



**COLORADO**  
Department of Education

# S.B. 23-219 Facility Schools Work Group Annual Report

Submitted to:

**Joint Budget Committee  
House Education Committee  
Senate Education Committee  
State Board of Education**

By:

**Office of Facility Schools**

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## Table of Contents

<b>Executive Summary</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Membership, Meetings, and Resources</b>	<b>4</b>
• Legislation Required Representation	
• Facility School Work Group Meetings and Resources	
• 2024-25 Stakeholder Groups for Facility School Work Group	
<b>Implementation Progress to Date</b>	<b>8</b>
• Funding	
• Capacity	
• Continuum	
• External Evaluation	
<b>Implementation Data Collection and Feedback</b>	<b>12</b>
• Impact in Key Areas	
• Examples of Positive Change	
• Observations of Continues Challenges	
<b>Next Steps</b>	<b>16</b>
• Funding	
• Capacity	
• Continuum	
• External Evaluation	
<b>Appendices</b>	<b>18</b>
• Appendix A: Tuition Cost Rate System	
• Appendix B: CAFCA Final Report	
• Appendix C: Technical Assistance Center Information	



## Executive Summary

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Facility Schools provide educational services outside of the traditional classroom to students with physical, behavioral, mental health, or special education needs. Facility Schools are found primarily on the Front Range and operate as day or residential treatment facilities, specialized day schools, or in a hospital setting. Historically, Facility Schools have served approximately 6,000 students each year across the state. They provide critical educational and treatment services for students with high need, but statewide capacity decreased by over 40% between 2012 and 2022. This has led to a decrease in available placement options for students and limited access for students outside the Denver Metro area. This loss of approved Facility School capacity creates significant barriers to academic success for many students and decreases educational opportunities for the state's most vulnerable students.

During the 2021 legislative session, [Senate Bill \(S.B.\) 21-274](#) established a Facility School Work Group that was tasked with developing a series of recommendations to help foster a sustainable facility school model to better serve students. The recommendations were intended to address the educational, physical, behavioral, and mental health needs of children and youth who need advanced services. The bill also identified funding, capacity, and the continuum of student services as areas of focus for the Work Group. Providing sustainable funding would ideally support a high-quality education, providing a comprehensive continuum of services would help ensure that all student needs could be met, and providing additional capacity would help keep the students of Colorado close to their families and communities and minimize costs to the districts. Funding, capacity, and the continuum of services are interconnected and support each other to provide a more holistic solution that benefits everyone. The Work Group commenced work in the fall of 2021 and developed a set of recommendations that were presented to the Joint Budget Committee (JBC) at the end of 2022 in their [S.B.21-274 Facility Schools Work Group Final Report](#).

In April of 2023, the Colorado General Assembly passed [S.B. 23-219](#), which contained the recommendations put forth by the Facility School Work Group. The bill was signed into law in April of 2023. The system-level recommendations were grounded in the three focus areas: funding, capacity, and the continuum of student services. Each focus area contained specific items, listed below, to help address student and family needs as well as system shortfalls.

***Funding Recommendations:***

- *Baseline Funding*
- *Tuition Costs*
- *Medicaid Reimbursements*
- *Shared Operational Services*

***Capacity Recommendation:***

- Technical Assistance Center

***Continuum Recommendations:***

- Specialized Day School
- Interagency Resource Guide
- Accountability and Accreditation



Beginning in June of 2023, with the passage of S.B. 23-219, the Facility School Work Group shifted its focus to track implementation of the new legislation and provide feedback and additional recommendations concerning the work. The [2023 S.B. 23-219 Annual Report](#) was submitted to the JBC in October of 2023 and the [2024 S.B. 23-219 Annual Report](#) was submitted in October of 2024. Each annual report provided information on the progress underway to implement each of the recommendations and related baseline data. The Work Group has continued to collect data, such as attendance and enrollment numbers, as well as track implementation on all recommendations proposed by the initial Facility School Work Group. Over the last year of implementation, extensive progress has been made to expand and support the Facility School system, including the approval of four new Specialized Day Schools and two new day treatment programs, the establishment of a Technical Assistance Center which serves rural districts, and the roll out of a new tuition cost system. This document reviews the entirety of work to date since the 2024 S.B. 23-219 Annual Report and outlines next steps in implementation tracking.

## Membership, Meetings, and Resources

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### Legislation Required Representation

S.B. 21-274, and modified by S.B. 23-219, required representation from the following entities within the Work Group:

- School Districts
- Boards of Cooperative Services
- Special Education Directors
- Facility Schools and Facility School Board Members
- The Department of Health Care Policy and Finance
- The Department of Education
- The Department of Human Services, Including the Division of Youth Services
- County Departments of Human or Social Services
- Parents, Guardians, and Legal Custodians of Students with Exceptionally Severe or Specialized Needs
- Therapeutic Facilities for Students with Exceptionally Severe or Specialized Needs That Are Not Approved Facility Schools

Work Group members were appointed through the Office of Facility Schools. Representatives were sought through a variety of stakeholder groups and pathways. The office ensured each member had knowledge of or experience with facility schools. A complete list of current Work Group members, the entities they represent, and their roles can be found below (Table 1). All but one member of the SY2023-24 Work Group continued their service into SY2024-25.



