

Training 1-1: General School Requirements



In this training, we will refer to the Private School Choice Programs as “Choice” or “Choice program” throughout this training. The Choice program is governed by Wis. Stat. §§ 119.23 and 118.60, as well as Wis. Admin. Codes ch. PI 35 and 48. Provisions of this training module are subject to statutory and rule changes.

This training module will discuss general school requirements.

Programs and Statutes

- Milwaukee Parental Choice Program (MPCP)
 - Wis. Stat. § 119.23, Wis. Admin. Code § PI 35
- Racine Parental Choice Program (RPCP) & Wisconsin Parental Choice Program (WPCP)
 - Wis. Stat. § 118.60, Wis. Admin. Code § PI 48
- Collectively referred to as the Private School Choice Programs (PSCP)

There are three programs that are collectively referred to as the Private School Choice Programs, and they are the

Milwaukee Parental Choice Program (MPCP), for the residents of the City of Milwaukee

Racine Parental Choice Program (RPCP) for the residents of the Racine Unified School District

And the Wisconsin Parental choice programs (WPCP) all residents outside the City of Milwaukee and Racine unified School District.

A link to the statutes and administrative rules can be accessed on the Choice website. We invite you to review and become familiar with the rules and statutes governing these programs.

Training Resources

This presentation will provide an overview of the school requirements of the Choice Programs.

In-depth trainings on various topics are available on the PSCP On-Demand Training webpage: <https://dpi.wi.gov/sms/choice-programs/on-demand-training> or by clicking:

Informational Bulletins on various topics are available on the PSCP Bulletins webpage: <https://dpi.wi.gov/sms/choice-programs/bulletins> or by clicking:

Important Dates and Reminders are available on the PSCP School Information webpage: <https://dpi.wi.gov/sms/choice-programs/school-information>

Statutes and Rules for the PSCP are available on this webpage: <https://dpi.wi.gov/sms/choice-programs/statutes>

There are several training resources for schools available on the Choice Program website.

In-depth trainings on specific topics.

Informational Bulletins on various topics.

Important Dates and Reminders

We invite you to review these additional resources and become familiar with the rules and statutes governing the Choice programs.

Definition of a Private School

All schools participating in the PSCP must be private schools and meet the definition of a private school under [Wis. Stat. § 118.165 \(1\)](#):

- Primary purpose of program is to provide private or religious-based instruction.
- Program is privately controlled.
- Program is not operated for the purpose of avoiding or circumventing the compulsory school attendance requirement.
- Program provides at least 875 hours of instruction each school year

Schools participating in the PSCP have additional hours of instruction requirements. For more information, please see [Training 3-1: Reporting Hours of Instruction](#).

4

To be in the choice program, you must satisfy the definition of private school in Wisconsin. Wis. Statute § 118.165(1) defines what a private school is.

A private school is

- 1) Where the primary purpose of your program is to provide private or religious based instruction,
- 2) Is privately controlled,
- 3) Not operated for the purpose of avoiding or circumventing the compulsory school attendance requirement, and a
- 4) Private schools must provide 875 hours of instruction.

Schools participating in the PSCP have additional hours of instruction requirements. For more information about these requirements, please see Training 3-1: Reporting Hours of Instruction.

Definition of a Private School (continued)

- Pupils at the institution return annually to their home for not less than 2 months of summer vacation, or the institution is licensed as a child welfare agency.
- The program provides a sequentially progressive curriculum of fundamental instruction in reading, language arts, mathematics, social studies, science and health.

Additionally, 5) pupils at your school must return home for at least 2 months of summer vacation, if your school provides boarding. This excludes year-round schools that are licensed as child welfare agencies.

And 6) All private schools in Wisconsin must provide a sequentially progressive curriculum of fundamental instruction in reading, language arts, math, social studies, science and health. Schools may also provide instruction in other areas.

