

Medical Exception Request and Review Process

Background

In 2004 the United States Education Department (USED) shared guidance (with schools about students who are unable to participate in required state assessments because of a significant medical emergency and/or condition. Per this guidance, states must monitor and account for students exempted from required state assessment due to a significant medical emergency. 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 shares guidance with districts and schools about how to submit a *Request for Testing Exceptions Based on Significant Medical Emergencies and/or Conditions* process. This guidance states that there may be rare instances in which a student is unable to participate in a state test 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).

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.

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 or school test coordinator determines there is a need to submit a medical exception request, parents or 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 from the current school year,
- statements of treatment or release from a medical facility,

- concussion forms, and
- seizure logs.

All supporting documentation must indicate and apply to the current school year. The supporting documentation provided must adhere to the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act . 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 district to the Office of Accountability and Testing.

Step 4

Once a medical exception request is submitted securely to the Office of Accountability and Testing, 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 test match the student's present levels of performance as indicated by a current (Section 504 Plan or IEP), and
3. if the school should be provided with a medical exception for the request for the student.

Step 5

Once the medical exception committee reaches a decision, it is securely communicated to the PSU test coordinator. Parents and legal guardians should direct all questions and concerns about medical exception requests to school administrators or testing staff.

The medical exception request process is outlined in the following steps:

1. Medical exception request initiated through discussion with public school unit (PSU) staff.
2. PSU determines if medical exception meets state guidelines for submission.
3. PSU securely submits medical exception request and supporting documentation to the NCDPI.

4. The NCDPI medical exception committee evaluates the request. If insufficient documentation is provided, the committee may request additional documentation to support the request.
5. The NCDPI medical exception review committee determines a decision and securely transmits the decision the PSU.