**Table 1**  
**S.B. 23-219 Facility School Work Group Membership By Name, Representation, and Role**

Member	Representation Required by Statute	Role/Position
Sarah Baumgartner	School District	Assistant Director of Special Education- Brighton 27J
Laurie Burney	CO Dept. of Human Services	Div. of Child Welfare- Facility Monitoring
Danny Combs	Specialized Day School Parent/Guardian of Student	Former Executive Director- TACT and Parent
Kari Chapman	Facility School	Chief Finance Officer- Griffith Facility School
Wendy Dunaway	CO Dept. of Education	Assistant Director- Office of Facility Schools
Mylynda Herrick	Facility School Board Member Parent/Guardian of Student	Parent
Kathleen Homan	CO Dept. of Health Care Policy & Finance	Complex and Supportive Services Unit Supervisor
Sonjia Hunt	Facility School Facility School Board Member	Special Education Director- Hilltop Facility School
Susan Udenberg	Boards of Cooperative Services	Executive Director and SPED Director
Erin Osterhaus	Division of Youth Services	Director of Education
Steven Ramirez	Facility School Facility School Board Member	CEO- Shiloh Facility School and Board Chair
Deon Roberts	Facility School	Special Education Director- Cedar Springs Hospitals
Robin Singer	CO Dept. of Education	Supervisor- Office of Facility Schools
Judy Stirman	CO Dept. of Education	Director- Office of Facility Schools
Ann Symalla	CO Dept. of Education	Office of Facility Schools



Lindsey Tapp	CO Dept. of Human Services	Foster Care Liaison- Education Specialist
Barb Taylor	Facility School	Special Education Director- Various Facility Schools
Kevin Tracy	Facility School	Chief Officer- Residential & Education Services- Shiloh
Callan Ware	School District Special Education Director	Director of Special Education- Englewood Schools
Laura Writebol	County Depts.- Human Services	Education Liaison - Denver County DHS

### Facility School Work Group Meetings and Resources

Facility School Work Group meetings occur approximately once a month, and are typically held virtually. Meetings are open to the public and include a scheduled time for public comment; however, only Work Group members actively participate in meetings. Meeting dates and times, agendas, meeting notes, and Zoom links are available to the public through the [Facility School Work Group page on the Colorado Department of Education website](#) . Work Group members have access, through a shared Google folder, to an archive of resources, reports, PowerPoint presentations, and past meeting notes.

### 2024-2025 Stakeholder Groups of the Facility School Work Group

Consultation with stakeholder groups will be required to address some specific items outlined in S.B. 23-219. The Tuition Cost Stakeholder Group was established to *“analyze and recommend changes to the methods used for calculating tuition costs for approved facility schools.”*

#### Tuition Cost Stakeholder Group Formation and Work

The stakeholder group was assembled by the Office of Facility Schools and includes S.B. 23-219 Work Group members, Facility School Board members, school district staff, Charter School Institute representatives, and facility school staff. A complete list of stakeholder group members, representation, and their roles can be found below (Table 2). The stakeholder group met to review the new process and tools to determine the Tuition Cost category for each school. As part of the new system an annual financial report was developed. Each facility school will complete and submit the report to the CDE Office of Facility Schools no later than October 31 of each year. The first reports are due October 31, 2025.



**Table 2**  
**S.B. 23-219 Tuition Cost Stakeholder Group Membership By Name, Representation, and Role**

Member	Representation	Role/Position
Kari Chapman	Griffith Center Facility School Facility School Work Group Member	Facility School Finance
Wendy Dunaway	Office of Facility Schools	Assistant Director
Annie Haskins	Office of Facility Schools	SPED/IEP System Administrator
Sonjia Hunt	Hilltop Facility School Facility School Board Member Facility School Work Group Member	Facility School Special Education Director
Nancy Jones	Lardon Facility School	Facility School SPED Director- Past School District SPED Dir.
Corey Kala	Lardon Facility School	Chief Financial Officer
Lori Kochevar	Office of Facility Schools	Lead- Tuition Cost- Committee Lead
David Molineux	Jefferson Center Facility School Facility School Work Group Member	Facility School Special Education Director
Robin Singer	Office of Facility Schools Facility School Work Group Member	Supervisor- Committee Lead
Judy Stirman	Office of Facility Schools Facility School Work Group Member	Director
Ann Symalla	Office of Facility Schools Facility School Work Group Member	Monitoring Specialist
Barb Taylor	Multiple Facility Schools Facility School Work Group Member	Facility School Special Education Director
Callan Ware	Englewood School District Facility School Work Group Member	SPED Director
Jewell Weber	Joshua School Facility School	Chief Financial Officer