Private School Report PI-1207

- All private schools are required to [electronically](#) file this report.
- School Administrators will receive an email from the DPI's Customer Service Team with a link to the report.
- Due on or before October 15 each year.
 - Requires school information, enrollments and self-verification that school meets definition of a private school.

6

All private schools in Wisconsin annually file the PI-1207 private school report. This is filed electronically by October 15th of each year, and the school will receive an email on how to file this report.

The PI-1207 is where the DPI asks for information about the school's program, enrollments, and asks for self-verification from the school that it meets the definition of a private school.

If Your School...

- 1) Has been open for **less than** 12 months, or;
- 2) Has fewer than 40 students in 2 or fewer grade levels

Your school is considered a *new school* and is required to meet additional requirements a year before it can participate in the choice program.

However, a new school is not subject to these additional requirements if it is operated by a governing board that operates a private school that is currently participating in the choice program.

7

If your school is a brand-new school, being defined as being open for less than 12 months or has fewer than 40 students in 2 or fewer grade levels, additional requirements and separate deadlines will need to be met before your school will be allowed to participate in the choice program.

Summer School

- Choice school requirements:
 - Offer a minimum of 19 days of pupil instruction during their summer school term;
 - Provide a minimum of 270 minutes of non-Title I pupil instruction per summer school day.

8

Choice schools may offer summer school. To receive payment for eligible choice students a Choice school must follow the requirements on the slide. You will notify us when you annually register your school by January 10 if you're interested in having summer school for your choice students. If you are a brand-new school, you will have to meet deadlines by the August 1 prior to the first school year the school intends to participate to be eligible to participate in the Choice programs. New schools, should communicate their intent to offer summer school to us as soon as possible.

Health and Safety Requirements

- All Choice schools must comply with all health and safety laws or codes that apply to public schools.
 - Must meet program insurance coverage requirements.
 - Must meet building code requirements.

9

All schools participating in the Choice program must comply with all health and safety laws or codes that apply to public schools. This means the school has the required insurance coverage and meets all building code requirements.

Insurance requirements are covered more in depth in Training 6 and minimum insurance requirements are posted on our web page. The Insurance Requirements document may be accessed in the resources tab at the top of this training module slide. We recommend you give a copy of the insurance requirements to your insurance agent and get a quote. You will need the cost of the insurance when you prepare your budget. New schools will provide proof of insurance to DPI by August 1st.

Schools that do not meet this requirement cannot participate in the Choice Program for the entire school year.

Certificate of Occupancy

Choice schools must provide the following:

- One of the following for all buildings if the school is participating in the MPCP and for any buildings located in the Racine Unified School District for WPCP and RPCP schools:
 - i. A certificate of occupancy from the municipality within which the private school is located; or
 - ii. A certificate of occupancy from a local or regional unit who has the authority to issue certificates of occupancy; or
 - iii. If the municipality and/or regional unit does not issue certificates of occupancy, then submit a letter from the municipality within which the school is located explaining that the municipality does not issue certificates of occupancy.

10

Schools participating in a choice program must check the requirement for a Certificate of Occupancy.

All schools participating in the Milwaukee program, and RPCP and WPCP schools that have buildings located in the Racine Unified School District must provide either a certificate of occupancy issued by the municipality within which the private school is located, or

A certificate of occupancy from a local or regional unit who has the authority to issue certificates or occupancy, or

If the municipality and/or regional unit does not issue certificates of occupancy, then submit a letter from the municipality within which the school is located explaining that the municipality does not issue certificates of occupancy.

Certificate of Occupancy (continued)

- Schools must file subsequent certificates of occupancy with DPI **prior to student attendance.**
- If school moves to a new location or opens a new facility a new certificate must be obtained.
- All school locations must have a certificate of occupancy.
- The certificate must be for school use (not church or daycare).

11

Be sure you have the occupancy permit before you use the building.

The school needs certificates for all school locations, and the certificate must say it is for “use as a school.”

