

2015
2016

Change of School Assignment (COSA)



INFORMATION BOOKLET

INTRODUCTION

Students in Montgomery County are assigned to public schools based on their place of residence or in accordance with an Individualized Education Program (IEP). Students are expected to attend their assigned school. Paired elementary schools are considered as one school for school assignment purposes. In order to attend a different school, the student must document a unique hardship or fall within one of the following four exceptional circumstances:

- **SIBLING:** Older sibling attends requested school in the regular program absent a boundary change. (This exception does not apply if the older sibling is enrolled in a countywide, regional, or other special program.)
- **CONTINUATION:** Elementary school students return to their home middle schools, unless a new COSA form is submitted and approved based on unique hardship or one of the stated exceptions applies. Although a new COSA form must be submitted, *middle* school students on an approved Change of School Assignment (COSA) will be permitted to continue to that school's feeder pattern high school, except when affected by boundary change, application program acceptance, or Consortium Choice guidelines.*
- **EXEMPT PROGRAMS:** Students selected for an exempt program do not need to submit a COSA form. (See page 2 of this booklet for additional information regarding these programs.)
- **FAMILY RELOCATION:** When a family moves within Montgomery County, preference to remain in the original school will be considered to complete the current school year only.

*A different process applies to changing high schools within the Northeast Consortium (NEC), Downcounty Consortium (DCC), and changing middle schools to the Middle School Magnet Consortium (MSMC). For information on changing schools within the NEC, DCC, or MSMC, contact the Division of Consortia Choice and Application Services (DCCAPS), or visit the website at www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/departments/schoolchoice.

PLEASE NOTE that by accepting a COSA, the parent or guardian accepts responsibility to provide transportation.

- **Division of Pupil Personnel Services (DPPS) 301-315-7335**
- **Division of Consortia Choice and Application Services (DCCAPS) 301-592-2040**

● How do I apply for a school transfer?

MCPS FORM 335-45: *Request for Change of School Assignment*, is included at the end of this booklet. Fill it out and return it to your home school for review, residency verification, and signature by the principal. The school will forward the form to the Division of Pupil Personnel Services (DPPS) at 45 West Gude Drive, Suite 1300, Rockville, Maryland, for processing.

Students new to the school system must be enrolled and registered in their home school prior to submitting a COSA request. COSA requests will not be processed until the student has completed the residency verification and enrollment process at the home school.

● When do I apply?

COSA requests should be submitted no earlier than the first school day in February and *no later* than the first school day in April, unless there is a *bona fide* emergency or an event that could not have been foreseen prior to the deadline. Students awaiting a decision on a COSA will attend their currently-assigned school until a final decision is made.

● What happens to my COSA request after it is submitted?

After residency verification and signature by the principal of your home school, the request is forwarded to the DPPS, where basic information on the form is entered into a computer program and used to monitor the two to three thousand requests typically received each year. This information is entered as requests are received. An investigation is completed prior to a decision being made.

● When will I hear whether my request has been approved or denied?

DPPS staff make every effort to notify parents and students by mail of the decisions in May.

● What is a unique hardship?

Unique hardship depends on the family's individual and personal situation. Problems that are common to large numbers of families, such as issues involving day care or program/course preferences, do not constitute a hardship, absent additional compelling factors. Documentation that can be independently verified must accompany all hardship requests, or the request will be denied.

- **What type of documentation do I need to submit with my request for a COSA?**

It will depend on your individual situation; however, the documents must represent facts that can be verified independently. Examples of documents that can be verified by staff investigating the request include financial records, letters from health care professionals, and letters from employers.

- **Is the transfer process the same for paired elementary schools?**

Although a COSA form must be filed, paired elementary schools are considered one school for COSA purposes, so students are automatically approved from the lower elementary grades school to the upper grades school. Each pairing has unique characteristics that can impact the implementation of transfers. Check with your school principal for more information.

- **How do I apply for an elementary language immersion program?**

You must contact DCCAPS (see above) to apply to any of the elementary language immersion programs. Forms to apply for admission to these programs are available at your assigned elementary school and online at www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/curriculum/specialprograms/.