## Implementation Progress to Date

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Extensive progress continues to be made to date across all focus areas. Following the passage of S.B. 23-219, all School Year (SY)2023-24 and SY2024-25 implementation requirements were met. By the end of 2023 school year, the new Tuition Cost Calculation Method was finalized, Medicaid Reimbursement Guidance was developed by the Department of Health Care Policy and Finance, and the Interagency Resource Guide was built out through collaborative efforts of the Department of Education, Department of Human Services, and Department of Health Care Policy and Finance. Further progress has been made and several additional milestones have been met including development and implementation of a tuition cost system, roll out of the Technical Assistance Center, approval of four new Specialized Day Schools as well as two new day treatment programs, creation of a draft accreditation process, and the piloting of shared operational services.

### Funding

#### A. Baseline Funding

- a. Bill Requirements- S.B. 23-219 “creates a new baseline funding model for approved schools. The bill requires reporting on the new baseline funding model for approved schools.”
- b. 2023 Annual Report Recap- Ahead of the [2023 Annual Report](#), the Work Group collected historical data, including monthly enrollment data and additional administrative and operational data, that could be used in the analysis of the remodel of baseline funding and updated methods for tracking monthly enrollment.
- c. 2024 Annual Report Recap- Ahead of the [2024 Annual Report](#), the first full year of implementation of the new baseline funding model was completed. Feedback from facility schools and the Work Group was collected to help develop revisions and refinements to the formula.
- d. 2025 Annual Report Progress to Date- Based on feedback collected from Facility Schools and Work Group members regarding the first year of Baseline Funding implementation, revisions and refinements to the formula were made. Additionally, feedback regarding data collection will be gathered to help collect more meaningful and accurate data for tracking and evaluation purposes moving forward. An inflationary factor has been applied to the formula in alignment with the state rate. The collection of enrollment data continues to be used to verify enrollment at each school for state revenue payments. A guidance document covering Facility School state revenue is being developed.

#### B. Tuition Costs

- a. Bill Requirements- S.B. 23-219 requires the Office of Facility Schools to provide “recommendations to change the method used for calculating costs for approved Facility Schools as described in section 22-2-405(5) and identify next steps”.
- b. 2023 Annual Report Recap- Ahead of the [2023 Annual Report](#), the Tuition Cost Stakeholder Group began reviewing options for an updated method for calculating tuition costs as well as rule changes.
- c. 2024 Annual Report Recap- Ahead of the [2024 Annual Report](#), the State Board of Education approved a new tuition cost plan and rates. Changes included the creation of



three category rates. The new rates took effect for SY2024-25. The Facility Schools Expenses Workbook was also updated.

- d. 2025 Annual Report Progress to Date- Implementation of the new tuition cost system took effect for SY2024-25. The end of year financial report was completed. Facility schools are receiving training and will complete and submit the report to CDE Office of Facility Schools no later than October 31, 2025. A guidance document for Facility Schools and school districts was also created. See Appendix A for the full Tuition Cost Rate System Document.
- C. Medicaid Reimbursement Guidance
- a. Bill Requirements- S.B. 23-219 requires the Department of Health Care Policy and Finance to “*recommend a plan to provide guidance to approved schools on the eligibility standards required to request and receive Medicaid reimbursement funding for therapeutic services to the maximum extent feasible.*”
  - b. 2023 Annual Report Recap- As of the submission of the [2023 Annual Report](#) to the Joint Budget Committee, the Facility School Work Group was waiting on the Department of Health Care Policy and Finance (HCPF) to share plans on the development of the Medicaid Reimbursement Guidance.
  - c. 2024 Annual Report Recap- Ahead of the submission of the [2024 Annual Report](#), draft guidance was developed by HCPF.
  - d. 2025 Annual Report Progress to Date- Medicaid Reimbursement Guidance was finalized by HCPF. HCPF shared information with the Work Group regarding the school health services program.
- D. Shared Operational Services
- a. Bill Requirements- S.B. 23-219 “*creates the shared operational services grant program to award a grant to eligible applicants to contract for two years with an organization that coordinates shared operational services.*”
  - b. 2023 Annual Report Recap- Ahead of the [2023 Annual Report](#), the operational services grant recipient was determined and was awaiting approval by the state board.
  - c. 2024 Annual Report Recap- Ahead of the [2024 Annual Report](#), the State Board of Education approved Colorado Association of Families and Children's Agencies (CAFCA) as the grantee at their regular board meeting in October 2023. Funds were distributed, Dave Sevick was named Director of Development and Member Services, and an Advisory Council was seated. A needs assessment was started and a shared purchasing process was piloted.
  - d. 2025 Annual Report Progress to Date- A needs assessment was finalized to determine the best direction of the work and the shared purchasing process to be implemented. A plan of sustainability was developed and an “End of Year” financial summary was prepared. Participating Facility Schools realized cost savings. See Appendix B for the CAFCA Final Report submitted to CDE.

