

TIPS/TOOLS FOR FAMILIES - School Choice/Transfers

I want my child to attend a different school. What are my options?

Each district should have a written policy and procedure explaining the rules for transfers within the district. Each district should also have a policy for reviewing transfer requests from students who live outside the district, or “non-resident” students. Transferring to a school in a different district involves a two-step process: getting ‘released’ from the resident district and accepted by the non-resident district.

Generally, the ability to change schools will depend on whether space is available in the school or specific program you want your child to attend. In some districts, transfers between schools are limited to situations where there is a hardship or other just cause for the change.

Action Steps for Transfers within a District

- **Find your district’s policy and procedure on transfers** either on the district website or available on request to the district office – these are also sometimes referred to as ‘attendance area’ or ‘boundary exceptions.’
- Check your district’s website and/or contact the enrollment office to **find out about timelines** – many districts have an ‘open enrollment’ period and grant requests to transfer in the order they are submitted;
- Get a copy of your **district’s transfer request form** if they have one, and **submit the request as soon as possible**.

Action Steps for Transfers to a Different District

- **Find both districts’ policies and procedures** on transfers either on the district website or available on request to the district office;

Relevant Rules

Rules for the Resident District: RCW 28A.225.220

Districts are encouraged to honor the requests of parents for a child to attend school in another district. Districts must approve a request for a student to transfer to a different district that has agreed to accept the student if:

- a financial, educational, safety, or health condition affecting the student would likely be reasonably improved; or
- attendance in the nonresident district is more accessible to the parent's place of work or to the location of child care; or
- there is a special hardship or detrimental condition; or
- the purpose of the transfer is for the student to enroll in an online course or online school program offered by an approved online provider.

Rules for Non-Resident Districts: RCW 28A.225.225

Each district must consider non-resident transfer applications equally, according to rational, fair and equitable standards.

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- **Contact the non-resident district** to find out if it is accepting transfer applications (some districts post information on their websites regarding which schools do/do not have space for non-resident transfer applicants);
- Get a copy of a **transfer request form** from either the non-resident or resident district and submit it as soon as possible;
- If the non-resident transfer request is denied, consider whether you want to appeal. Information about the appeal process should be provided by the district along with notice of the decision on the transfer request.

For more information on student transfers, visit OSPI's Student transfers page: <https://www.k12.wa.us/student-success/support-programs/student-transfers>.

Make a plan for Transportation

Typically when a parent requests a transfer to a different school or district, and the student is transferred based on the parent's "choice," **the parent will be responsible for transportation to and from school**. In some situations, students may be able to ride the bus if there is an existing route with available space. Contact the school or district to ask about transportation options.

Transportation may be provided by the district when the transfer involves a student who meets the definition of "homeless" under the McKinney-Vento Act. For more information, contact your district's McKinney-Vento liaison: <https://www.k12.wa.us/student-success/equity-education/homeless-education/homeless-education-liaison-contact-list>.

For more information on enrollment and school choice options, see **OSPI's Learning By Choice Booklet**, available at <https://www.k12.wa.us/student-success/learning-alternatives/learning-choice> or by calling OSPI at 360-725-6229. Also available in **Spanish**.

Relevant Rules, continued

Rules for Non-Resident Districts:

Districts must give timely written notice of the approval or denial of non-resident transfer applications, including reasons for denials and information regarding the right to appeal.

Reasons for denying a non-resident transfer might include:

- there is no space available in the desired school/program;
- acceptance of the non-resident student would result in the district experiencing financial hardship; or
- the student's records indicate a history of convictions, violent or disruptive behavior or gang membership, or the student has been expelled or suspended for more than 10 days.

Rules re Appeal:

RCW 28A.225.225, RCW 28A.225.230
A home district's refusal to release a student can be appealed if the non-resident district agrees to accept the student, and a non-resident district's denial of a transfer request can be appealed to the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI). If a district doesn't respond within 45 days of a transfer request, it will be considered denied, and a parent can appeal the denial to OSPI. A model form for Nonresident transfer appeals is available at: <https://www.k12.wa.us/sites/default/files/public/profpractices/forms/m-666.pdf>