- **What if my child is receiving special education services?**

Students receiving special education services available in all schools follow the regular COSA process. If the requested COSA is approved, no transportation is provided, and the student will not be eligible to participate in interscholastic athletics for one year. Students receiving all other special education services should not use the COSA form, but should submit their request in writing to the Department of Special Education Services at 850 Hungerford Drive, Room 230, Rockville, Maryland 20850. Decisions regarding requests for students receiving special education services that are not available in all schools will be made after July 1.

- **Are COSAs approved to academies, signature programs or unique courses?**

No. Signature programs and unique courses have been designed for the school in which they are located. COSA requests to these schools must meet the same criteria as all other COSA requests. See page 1 of this booklet.

- **Is transportation provided to the new school?**

No. By accepting the COSA approval, the parent agrees to provide transportation to the requested school. For information on transportation that may be provided by MCPS for MCPS Application and Choice Programs, see the Options booklet at www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/departments/enrichedinnovative/options.shtm.

- **Will my child be eligible to play interscholastic sports at the new school?**

A student who receives an approved COSA out of his/her current feeder pattern must attend the new school for one calendar year before being able to participate in athletics. Middle school students who previously received a COSA to a new secondary feeder pattern and wish to remain in that pattern when transitioning to high school also are required to reapply, but athletic ineligibility is automatically waived.

- **Once my child has been approved for a COSA, do I need to reapply each year?**

Unless a COSA was approved for one year only, the student may remain at that school on an approved COSA until the student is ready to matriculate to the next education level; e.g., elementary school to middle school, middle school to high school. A COSA request must be submitted at these points. (See "Continuation" in the Introduction section.)

- **Once my child has been approved for a COSA, can it be rescinded?**

A student may have a COSA rescinded if, for example, there are ongoing disciplinary infractions or attendance issues. In addition, students whose COSAs were approved because they were attending a special/exempt program must return to their home school if they leave that program.

- **Are there programs exempt from the COSA criteria?**

Yes, the following programs are exempt from the COSA process; however, other selection criteria may apply. (See www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/departments/enrichedinnovative/.)

- The Science, Mathematics, and Computer Science Magnet Program at Montgomery Blair High School.
- The Visual Art Center at Albert Einstein High School.
- The International Baccalaureate Magnet Program at Richard Montgomery High School.
- Magnet Programs at Poolesville High School.
- The Upcounty Center Programs at Roberto Clemente Middle School.
- The Humanities and Communication Magnet Program at Eastern Middle School.
- The Science, Mathematics, and Computer Science Magnet Program at Takoma Park Middle School.
- Elementary Centers for the Highly Gifted.
- The early identification program for the primary highly gifted at Takoma Park Elementary School. (If the number of qualified applicants exceeds program capacity, admission is determined by lottery.)
- Students assigned to Poolesville Elementary School who wish to attend Monocacy Elementary School.

NOTE: The sibling preference does not automatically apply when an older sibling is enrolled in any of the above-mentioned programs, absent a unique hardship.

- Students accepted into any elementary language immersion programs.
- Elementary language immersion students wishing to continue immersion into middle school.

- **My COSA was denied. How do I appeal?**

You may appeal to the Office of the Chief Operating Officer, 850 Hungerford Drive, Room 149, Rockville, Maryland 20850. The chief operating officer serves as the superintendent of schools' designee. The appeal must be made in writing and received in the chief operating officer's office no later than 15 calendar days following the date of the decision letter. The appeal should state the reason(s) for seeking review of the decision. It is not necessary to provide additional information in order to appeal, but if there is additional information you wish to have considered, it should be included. *Students awaiting a decision on a COSA appeal will attend their assigned school until a final decision is made.*

All appeals are reviewed on the basis of the documents submitted and telephone conferences.

If your appeal is denied by the chief operating officer, you may appeal to the Board of Education, 850 Hungerford Drive, Rockville, Maryland 20850, within 30 calendar days of the date of the chief operating officer's decision letter, although you are strongly encouraged to submit any appeal as soon as possible. All appeals are heard on regularly scheduled Board meeting dates. Please note that the Board of Education is in recess during the month of August.

NOTE: Final decisions on appeals received in the chief operating officer's office before July 1, 2015, will be decided prior to the beginning of the school year. Final decisions on appeals received after July 1, 2015, may not be made until after the school year has begun.