If a school moves to a new location, changes name, or opens a new facility a new certificate must be obtained. **Temporary certificate of occupancy will not meet this requirement.**

Certificate of Occupancy-New School Requirements MPCP

- **All MPCP schools** must file a copy of the school's FINAL certificate of occupancy and capacity placard (if available).
 - By May 1 if offering summer school
 - By August 1 if not offering summer school
- **Temporary certificate of occupancy will not meet this requirement.**

12

A final Certificate of Occupancy must be received by DPI no later than August 1. Again, if you offer summer school, the permit is due May 1.

Keep in mind a **temporary certificate does not satisfy this requirement** and your school will not be permitted to participate in the Choice programs.

Certificate of Occupancy-New School Requirements RPCP and WPCP

- **Certificates of Occupancy are required for any buildings located within the boundaries of the Racine Unified School District**
- **Must file a copy of the school's FINAL certificate of occupancy and capacity placard.**
 - By May 1 if offering summer school
 - By August 1 if not offering summer school
- **Temporary certificate of occupancy will not meet this requirement.**

13

If your school building is within the boundaries of the Racine Unified School District, you must provide a copy of the final certificate of occupancy and capacity placard (if available) to DPI. This requirement applies to schools participating in the RPCP or the WPCP.

New schools must provide the certificate no later than August 1. If you are offering summer school, the certificate is due to DPI by May 1.

A temporary certificate of occupancy will not meet this requirement.

Religious Activities

- Religious Activities:

- A private school may not require a choice student to participate in any religious activities if the student's parent or guardian submits a written request that the student be exempt from such activities.
- Failure to meet this requirement could result in termination from the program and withholding of program payments.

14

Many schools in the Parental Choice program have religious activities and instruction. If a parent submits a written request, the parent may opt their student out of religious activities and graduation requirements that include religious instruction or activities at your school. The school must provide alternate instruction for the student and the student may not be required to participate in any religious activity.

Preaccreditation

- Prior to participating in the choice program new schools are required to obtain preaccreditation by **August 1**, unless fully accredited by one of the accrediting entities listed in statute.
- A new school that fails to meet this requirement is not eligible participate in the choice program.

15

Schools participating in the Choice program for the first time must be preaccredited by August 1, unless already fully accredited. If your school offers summer school, the due date is May 1.

A school may only apply to one preaccrediting entity.

If your school is already fully accredited, provide documentation of accreditation to DPI by August 1.

For information on the preaccreditation and accreditation requirements please refer to the Accreditation Bulletin.

Preaccreditation

- Schools that are not fully accredited must obtain preaccreditation before providing instruction in additional grades or in an additional or new school.
- If an accrediting organization determines during the preaccreditation process that a school does not meet the private school requirements, the organization must notify DPI.

16

If you are preaccredited and decide to add to your program, such as add a high school, additional preaccreditation is required. Please see the Accreditation Bulletin for more detail.

Your accrediting organization must report to DPI if you no longer meet the requirements of a private school in Wisconsin. A school is ineligible to participate in the choice program if it fails to meet the preaccreditation requirements.

Approved Preaccreditation Entities

- Institute for Transformation of Learning at Marquette University (no longer preaccrediting schools)
- Cognia
- Wisconsin Religious and Independent Schools Accreditation
- Independent Schools Association of the Central States
- Archdiocese or diocese within which the school is located
- Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod School Accreditation
- National Lutheran School Accreditation
- Wisconsin Association of Christian Schools
- Association of Christian Schools International
- Christian Schools International
- Archdiocese or diocese within which the school is located

17

The statutes list the organizations that may preaccredit Choice schools. However, not all these organizations may preaccredit schools

Contact the organization as soon as possible, since advanced planning is needed to complete the process. Remember you may only apply to one entity for preaccreditation. Proof of preaccreditation is due to DPI no later than August 1.