## Capacity

- A. Technical Assistance Center (TAC)
- a. Bill Requirements- S.B. 23-219 “*creates the technical assistance center in the Office of Facility Schools to provide technical assistance support to school districts and related administrative units, with a priority to serve rural and remote school districts and related*



*administrative units. Beginning in the 2023-24 budget year, the center is required to assess the needs of school districts and related administrative units.”*

- b. 2023 Annual Report Recap- Ahead of the [2023 Annual Report](#), a job description for the technical assistance center coordinator was being developed and the Office of Facility Schools was informally collecting data to help assess potential needs of school districts and related administrative units.
- c. 2024 Annual Report Recap- Ahead of the [2024 Annual Report](#), the position for the technical assistance center was filled and the new coordinator started on July 1, 2024. The coordinator began to connect and conduct outreach with internal and external stakeholders, collect data to help steer future work, build out a resource hub, and attend relevant conferences and meetings.
- d. 2025 Annual Report Progress to Date- A Technical Assistance Center (TAC) website was created and maintained. The TAC coordinator facilitated a variety of meetings with rural school districts and stakeholders to collect feedback and insight to guide the work. A resource “hub” of Facility Schools was established to provide support and coaching opportunities to rural districts. Data collection continues to take place to better understand statewide needs and how they can be most effectively addressed. See Appendix C for the TAC informational one-pager available to school districts and stakeholders.

## Continuum of Services

### A. Specialized Day Schools

- a. Bill Requirements- S.B. 23-219 “*creates the specialized day school as a type of approved school. The facility school board shall promulgate rules for a facility to become authorized to operate as a specialized day school.*”
- b. 2023 Annual Report Recap- Ahead of the [2023 Annual Report](#), the Facility Schools Board began updating rules, 1 CCR 304-1, Rules for Administration of the Facility Schools Act, to include a process to authorize Specialized Day Schools.
- c. 2024 Annual Report Recap- Ahead of the [2024 Annual Report](#), rules were approved by the Facility School Board. Teaching the Autism Community Trades (TACT) and Austin Centers for Exceptional Students (ACES) both progressed through the pilot authorization process and were approved as Specialized Day Schools and additional sites expressed interest in becoming authorized and approved Specialized Day Schools.
- d. 2025 Annual Report Progress to Date- The overall process and guidance continues to be refined and will be formally reviewed and approved in the fall of 2025. To-date there are four Specialized Day Schools approved as Facility Schools, serving students with exceptionally severe or specialized needs.

### B. Interagency Resource Guide

- a. Bill Requirements- S.B. 23-219 requires the CDE, Department of Human Services (CDHS), HCPF, and the Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE) to “*collaborate and create an interagency resource guide to provide assistance to facilities that are pursuing licensing or authorization to operate as an approved school. The bill requires the state agencies to identify and recommend legislation and changes to each department’s respective rules and administrative processes to facilitate licensing,*



*authorization, and approval processes for facilities seeking to operate as approved schools.”*

- b. 2023 Annual Report Recap- Ahead of the [2023 Annual Report](#), a draft Interagency Resource Guide was written and reviewed by stakeholders including the SB23-219 Work Group Members.
  - c. 2024 Annual Report Recap- Ahead of the [2024 Annual Report](#), a finalized version of the guide was posted on the CDE website.
  - d. 2025 Annual Report Progress to Date- During SY2024-25, no adjustments and/or revisions were necessary in the Interagency Resource Guide. The guide will be reviewed again in the fall of 2025 and updated if necessary.
- C. Accountability and Accreditation
- a. Bill Requirements- S.B. 23-219 requires the Facility Schools Board “*to adopt accountability and accreditation measures for approved schools.*”
  - b. 2023 Annual Report Recap- The Facility Schools Board planned to update 1 CCR 304-1, Rules for Administration of the Facility Schools Act, to include the process to accredit approved facility schools and the components of the accreditation outcome reports.
  - c. 2024 Annual Report Recap- Ahead of the [2024 Annual Report](#), the Facility School Board adopted revisions to 1 CCR 304-1 rules to include the process to accredit approved facility schools and complete outcome reports. The Office of Facility Schools worked on accreditation standards, measures, data collection and process.
  - d. 2025 Annual Report Progress to Date- The Office of Facility Schools has developed a draft accreditation report in collaboration with the Facility Schools Board. The report will be finalized internally by CDE. An accreditation standards and indicators rubric has been developed and will be piloted during the 2025-26 school year.