REGULATION

MONTGOMERY COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Related Entries: ACD, JEE, FAA

Responsible Office: Chief Operating Officer
Deputy Superintendent of Teaching, Learning, and Programs

Transfer of Students

I. PURPOSE

To establish procedures concerning the within-county transfer of students

II. BACKGROUND

Students are expected to attend the school within the established attendance area in which they reside or are assigned in accordance with an Individualized Education Program (IEP). A request for a student to attend a school outside such attendance area may be initiated by the parent/guardian/eligible student (18 years of age or older), student services staff, or the principal.

III. DEFINITIONS

- A. The *home school* is the school to which a student is assigned based upon the Montgomery County Board of Education (Board) geographical boundary decision. Should the student be reassigned through the transfer process, he or she may elect at any time to return to the home school.
- B. The *assigned school* is the school to which the student has been assigned for a given school year. This is the home school in the absence of an approved Change of School Assignment (COSA). When a student is granted a COSA, the requested school becomes the assigned school.

IV. PROCEDURES

- A. Only documented unique hardship situations will be considered for a COSA.

B. Exemptions

1. Except for a boundary change, an older sibling attending the requested school at the same time in the regular program.
2. The student is ready to move from middle school to high school, except for a boundary change.
3. The student has met the criteria for and been admitted to and attends a countywide program.

C. Timetables and Deadlines

1. COSA requests for the next school year will be accepted only between February 1 and April 1 for the following school year.
2. Every effort will be made to notify parents and students of the decision on their COSA request in May.
3. Some programs, such as elementary language immersion programs, may be based on attendance area, or admit students by lottery when there are more requests than available spaces.
4. COSA requests submitted after April 1 will not be accepted unless the student is a new resident of Montgomery County or there is a bona fide emergency or event that could not have been foreseen prior to April 1. Documentation supporting this situation must be supplied. Students must enroll in and attend their home school while a COSA request is being processed.

D. Process for COSA

1. General

- a) Paired elementary schools are considered one school for COSA purposes. However, when a student on an approved COSA matriculates from the primary grades to the upper grades, a new form must be submitted. Each pairing has unique characteristics that can impact implementation of transfers.
- b) High school students who receive an approved COSA are ineligible for athletic participation for one calendar year. A waiver may be

requested in writing from the director of Systemwide Athletics explaining the reason for the COSA.

- c) Middle school students on an approved COSA, who wish to remain in that pattern for high school, will be required to reapply for a COSA at the end of middle school. The exemption will be approved and the athletic ineligibility will be waived.
- d) Elementary school students on an approved COSA must reapply and meet the criteria in order to attend a middle school other than that serving their residence.
- e) In unique circumstances, COSAs may be granted for one year only. Parents/guardians must reapply for a COSA or students must return to their home school for the next school year.
- f) Students whose families have moved within the county who wish to continue attending their former home school should request a COSA from the school serving their new neighborhood to the school they have been attending. Such requests will be given preference for the remainder of the current school year only. Continuation in feeder pattern does not apply. Students in Grades 11 or 12 are exempt from this restriction and will be allowed to stay through graduation.
- g) COSA or exemption requests for younger siblings of students, including step brothers and sisters and half brothers and sisters, for whom COSAs have been approved, will be approved for a COSA, absent a boundary change, provided that the older sibling still will be attending the requested school in the regular program.
- h) COSA requests after an extended suspension will be addressed by staff in the Division of Pupil Personnel Services (DPPS) in consultation with the school principals involved. School changes for this reason are not generally approved.
- i) Students who have been given permission to attend schools other than assigned may, with proper cause, such as poor attendance or behavior, have that permission rescinded. In addition, students whose COSAs were approved because they were attending a special/exempt program must return to their home school if they leave that program.

