

## Medical Exception Request and Review Process

### Background

In 2004, the United States Education Department shared [guidance](#) with schools about students who are unable to participate in required state assessments because of a significant medical emergency. Per this guidance, students with a significant medical emergency do not have to be included in the state's participation rate; however, states must monitor which students are not required to participate in required state assessment(s).

The Office of Accountability and Testing uses the following process to identify and monitor medical exception requests.

### Medical Exception Request and Review Process

#### Step 1

At the beginning of each school year the Office of Accountability and Testing sends guidance to superintendents and directors of public school units which addresses *Request for Testing Exceptions Based on Significant Medical Emergencies and/or Conditions*. This guidance states that there may be rare instances in which a student is unable to participate in a required state assessment during the testing window, including makeup dates, because of a significant medical emergency and/or condition. Examples include, but are not limited to, circumstances involving students who are (1) in the final stages of a terminal or degenerative illness, (2) comatose, or (3) receiving extensive short-term medical treatment due to a medical emergency. Under these circumstances, a school may request a testing exception for the student from the Office of Accountability and Testing. If a medical exception is granted, the student remains enrolled in the school during the test window; however, the student does not take the assessment(s), and the student is not included when calculating participation rates.

When submitting medical exception requests, it is important to remember that the medical exception committee provides a decision about the removal of the student's data from the school's denominator (given the supporting documentation and the details of the request). The school should make the decision to test a student based on the medical condition or emergency, not on approval of a medical exception request. Districts and schools should not wait for a medical exception decision before determining to test a student; however, if the student is not tested and the medical exception is denied, the student will be included in the participation calculation.

School directives for submitting a medical exception request are found on the [Testing Policy and Operations webpage](#) (under Guidelines, Policies, and Memos). Parents and legal guardians who have questions about the medical

exception process and whether their student meets the guidelines for a medical exception should work in consultation with school and/or district testing staff to determine whether the school's application for a medical exception request is appropriate.

## **Step 2**

If the district test coordinator determines there is a need to submit a medical exception request, parents and legal guardians should work with the appropriate school staff to provide all necessary supporting documentation to accompany the request. This documentation should clearly detail how the medical condition impacts the student's ability to participate in or access the test(s).

Some examples of acceptable medical documentation provided by parents and legal guardians (to the school) may include, but are not limited to: doctor's notes, statements of treatment or release from a medical facility, concussion forms, and seizure logs. All supporting documentation must be from the current school year and verified as applicable to the current school year. The supporting documentation provided must adhere to the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). For life-long medical conditions, the submitted documentation must reflect the current school year and acknowledge the continued need for a medical exception request. The documentation should provide information that clearly details reasons why the student is unable to access or participate in the test(s).

## **Step 3**

All medical exception requests are securely submitted by the public school unit to the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI).

## **Step 4**

Once a medical exception request is submitted securely to the NCDPI, these requests are reviewed internally by the medical exception review committee. This committee is comprised of educational professionals with backgrounds in one or more of the following areas: classroom instruction, state testing, writing Section 504 Plans or Individualized Education Programs (IEPs), and/or experience teaching students with disabilities, to include but not limited to students with visual impairments, deaf and hard of hearing impairments, and students with specific behavioral needs and behavior intervention plans. Additionally, some committee members have expertise teaching and supporting students on the occupational course of study (OCS) and students with significant cognitive disabilities.

The committee evaluates each request and supporting documentation to determine:

1. if the student can access the test based upon the supporting documentation provided;
2. if the demands of the assessment match the student's present levels of performance as indicated by a current (Section 504 Plan or Individualized Education Program); and
3. if the school should be provided with a medical exception for the request.

### Step 5

Once the medical exception committee has reached a decision it is securely communicated to the public school unit test coordinator. The following graphic representation outlines the steps of the medical exception request process.