## External Evaluation

- A. Third-Party Evaluation
- a. Bill Requirements- S.B. 23-219 requires the Office of Facility Schools to “*contract with a qualified third-party evaluator to evaluate and report whether the work group recommendations resulted in more effective services and better access to those services for students with exceptionally severe and specialized needs.*”
  - b. 2023 Annual Report Recap- Ahead of the [2023 Annual Report](#), the Office of Facility Schools had begun to collect data to be utilized by evaluators to assess implementation of the work group recommendations and associated outcomes.
  - c. 2024 Annual Report Recap- As of the submission of the [2024 Annual Report](#), the Office of Facility Schools was collecting data for use by the evaluator. During the 2024 legislative session, the General Assembly extended the deadline for a third-party evaluation from September 1, 2025 to September 1, 2026.
  - d. 2025 Annual Report Progress to Date- A Statement of Work written by the Office of Facility Schools with input from the Work Group was completed and an evaluator was selected to conduct the work. The CDE Office of Facility Schools has contracted with the University of Northern Colorado to complete the evaluation. Through legislative action, the deadline for the evaluation was pushed back to be conducted during SY2025-26, with a final report due in September 2026.



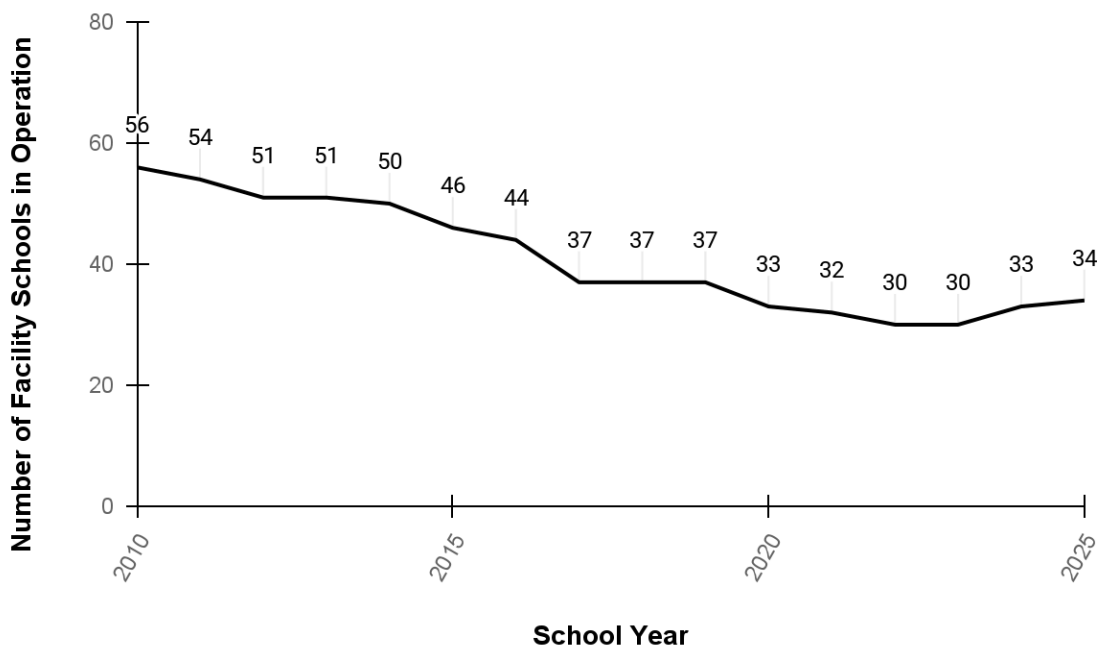
# Implementation of Data Collection and Feedback

## Impact in Key Areas

As part of the implementation process, the Facility School Work Group has collected data in key areas to help better understand the impact of the work. Data collection and analysis continues in a number of areas. Data collected continues to illustrate positive change in response to the passage of S.B. 23-219. The following information demonstrates how implementation continues to enhance the capacity and continuum of services of facility schools.

- Facility Schools have increased in number. Between 2010 and 2022, the number of active Facility Schools across Colorado dropped from 56 to 30. Last year, SY2023-24, marked the first time since before 2010 that the number of Facility Schools increased, with three new facility schools approved during the school year. A further increase was seen this past year, SY2024-25, with four new Specialized Day Schools and two new day treatment programs being approved (Figure 1). Along with the new approvals, there have been two Facility School closures in the past year, resulting in an overall system increase to thirty-four active Facility Schools. The continued increase in the number of Facility Schools in the state will help increase capacity and provide more available seats to students in need of placement options. Further the introduction of new types of schools and programs with potentially different specializations will help increase the statewide continuum of services by expanding programming options.