2. Initiated by Parent/Guardian/Eligible Student (18 years of age or older)
 - a) If a COSA is desired, MCPS Form 335-45: *Request for Change of School Assignment* (COSA), must be obtained from the principal of the home school.
 - b) This completed form must be submitted to the principal of the student's home school by the deadline. The principal's signature signifies verification of residency and knowledge of the request, but does not constitute agreement or disagreement with the request.
 - c) Students receiving special education services available in all schools follow the regular COSA process. Students receiving all other special education services should *not* use the COSA form, but should submit their request in writing to the Department of Special Education Services at 850 Hungerford Drive, Room 230, Rockville, Maryland 20850.
 - d) The COSA may be approved or denied after considering the reason(s) for the COSA and, for students receiving special education services, whether the IEP can be implemented, considering staffing and services available at the requested school.
 - e) Parents accepting an approved COSA or exemption assume responsibility for transportation.
 - f) The parent/guardian will receive written notification of approval or disapproval of a COSA or exemption request from DPPS. The student must enroll in and attend the home school while the appeal of a denial is in process. The home and requested schools will be notified that the request has been approved or denied.
3. Initiated by the Principal
 - a) Prior to initiating a request for an administrative change of assignment of a student, the principal and the pupil personnel worker assigned to the student's home school will:
 - (1) Review the student's educational, medical, and behavioral record and consider alternative programs

- (2) Schedule a conference with the parent/guardian and the student
- b) If a COSA is indicated, the following steps are implemented:
 - (1) After consulting with the principal and the appropriate associate superintendent as to the reason(s) for the COSA, the director of DPPS will identify an appropriate school placement for the student.
 - (2) The pupil personnel worker will arrange any necessary conferences with the parent/guardian, student, principal of the receiving school, and Department of Student Services staff, as well as supply written confirmation of the placement, athletic eligibility, and athletic waiver process.
- c) Department of Student Services staff members are responsible for monitoring the academic progress and social adjustment of the student whose COSA was initiated by the principal.

4. Initiated by the Department of Student Services

A COSA may be initiated by Department of Student Services staff, in concert with the parent/guardian and the home school's staff, at any time for special circumstances. The approval or denial of Department of Student Services initiated COSAs is the responsibility of the director of DPPS.

- a) Students transferred and assigned under this provision [IV.D.4.a] based on their behavior that raised concerns about the health and/or safety of others in the school setting must attend the assigned school for one calendar year in order to be eligible to participate in athletics. Parents may request a waiver by writing to the director of Systemwide Athletics, explaining the reason for the COSA.
- b) Students transferred and assigned under this provision [IV.D.4.b] based on concerns about their health and/or safety in the school setting must attend the assigned school for one calendar year in order to be eligible to participate in athletics. Parents may request a waiver by writing to the director of Systemwide Athletics, explaining the reason for the COSA. In these cases, a waiver will be granted.

E. Appeals

1. Superintendent of Schools

If a COSA is denied by the director of DPPS, the parent/guardian may appeal the decision to the superintendent of schools. Appeals must be made in writing and must be received by the Office of the Chief Operating Officer (the chief operating officer serves as the superintendent of schools' designee) within 15 calendar days of the date of the decision letter. The appeal should state the reason(s) for seeking review of the decision. It is not necessary to provide additional information in order to appeal, but the appellant should include any additional information in order for it to be considered. The superintendent of schools, or the chief operating officer as his/her designee, will review all available information before issuing a decision. Although the matter is usually considered on the basis of the documents and telephone conferences, personal conferences may be arranged by the chief operating officer's hearing officer. Decisions will be made promptly given the number, complexity, and timing of appeals being handled at the same time. Appeals received by the chief operating officer before June 30 will be decided prior to the beginning of school.

2. Board of Education

An appeal of the decision of the superintendent of schools or his/her designee must be made in writing and received by the Board within 30 calendar days of the date on the superintendent of schools' decision letter. Appellants are strongly encouraged to note any appeal as soon as possible. The superintendent of schools will be given the opportunity to respond, with a copy sent to the appellant, before the Board considers the appeal. The Board's decision will be rendered in writing.

Regulation History: Formerly Regulation 265-2, February 22, 1980, revised January 23, 1992, revised April 25, 1994; revised December 23, 1994; revised December 30, 1997; revised July 20, 1998; revised December 2, 1999; updated office titles June 1, 2000; revised December 6, 2000; revised January 7, 2002; revised January 10, 2003; revised November 29, 2006; non-substantive revision, November 27, 2007; non-substantive revision, November 17, 2008; revised January 04, 2010; revised November 18, 2010; revised December 12, 2011; revised December 20, 2012; revised November 6, 2013; revised December 13, 2013.

