

The Louisiana Department of Education is committed to ensuring that Type 2 charter schools are well-positioned to serve students in their community with a variety of needs. Under the recently passed Louisiana Legislative Act 467, type 2 charter schools are required to enroll a certain percentage of students considered to be at-risk and a certain percentage of students with disabilities. This Frequently Asked Questions document is intended to assist schools in adapting recruitment and enrollment procedures to comply with the requirements set forth in Act 467.

**How does Act 467 change enrollment requirements for my school?**

Type 2 charter schools are still required to enroll a certain percentage of students considered to be “at-risk” as defined in R.S. 17:3973. Act 467 creates an additional enrollment requirement for charter schools by mandating that each school enroll a certain percentage of students with disabilities.

**Can my school give enrollment preferences to at-risk students and/or students with disabilities?**

Yes. Type 2 charter schools can structure enrollment and lottery procedures in a way that prioritizes the enrollment of certain groups of students over others as allowed contractually and by law and policy. With regard to meeting the requirements of Act 467, Type 2 charter schools can establish an enrollment priority structure focused on ensuring that both the required number of at-risk students and students with disabilities have the greatest likelihood of admission.

An appropriate enrollment priority structure could resemble the following:

1. Students with disabilities, students eligible to participate in the federal free and reduced lunch (FRL) program or considered to be Economically Disadvantaged (ED), or students considered to be at-risk according to the additional indicators defined in R.S. 17:3973
2. Current students\*
3. Siblings of current students\*
4. All Remaining applicants

\*Enrollment preferences for students and siblings of current students are allowable only in schools not in their first year of operation.

**How should my school enroll students and conduct a lottery based on a set of identified enrollment preferences?**

Each charter school must set and publicize a period during which student applications will be accepted. This application period cannot be shorter than one month nor longer than three months. If, at the conclusion of this enrollment period, the total number of applications does not exceed the slots available, all students applying during the application period shall be admitted. If, at the conclusion of the enrollment period, the total number of applicants exceeds grade or program capacity, the school must conduct an open lottery to enroll students.

If utilizing a priority structure, students are enrolled in the order identified in the priority structure. For example, using the priority structure above, all students with disabilities, students qualifying for the federal free and reduced lunch program, and students considered to be at-risk would be enrolled first.

A lottery would then be conducted among remaining applicants until all seats in a given grade or program have been filled. Once grade or program capacity has been reached, remaining applicants are to be added to the school’s waitlist in the order determined by the school’s priority structure and lottery procedure. Should students exit during the school year, the school may fill vacancies based on the previously established priority structure to ensure that vacancies are more likely to be filled by students in prioritized groups and schools are more likely to maintain compliance with the requirements set forth in applicable law and policy.

The priority structure mentioned previously is just one example of how a school might prioritize enrollment processes. Schools should determine a priority structure based on the population currently served in relation to the enrollment requirements of special populations enumerated in Act 467.

**What are some strategies my school can use to recruit at-risk students and students with disabilities?**

The following practices are recommended as ways of recruiting students to meet your required percentage of at-risk students and students with disabilities while ensuring compliance with applicable law and policy:

- Send notification to local non-profits that serve potential students and their families, advertising the school and its enrollment process
- Post notices in various locations across the parish(es) that potential students and their families may visit;
- Hold well-publicized information meetings for students and families to learn about the school and its enrollment process and provide information about these meetings widely and to organizations that serve potential students and their families;
- Run advertisements in the city’s major commercial and community media outlets (newspapers, radio, etc.); and
- Highlight any aspects of the school or programs in place specifically designed to serve special populations.

**In terms of application and enrollment procedures, what can I do to ensure that my schools maintains compliance with applicable law and policy?**

A charter school **may** . . .

- ♦ Require a written enrollment form that includes basic and general information about the prospective students (i.e. name, address, birth date, last grade completed, prior school attended).
  
- ♦ Include, as part of their application materials, a mechanism by which parents and families can indicate that their student is a student with an exceptionality (not gifted or talented) and/or considered to be at-risk as defined in R.S. 17: 3973.

A charter school **may not** . . .

- ♦ Require, as part of their application materials, documentation to substantiate the designation of a student as having a disability or considered to be at-risk. (i.e. IEP documents, proof of enrollment in government assistance programs, etc.)
  
- ♦ “Conditionally accept” a student pending receipt of the student’s academic, behavioral, assessment and/or health records.
  
- ♦ Rescind an admissions offer after one has been granted for any reason other than the student failing to attend school for two consecutive weeks. In this instance, a school must follow state law related to truancy before dropping a student from its roster.

**Next Steps:** Schools can expect preliminary school-specific data as well as more information regarding implementation and accountability associated with Act 467 in March 2016. In the meantime, please contact your Manager of School Performance with any questions or concerns.