classroom preparation and testing for the High School Equivalency Diploma (HSED), character development classes, rappelling, ROPES courses, experiential activities, service to community projects and leadership/ followership experiences. The goal of the Challenge Academy is to offer cadets the opportunity develop strength of character and the life skills necessary to become successful, responsible citizens.

During the 12 month Post-Residential Phase, cadets with the support of their mentors, carry out the plans they developed for their future while in residence. The mentors are community volunteers who are matched with the cadets to continue the development of the cadet by reinforcing the skills learned. Cadets who do not complete all of GED tests required for the HSED return to the local school district to complete the final tests.

Funding

2001 Act 109 changed the funding mechanism for the Challenge Academy. As a result of the changes, school districts with Challenge Academy cadets must contribute a portion of the costs of students enrolled in the Challenge Academy from their district; §121.095 Wis. Stats. On October 28, 2009, PL 111-84 was signed into law authorizing the Department of Defense to assume up to 75 percent of the costs of the Challenge Program, effectively reducing the states matching contribution of 40 percent to 25 percent of the costs. A provision allows the district to count the cadets for equalization aid and revenue limit purposes.

Determination of Costs

The Department of Military Affairs (DMA) will calculate the average per pupil costs, as required under §321.03(1)(c)(1), Wis. Stats., for the Challenge Academy based on actual costs and report those costs on a per pupil basis to the Department of Public Instruction by May 1. The department will then reduce the June equalization aid payment of each participating school district by the number of cadets times the per-pupil amount, or the district's revenue limit per member, whichever is less.

Enrollment

Cadets selected to attend the Challenge Academy are considered enrolled in the school district of residence for purposes of district equalization aid eligibility, special education responsibility, and revenue limit authority.

Determination of Residency

The Challenge Academy will determine when and where the student was last enrolled in school. If the school district where the student was last enrolled matches the student's current address then that will be the school district of residence. If the pupil was enrolled into a different school district than the pupil's resident district under Public School Open Enrollment, then the district of residence for Open Enrollment purposes will also be the district of residence for Challenge Academy purposes. Acceptance into the Challenge Academy ends a student's open enrollment status and when the student leaves the Challenge Academy, the student will attend the district of residence.

If the student was not enrolled in a public school district (e.g., expelled, home schooled, withdrawn), then the student's current address will determine the school district of residence. If the student was transient prior to enrollment in the Challenge Academy, then the address of the custodial parent will determine the school district of residence. For students age 18 and over, the last known address will serve to determine the district of residence.

School District Notification

The Challenge Academy Admissions Department may contact a school district to verify past enrollment, request academic records and confirm disability status. The Challenge Academy will officially notify school districts no later than September 1st or February 10th with the names of the students officially enrolled in the current Challenge Academy semester.

Counting the Student for Equalization Aid Purposes

Wisconsin State Statute §121.095 allows the Department of Public Instruction to include the school district's cadets in their pupil counts for equalization aid in the school year in which the cadets attend the Challenge Academy. Equalization aid based upon these pupil counts is paid in the following school fiscal year.

Districts will complete PI 1563 YCA, Youth Challenge Academy Report, which will be used by the department to give aid membership credit to districts with Challenge Academy cadets. The school district will also receive a June equalization aid payment explanation that will identify the number of cadets and the amount per cadet that will be deducted from the June payment.

Counting the Student for Revenue Limit Purposes

A change in statute allows the school district of the 1st semester Challenge Academy cadet to count the student for revenue limit purposes in the school year in which the cadets attend the Challenge Academy. This is a change from previous years where the 1st semester Challenge Academy student was counted in the year following participation in the Challenge Academy. Note: Some districts will have previous year 2nd semester YCA counts in the revenue limit membership. §121.91(2m)(e)3., Stats. Districts will complete the PI 1563 YCA, Youth Challenge Academy report, which will be used by the department to give proper revenue limit

membership credit to districts with Challenge Academy cadets. The department, in October, posts to the SFS team website an estimated revenue limit calculation. For each district the department also posts a detailed revenue limit membership report that will include eligible Challenge Academy students. The final revenue limit calculation is given to districts near the end of the school term at the end of May or early June, and will include any needed adjustments for cadets that may have participated during the second semester.

Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities who are enrolled in the Challenge Academy will continue to have their right to a free appropriate public education (FAPE) met. The local education agency responsible to ensure FAPE is the resident school district. The school district will work with the Challenge Academy education staff to complete the paperwork necessary for any needed accommodations for the GED Tests. Because accommodations for GED testing are based on the American's with Disabilities Act, additional testing and documentation will need to be completed by the school district. The Challenge Academy will work with the school district to submit accommodations paperwork for GED testing for the student in a timely fashion to optimize student success on the GED tests.

For additional information on GED accommodations:

<http://www.gedtestingservice.com/testers/computer-accommodations>

Testing

Students enrolled as 8th or 10th graders will fall under the Wisconsin Student Assessment System and the school district will be responsible for forwarding testing requirements to the Challenge Academy. The Challenge Academy will work with DPI assessment staff to facilitate testing.

School Performance Reporting

The school district of residence will be responsible for meeting the school performance reporting requirements under §115.38, Stats. This performance data includes attendance, graduation, dropout and other data for students enrolled in their schools. Students who obtain HSED (high school equivalency diploma) certificates are not counted as graduates for school performance report purposes unless the school district also issues that student a diploma. HSED completer counts are reported separately.

Post-residential Services

1. Many students complete their high school education or high school equivalency diploma (HSED) while enrolled in the Challenge Academy. Those students will be served through the Phase II Mentoring Services of the Challenge Academy. All students who receive HSEDs continue to be eligible for public education and may choose to return to the high school to earn a high school diploma. Students with disabilities remain eligible for special education services until they are properly exited through the Individual Education Program (IEP) process.
2. For students who do not successfully complete the Challenge Academy, the school district will be notified of their dismissal and documentation of academic progress will be sent to the local school district. Because Wisconsin's compulsory school attendance law

remains in effect, the student will be expected to attend school if he or she is under the age of 18.

3. For students who successfully complete the Challenge Academy, but were unable to complete all of the requirements for an HSED, the responsibility for education of that student will transfer back to the school district. It is hoped that the student will be served, short-term, with a §118.15 contract between the school district, the student and the local technical college to successfully complete the HSED or through the school district's GEDO #2 Program. Students have a waiver to complete testing early because of their involvement in the Challenge Academy.

Additional Information

For additional information about the Challenge Academy contact:

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For information about alternative education, at-risk students and HSED requirements, contact:

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Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction
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For school finance related questions for the Challenge Academy contact:

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