Request for Change of School Assignment (COSA)



Office of the Chief Operating Officer
MONTGOMERY COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Rockville, Maryland 20850

MCPS Form 335-45
November 2014

INSTRUCTIONS: The parent/guardian is to complete Part I and submit the form to the principal of the home school from which the student wants to transfer no later than the first school day in April. Read carefully the information provided in the *Change of School Assignment (COSA) Information Booklet* before completing the form. Reference: Regulation JEE-RA, *Transfer of Students*.

PART I: CHANGE OF SCHOOL ASSIGNMENT REQUEST. To be completed by parent/guardian. (please print)

Student _____ Birth Date ____/____/____ Sex: ☐ M ☐ F
Last First MI

Receiving Special Education Services No ☐ Yes ☐

Current School _____ Entering Grade ____ in August 2015

Home School _____ Requested School _____ Effective Date ____/____/____

Parent/Guardian: ☐ Dr. ☐ Mr. ☐ Mrs. ☐ Ms. ☐ Miss _____

Address: _____ Home phone ____-____-____
Street

City State Zip Code Work phone ____-____-____

E-mail address _____ Cell phone ____-____-____

Language spoken at home _____ TTY needed ☐

Reason for request:

1. **Hardship:** ☐ describe in detail—**documentation that can be verified must be attached**
2. **Exemption:** ☐ Older sibling attends requested school in grade ____; name of sibling _____
☐ Continue in feeder pattern from middle school to high school, except for boundary change
☐ Exempt countywide program _____ (see booklet for exempt programs)
☐ Family move, completion of this school year only due to family move

Request forms must be submitted no earlier than the first school day in February and no later than the first school day in April for the next school year. In the absence of extenuating circumstances, late applications will not be processed.

I understand that, unless otherwise indicated, if this request is approved: 1) transportation is not provided by Montgomery County Public Schools; 2) my son/daughter WILL NOT be eligible to participate for one year in high school interscholastic athletics; and 3) the COSA may be rescinded for cause.

_____/____/____
Signature, Custodial Parent/Guardian

_____/____/____
Date

PART II: SCHOOL REVIEW. To be completed by school from which student wants to transfer.

Residency Verification has been completed Date ____/____/____ Student ID # _____

I have discussed this request with the parent/guardian Yes ☐ No ☐ School # _____

_____/____/____
Signature, Principal (Signature does not constitute agreement/disagreement with the request but does verify that residency has been validated.)

_____/____/____
Date

FORWARD TO: Director, Division of Pupil Personnel Services, 45 West Gude Drive, Suite 1300, Rockville, Maryland 20850

PART III: DIVISION OF PUPIL PERSONNEL SERVICES ACTION. To be completed by DPPS.

Forwarded to: Consortium Office ☐ Special Education ☐ Date ____/____/____

DPPS Decision:

- ☐ Approved ☐ Approved, to the end of school year ____ ☐ Denied, documentation does not meet guidelines
☐ Late, denied, unable to process without documentation of extenuating circumstances.

Comments: _____

_____/____/____
Signature, Director or Coordinator, Division of Pupil Personnel Services

_____/____/____
Date

APPEALS: Must be made in writing (please state reason and any additional information) within 15 calendar days of the date of this decision to: Office of the Chief Operating Officer, Montgomery County Public Schools, 850 Hungerford Drive, Room 149, Rockville, Maryland 20850, 301-279-3997

Submit completed form to the principal of the home school. Principal then forwards form to the Division of Pupil Personnel Services.