**Figure 1**  
**Number of Facility School Operating In Colorado By Year**





- Enrollment has likely been undercounted in past years.* Historically, “Count Day” for facility schools has been conducted on December 1 of each year and no other enrollment counts have been conducted. “Count Day” for SY2023-24 reported 796 students; however during the entire month of December 2023, 1,016 unique students were served by Facility Schools. Additionally, between September 2023 and April 2024, over 2,800 unique students were served with roughly 10 percent of those students being served by more than one facility school (Table 3). Analysis of enrollment data for SY2024-25 illustrates similar trends. The December “month” count (1,032 students) is higher compared to the “Count Day” count (813 students). Additionally, there were over 3,000 unique students between September and April and approximately 10% of students were served by more than one school during the school year. The capacity of Facility Schools across the state is fluid, and data collected continues to demonstrate that in order to have the most accurate enrollment counts more than a single day of data collection is needed. Additionally, data continues to illustrate that many students attend more than one facility school in a given year, highlighting the need to expand the continuum of service options.

**Table 3**  
**SY2023-24 Enrollment Count By Time Frame**

Enrollment Counts		
Time Frame	SY23-24 Enrollment Count	SY24-25 Enrollment Count
"Count Day" Dec 1st	796	813
"Month of December" Dec 1st-31st	1016	1032
"School Year" Sept 1st- Apr 30th	>2,800	3111
<p><i>10% of students were served by more than one school during SY23-24.</i>  <i>9.6% of students were served by more than one school during SY24-25.</i></p>		

- Staff numbers and salaries have increased.* Since SY2021-22, staff counts have increased across the board. As of SY2023-24, Facility Schools’ staff counts, paraprofessional counts, and hospital staff counts had all increased (4%, 17%, and 33% respectively). Additionally, as of SY2023-24, average teachers salaries increased by 20 percent since SY2021-22. The number of Facility School staff and paraprofessionals has continued to increase over the last year since SY2021-22 (19% and 20% respectively), while the number of hospital staff has held steady. Salaries have also continued to climb over that last year with a total increase of 23% since SY2021-22. (Table 4). Increases in the number of staff can increase the capacity of a given facility school. Additionally, increases in staff numbers could allow facility schools to provide additional services, thus impacting the educational services continuum. Increases in salaries could also help retain staff year to year which could positively impact both capacity and the continuum of services. These increases should help to address the existing unmet needs of students across the state.



**Table 4**  
**Percent Change in Staff Number and Salaries**

Staff Number Over Time		
Staff Type	Percentage Increase from SY21-22 to SY23-24 <sup>1</sup>	Percentage Increase from SY21-22 to SY24-25
Facility School Staff	4%	19%
Paraprofessionals	17%	20%
Hospital Staff	33%	33%
<i>Teacher's salaries have increased 20% between SY21-22 and SY23-24 &amp; increased 23% between SY21-22 and SY24-25</i>		

- Staff retention has increased.* Staff retention has increased over the last several years. A comparison of SY2021-22 to SY2022-23 and SY2022-23 to SY2023-24 illustrated an increase in staff retention across the board. Retention rates of teachers, paraprofessionals, and Day Treatment staff all increased (49%-63%, 36%-37%, and 53%-55% respectively). Staff retention has continued to demonstrate an upward trend over the last year with teacher retention reaching 66%, paraprofessional retention reaching 42% and Day Treatment staff retention reaching 63% (Table 5). As mentioned above, an increase in staff retention could help to positively impact both capacity and the continuum of services of Facility Schools across Colorado.

**Table 5**  
**Percent Change in Staff Retention Pre- and Post-Implementation**

Staff Retention Over Time				
Staff Type	SY21-22 to SY22-23 <sup>2</sup>	SY22-23 to SY23-24 <sup>2</sup>	SY23-24 to SY24-25	% Point Increase in Retention Rate (3-year increase)
All Facility School Staff	46%	52%	56%	10
Teachers	49%	63%	66%	17
Paraprofessionals	36%	37%	42%	6
Day Treatment Facility Staff	53%	55%	63%	10

<sup>1</sup> Percentage Increase from SY21-22 to SY23-24<sup>1</sup> has been updated since the 2024 Annual Report. Inconsistencies with regards to state reporting of staff member's legal vs preferred names and reporting duplications as a result of individuals holding multiple licenses led to tracking anomalies that required updates following submission of last year's report.

<sup>2</sup> Percentage Increases in Retention from SY21-22 to SY23-24 and SY21-22 to SY24-25 have been updated since the 2024 Annual Report. Inconsistencies with regards to state reporting of staff member's legal vs preferred names and reporting duplications as a result of individuals holding multiple licenses led to tracking anomalies that required updates following submission of last year's report.



