



Questions for Parents of Children with Disabilities to Ask About Public Charter Schools

Minnesota is a national leader in the development of public charter schools. In 1991, Minnesota was the first state to pass charter school legislation. Currently there are approximately 57,000 Minnesota children enrolled in the state's 164 charter schools.

Minnesota charter schools have experienced high visibility and rapid growth throughout the state. As a parent, you may wonder if a charter school might be a good option for your child with a disability. This overview of charter schools in Minnesota may help you decide.

What are charter schools?

Charter schools are part of the state's public school education system. As an alternative to traditional public schools, Minnesota law permits teachers, parents, and others to form and operate charter schools as independent school districts.

Do charter schools serve students with disabilities?

Although exempt from some Minnesota education statutes and rules, charter schools are not exempt from special education statutes and rules.

Minnesota charter schools must:

- Implement federal laws including Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)
- Follow the discipline procedures of Minnesota's Pupil Fair Dismissal Act and Standards for Restrictive Procedures
- Implement Child Find activities and evaluate children for special education services when appropriate
- Do not discriminate against children with disabilities
- Participate in statewide assessments of student learning

What should I ask the school?

When considering a charter school, you may want to ask its administrators the following questions.

- What is the focus or goal of this charter school?
- Who sponsors this charter school—a university, a parent group, or someone else?
- When did the school open?
- How will my child's Individualized Education Program (IEP) be implemented here?
- Is transportation provided? By whom? Is there a cost?
- What type of special education and related service providers are employed at this charter school?
- My child has difficulty with _____. How would this charter school help with that?

- How did students at this school score on the most recent statewide assessments?
- If this school includes the high school grades:
 - What are the school's diploma and/or graduation requirements?
 - What transition services does this school offer to eligible students ages 18-21?

How do I enroll my child in a charter school?

Parents can enroll their child in a charter school if the charter school has openings. Because most charter schools are independent school districts, the child would be considered a transfer* student.

Conclusion

Charter schools offer a public school education option. If you are considering enrolling your child with a disability in a charter school, asking questions can help you determine whether this choice will meet your child's needs.

For more information on transfer students, download [PHP-c163, "Transfer Students and Special Education,"](#) from PACER Center.

For more information, please contact:

PACER Center

8161 Normandale Blvd.
 Minneapolis, MN 55437
 (952) 838-9000
 (800) 537-2237
 PACER@PACER.org
PACER.org

Minnesota Department of Education

<https://education.mn.gov/MDE/dse/chart>

Minnesota Association of Charter Schools

351 E. Kellogg Blvd.
 St. Paul, MN 55101
 (651) 789-3090, Voice
 (651) 789-3098, Fax
 (888) 789-3090, Toll-free
mncharterschools.org