Accreditation

- **All Schools** that are **fully accredited** must maintain their accreditation.
- Annually, by August 1, a letter from the school's accrediting agency must be submitted to the DPI confirming that the school remains accredited for the current school year. The letter must include all of the following information:
 - Be dated after July 1 of the current school year;
 - the private school's name;
 - The private school's address for each location included in the accreditation;
 - The grades accredited;
 - A statement that the school is or is not accredited as of the date of the letter;
 - Signature of an authorized member of the accrediting agency.
- Failure to maintain accreditation will result in the school being terminated from the choice program.

18

When fully accredited, all schools must maintain full accreditation and provide DPI by August 1 with a letter from their accrediting organization confirming that the school continues to be accredited.

Failure to maintain accreditation will result in the school being terminated from the Choice program. The letter must contain certain information. The letter must be dated after July 1st of the current school year, contain the school's name, the school's address for each location, include the grades accredited, and include a statement that the school is or is not accredited as of the date of the letter. The letter must be sign by an authorized member of the accreditation agency.

Accreditation

- New schools:
 - Must apply for accreditation by December 31st of the first year of participation in the Choice program; and
 - Must achieve accreditation by 3rd year following the first year of participation.

19

If not already fully accredited, Choice schools must provide proof of an accepted application for full accreditation from one of the approved organizations. This is due to DPI no later than December 31st of the first year of participating in the choice program.

The school then has up to three years to achieve full accreditation.

Approved Accreditation Entities

- Cognia
- Wisconsin Religious and Independent Schools Accreditation
- Independent Schools Association of the Central States
- Archdiocese or diocese within which the school is located
- Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod School Accreditation
- National Lutheran School Accreditation
- Wisconsin Association of Christian Schools
- Association of Christian Schools International
- Christian Schools International
- An organization recognized by the National Council for Private School Accreditation

20

This is a list of the accrediting organizations listed in state statute that may accredit choice schools in Wisconsin.

Accountability Report and Notifications

- Annually, each private school, must provide to the parent or guardian of each pupil enrolled in or attending the school:
 - A copy of the school's accountability report; and simultaneously,
 - A list of the educational options available to children who reside in the pupil's resident school district – including public school, choice schools, charter schools, virtual schools, full-time open enrollment, youth options, course options and options for pupils enrolled in a home-based private educational program.

21

Wis. Statute sec. 115.385(2) requires Choice schools to provide parents with a copy of the school's accountability report and list of educational options available to that parent.

The Department of Public Instruction has a website (linked above) that includes links to all educational options available to Wisconsin parents.

Additional Requirements

- Comply with federal provisions prohibiting discrimination based on race, color or national origin.
- Complete and file all required forms and reports on a timely basis.
- Failure to comply with the statutory requirements of the program could result in the withholding of choice payments or termination from the program.

22

Federal law requires schools to comply with provisions that prohibit discrimination based on race, color or national origin.

Failure to comply with program requirements or to file forms and reports timely may result in withholding funds or termination from the program.

Important Dates Document

See the Important Dates document for a list of the required due dates under the Choice programs.

<https://dpi.wi.gov/sms/choice-programs/school-information>

23

To assist you in meeting all these deadlines, the DPI publishes an Important Dates document and posts it on our web page.

We strongly encourage you to bookmark our Private School Choice Programs-School Information webpage and ensure that you are familiar with this important dates document. State law provides that schools that fail to meet program requirements and deadlines may have payment withheld and/or may be barred from participating in the program.

Questions

Website: <http://dpi.wi.gov/sms/choice-programs>

Email: privateschoolchoice@dpi.wi.gov

Phone: 1-888-245-2732 ext. 3



24

If you have any questions about the information discussed in this training, please see the Private School Choice Programs homepage. The left menu bar of the Private School Choice Programs homepage has resources for both schools and parents.

Choice schools may also contact the Choice team at privateschoolchoice@dpi.wi.gov, or call the toll-free number at 1-888-245-2732, extension 3 with questions.