- Technical Assistance Center has begun work. During SY2024-25, the TAC has directly supported 10 rural school districts and four BOCES programs. Support included connecting district and program staff to targeted training and resources available across the state. TAC has also created a resource “hub” which is designed to support rural districts through direct coaching and professional development; one school district has already begun to utilize the “hub” to help support its staff. Additionally, TAC has begun to build out a comprehensive email list of rural special education directors and coordinators to enable the sharing of regular information regarding training opportunities, connections, and other support options in Colorado.

### Examples of Positive Change

In addition to data collection, the Work Group has been collecting feedback and input from individuals ‘on the ground’ to help highlight improvements that have occurred since implementation began.

2024 Annual Report Recap- Numerous areas of improvement were highlighted by Work Group members in the [2024 Annual Report](#). Major areas covered included baseline funding, salaries, staff retention, and tuition costs. The following are major takeaways from those discussions.

- The Baseline Funding Model has created more stable funding for facility schools which helps with budgeting and enables schools to keep up with critical maintenance and improvement costs.
- The Baseline Funding Model has also provided schools with the opportunity to provide more competitive salaries for paraprofessionals, training specialists, and teachers, which has helped to improve year to year retention rates of staff.
- Standardizing tuition costs has made budgeting easier, financial tracking more accurate, and the entire process more transparent.

2025 Annual Report Feedback- During the August 8th Facility School Education Director’s meeting, attendees discussed and provided examples of positive change that they had experienced in their schools since implementation of S.B. 23-219. Topics discussed included overall funding, staffing, and tuition. The following are paraphrased comments from the meeting.

- The advent of Shared Operational Services has helped to distribute the cost of purchasing office supplies and has made it possible to access interpreter/translation services for Facility Schools.
- Increased funding has enabled Facility Schools to provide more competitive salaries, which has increased staff retention.
- New funding streams have allowed Facility Schools to fix and/or replace property that has been damaged or destroyed and it has enabled schools to address infrastructure needs such as roofing, carpeting, and furniture.
- Increased funding has provided classroom budgets an opportunity to expand programming such as an afterschool reading program which has helped to increase community engagement.
- Standardized tuition cost rates have provided a more stable funding stream for Facility Schools.

### Observations of Continued Challenges

Although significant headway continues to be made towards implementing all of the issues that S.B. 23-219 sought to address, it is important to continue to identify areas that are not reaching desired benchmarks and any unexpected challenges that have arisen and were not initially targeted by the bill. In



addition to positive change, the Work Group continues to collect feedback from individuals regarding insights on struggles and areas that require additional support.

*2024 Annual Report Recap-* In the [2024 Annual Report](#), Work Group members identified several challenges that they felt required continued attention. Major topics highlighted included a continued focus on staffing needs, support to address the ever growing needs of the student population, capacity in rural areas of the state, and additional facility funding needs. The following are major takeaways from the discussions.

- Staffing vacancies continue to persist in large part due to the severe needs of the student population. While higher salary levels as a result of changes in the Baseline Funding Model have helped the problem, complicated pathways for licensure and a lack of resiliency training continue to limit the number of positions that can be filled across the state.
- The capacity of facility schools in rural areas of Colorado continues to be an issue due in part to complications such as transportation and a lack of available cost sharing.
- Numerous improvements have been made that make facility school funding more sustainable, however, more funding for start-up costs will be necessary to ensure the facility school system can continue to grow.

*2025 Annual Report Feedback-* During the August 8th Facility School Education Director’s meeting attendees also discussed and provided examples of continued challenges that they were experiencing in their schools since implementation. Topics discussed primarily focused on continued staffing challenges. The following are paraphrased comments from the meeting.

- Although funding increases have enabled Facility Schools to offer more competitive salaries for staff, retention continues to be a challenge due in large part to the severity of needs of the overall student population.
- There is an overall shortage, statewide, of qualified special education teachers. This makes finding acceptable applicants for vacancies difficult.

## Next Steps

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A full review of the 2023 “Next Steps” can be accessed in the [2023 Annual Report](#) and a full review of the 2024 “Next Steps” can be accessed in the [2024 Annual Report](#).

### Funding

- A. Baseline Funding- The Baseline Funding Model and all model components will be reviewed to determine if any revisions are needed. Model guidance for stakeholders will be finalized and shared and the CDE will work to ensure that the model becomes a more systemic process.
- B. Tuition Costs- Following submission of the first annual financial report, adjustments will be made to the model and process based on data and feedback collected.
- C. Medicaid Reimbursement Guidance- The Work Group will monitor the use of the Medicaid Reimbursement Guidance and communicate concerns with HCPF when and if necessary.



- D. Shared Operational Services- The Work Group will monitor cost savings in SY2025-26 and beyond to ensure sustainability of the system. Recommendations regarding refinements and changes to the system will be shared with CAFCA.

