



Oregon Department of Education

Kate Brown, Governor

Office of the Deputy Superintendent
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September 23, 2015

RE: Change of Practice regarding funding for students placed at Washington State School for the Blind (WSSB), or other state school for the blind, beginning in the 16-17 school year

Dear Special Education Directors and Business Managers:

In 2009, the Oregon Legislature passed HB 2834 which effectively closed the Oregon School for the Blind and established the Blind and Visually Impaired Student Fund (ORS 346.315). Since that time, financial assistance from the Blind and Visually Impaired Student (BVIS) Fund has been made available to Oregon districts that have placed students at the Washington State School for the Blind (WSSB) in Vancouver, WA. **Please note that beginning with the 2016-2017 school year, accessing BVIS funding will occur after High Cost Disabilities Account funds are utilized when a district places a student at the WSSB or any other out-of-state school for the blind.** This change of practice continues to provide for 100% of these tuition and transportation costs to remain cost neutral for districts.

According to ORS 346.315 (3), **"When determining the manner in which to spend the moneys in the Blind and Visually Impaired Student Fund, the Department of Education shall: (a) Give priority to services or resources used by students described in section 3 (1), chapter 562, Oregon Laws 2009; and (b) Ensure that the moneys are used in addition to any other available moneys and do not supplant moneys available from any other source."**

This direction includes moneys available to districts through application to the High Cost Disabilities Account (ORS 327.348) for any student that was NOT enrolled in the Oregon School for the Blind on March 1, 2009, or was expected to be enrolled in the Oregon School for the Blind during the 2009-10 school year, and was under 21 years of age on 9/2/09. Beginning with the 2016-17 school year, reimbursement from the BVIS Fund for student tuition to the WSSB, or any other out-of-state school for the blind, will only be made available for costs above what is provided from the High Cost Disability Grant and the State School Fund Grant payments for students who are receiving special education services.

Transportation costs: The costs of student transportation (approximately 30% after state transportation reimbursement is paid) would be factored into the high cost funding. Any costs remaining after accessing High Cost Disability Grant funds for tuition and transportation should be accessed from the BVIS funds.

Starting in 2016-17, districts seeking reimbursement from the BVIS Fund for student tuition to the Washington State School for the Blind will need to do the following:

1. Pay monthly tuition costs to WSSB for an entire school year. Tuition rates can vary by individual student needs.

2. For students with education costs exceeding \$30,000, a school district will be eligible to participate in the High cost Disability (HCD) Grant. Per ORS 327.348(2), *each fiscal year, the Department of Education shall distribute moneys from the account to school districts as high cost disabilities grants. A school district may receive moneys from the account if the school district has a resident pupil with a disability for whom the approved costs to the school district of providing special education and related services exceed \$30,000.*
3. For those school districts anticipating students attending the WSSB in 2016-17, be sure to include those anticipated costs in your HCD Grant estimates in your 2016-17 Estimate of Membership and Revenue data collection. This collection is due to ODE in December 2015. A preliminary HCD Grant payment will be made based on these estimates in May 2016 in the school district's State School Fund payments. These estimates are reconciled with actual costs after the school year has ended. For example, the preliminary payments based on your 2016-17 estimates are received in May 2016. The actual data collection for the 2016-17 HCD grant will be due to ODE in March of 2018, with the reconciliation payment being made in May 2018 in the State School Fund payments.
4. Submit an invoice to the BVIS Fund Administrator for reimbursement of the total amount of WSSB tuition and transportation *minus* two times the General Purpose Grant per Extended ADMw and any amount of reimbursement provided from the High Cost Disability Account (amounts must be noted on the invoice to NWRESd/BVIS). Appropriate documentation of tuition expenses and payment, state school fund allotment and reimbursement from the High Cost Disability Account must be included with the invoice to the Blind and Visually Impaired Student Fund.

Questions or concerns about the Oregon Blind and Visually Impaired Student Fund should be directed to the BVIS Fund Administrator, Scott McCallum, at 503-614-1260 or smccallum@nwresd.k12.or.us. For questions regarding High Cost Student Funds, please contact Michael Wiltfong, Director of School Finance at 503-947-5914 or michael.wiltfong@state.or.us or Michael Elliott, State School Fund Coordinator at 503-947-5627 or michael.elliott@state.or.us.

Sincerely,



Sarah Drinkwater, Ph.D.
Assistant Superintendent
Office of Learning/Student Services Unit

C: Lisa Darnold, Director Regional Programs/Best Practices
Michael Wiltfong, Director of School Finance
Michael Elliott, State School Fund Coordinator
Scott McCallum, BVIS Fund Administrator