**DIVISION OF
PUPIL PERSONNEL
SERVICES**

45 West Gude Drive, Suite 1300
Rockville, Maryland 20850
301-315-7335

DOWNCOUNTY CONSORTIUM

**MONTGOMERY BLAIR, ALBERT EINSTEIN,
JOHN F. KENNEDY, NORTHWOOD, WHEATON**

MIDDLE SCHOOL MAGNET CONSORTIUM

ARGYLE, LOIEDERMAN, PARKLAND

NORTHEAST CONSORTIUM

JAMES HUBERT BLAKE, PAINT BRANCH, SPRINGBROOK

11721 Kemp Mill Road
Silver Spring, Maryland 20902
301-592-2040

**DEPARTMENT OF
SPECIAL EDUCATION
SERVICES**

850 Hungerford Drive, Room 230
Rockville, Maryland 20850
301-279-3837

Students and parents who may require assistance may contact ASK MCPS to get the information they need by telephone at 301-309-MCPS (6277). Telephone operators who speak English and Spanish are available 7:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., Monday through Friday. Parents who speak languages other than English or Spanish who call the ASK MCPS telephone line and identify their language will have their questions answered through a telephone interpreter.

Estudiantes y padres que requieran ayuda pueden obtener la información que necesiten comunicándose con ASK MCPS al teléfono 301-309-MCPS (6277). Hay operadores que hablan inglés y español disponibles para responder sus preguntas por teléfono de 7:30 a.m. a 5:30 p.m., de lunes a viernes. Los padres que hablen otros idiomas que no sean inglés o español y que llamen a la línea telefónica de ASK MCPS e identifiquen cuál es su idioma, recibirán respuesta a sus preguntas por teléfono a través de un intérprete.

Les élèves et parents qui ont besoin d'assistance peuvent contacter ASK MCPS par téléphone au 301-309-MCPS (6277) pour obtenir les informations dont ils ont besoin. Les standardistes qui parlent l'anglais et l'espagnol sont disponibles de 7h30 à 17h30, du lundi au vendredi. Les parents qui parlent des langues autres que l'anglais ou l'espagnol, qui appellent la ligne téléphonique de ASK MCPS et identifient leur langue, auront des réponses à leurs questions à travers un interprète téléphonique.

需要協助的學生及其家長可以致電301-309-MCPS (6277)與 ASK MCPS 聯繫，了解所需的資訊。說英語和西班牙語的接線員週一至週五早上7:30至下午5:30為您服務。如果家長使用除英語或西班牙語以外的其它語言，當他們致電 ASK MCPS 並說明自己使用的語言時，我們將通過電話安排翻譯員解答他們的問題。

도움이 필요한 학생 및 학부모님은 ASK MCPS (301-309-MCPS/6277)로 전화하셔서 도움을 받으실 수 있습니다. 영어와 스페인어가 가능한 직원이 월요일-금요일, 오전 7시 30분-오후 5시 30분에 여러분을 도와드리며 그 외의 언어로의 문의는 ASK MCPS로 전화하셔서 사용하는 언어를 말씀하시면 전화통역을 사용하여 답변해 드립니다.

Học sinh và các phụ huynh mà cần được giúp đỡ có thể liên lạc với ASK MCPS để lấy thông tin họ cần bằng cách gọi số 301-309-MCPS (6277). Những người trả lời điện thoại nói tiếng Anh và Tây Ban Nha từ 7:30 giờ sáng đến 5:30 giờ chiều từ thứ Hai đến thứ Sáu. Phụ huynh nói ngôn ngữ khác ngoài tiếng Anh hay Tây Ban Nha mà gọi đường giây điện thoại ASK MCPS và xác định ngôn ngữ của họ sẽ được thông dịch viên trả lời các câu hỏi của họ qua điện thoại.

This document is available in an alternate format, upon request, under the *Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990*, by contacting the Department of Public Information and Web Services, at 850 Hungerford Drive, Room 112, Rockville, MD 20850, or by telephone at 301-279-3391 or via the Maryland Relay at 1-800-735-2258.

Individuals who request (need) sign language interpretation or cued speech transliteration in communicating with Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) may contact the Office of Interpreting Services in the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Program at 301-517-5539 or 301-637-2958VP, or send an e-mail message to interpreting_services@mcpsmd.org.

MCPS prohibits illegal discrimination on the basis of race, color, gender, religion, ancestry, national origin, marital status, socioeconomic status, age, disability, physical characteristics, or sexual orientation. Inquiries or complaints regarding discrimination or Title IX issues such as gender equity and sexual harassment should be directed to the Office of the Chief Academic Officer at 301-279-3126, via the Maryland Relay at 1-800-735-2258, or addressed to that office at 850 Hungerford Drive, Room 129, Rockville, MD 20850.



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