### Capacity

- A. Technical Assistance Center (TAC)- Work will be conducted to continue to build out the “resource bank” and support options available for rural school districts. Outreach to rural districts will continue to further develop a complete understanding of the current needs of the student population and how best to address them. Additionally, the TAC is offering a SY2025-26 Rural Training Series which will run July-March and focuses on training for rural districts and areas regarding "hot topics." The TAC established “hub” group meets monthly to brainstorm creative ways to support and provide resources to rural districts. Finally, the TAC holds monthly rural community meetings consisting of rural directors and coordinators to enable connection and collaboration across the systems.

### Continuum of Services

- A. Specialized Day Schools- CDE will formally review and share guidance of the authorization and implementation process and publish for all stakeholders. The Work Group will monitor the authorization and implementation process and suggest refinement as needed.
- B. Interagency Resource Guide- Stakeholders will review and update the guide if needed based on changes to the process, rules, etc.
- C. Accountability and Accreditation- The facility schools accountability and accreditation process will continue to be developed. A full report and rubric will be prepared for the first accreditation recommendations and approvals in the Fall/Winter of 2026.

### External Evaluation

- A. Third-Party Evaluation- A full evaluation will take place during SY2025-26, and a final report will be submitted for review in September 2026.



## Appendix A: Tuition Cost Rate System



# Office of Facility Schools

## Tuition Cost Rate System Revision 2024

### History

State law has required school districts to pay tuition-related costs to facility schools since 1983. [H.B. \(House Bill\) 08-1204](#)

From 1983 to 2019, facility schools itemized certain costs and expenses for special education services and submitted these amounts to CDE for approval using a manual process. Once rates were established, they required approval from the Colorado State Board of Education (SBE). Facility schools then used the SBE-approved rates to bill districts for the services. Aside from being able to electronically submit tuition cost expenses beginning in 2020, the data expense reporting process has virtually stayed the same for over 40 years.

In 2023, the Colorado legislature enacted S.B. 23-219, which required CDE's Office of Facility Schools to assemble stakeholders and workgroup members "to analyze and recommend changes to the methods used for calculating tuition costs for approved facility schools." The group convened in July 2023 to review the current tuition cost process and recommend changes. CDE brought the recommended changes to the State Board of Education in early 2024, and the State Board of Education amended the ECEA rules to implement the changes. The following information summarizes the new system for facility school tuition costs.

### Overview of the New System and Its Development

The work group and stakeholders met to examine the strengths and weaknesses of the existing tuition cost process and ultimately proposed a new tiered system for tuition costs. Under the new system, CDE will establish categories of facility schools for tuition cost purposes and set a tuition cost rate for each category. The categories will be based on the needs of the students served and the educational programming offered by each school. The rate for each category will be based primarily on special education staff salaries, special education staff employment benefits, and additional expenses for special education, such as professional development, assessments, and specialized equipment. Additional education costs, individualized add-on costs, and day treatment fees, as defined below, are not included in the tuition cost rate.

The new system was implemented during the 2024-25 school year. CDE has established three categories of facility schools and set a tuition cost rate for each category. These tuition cost rates are primarily based on previous tuition cost expenses. The new "Rules for the Administration of the Exceptional Children's Educational Act" ("ECEA rules") on tuition costs continue to require facility schools to annually submit actual costs to CDE for CDE's consideration when establishing tuition cost rates. CDE may adjust the tuition cost rates as appropriate.



## **New Terminology**

Tuition Cost Rate: The tuition cost rate is intended to cover expenses to provide special education support and services to students in a facility school, over and above the general education costs. These rates include the salaries and benefits of instructional and support staff, equipment, supplies and materials, purchased services, professional development, including staff travel, transportation, and other costs, which can include student outings, admission fees, etc.

Additional Education Costs: Additional education costs are expenses that are not included in the tuition cost rate but are services and support necessary for the general administration of the facility school. This may include administration and business services, building occupancy, property destruction, janitorial services, and non-instructional equipment, supplies, and materials. The ECEA rules refer to these additional education costs as “indirect costs.” CDE will annually determine the percentage of each facility school’s baseline funding amount that must be applied towards these costs. CDE has assigned the additional education cost amount to be no more than fifteen percent of each category's assigned tuition cost rate.

Individualized Add-on Costs: Additional special education supports and services are based on individual student needs. The facility school and school district negotiate and agree upon these costs.

Day Treatment Fee: Treatment program costs are not part of the tuition cost rate and are agreed upon on an individual student basis between the facility school and the school district.

## **New Tiered Tuition Cost Rate System**

The new tuition cost rate system will consist of three categories, with schools serving students with the lowest level of needs in category one and the most intensive student needs in category three. Most facility schools fit into one designated funding category. However, some facility schools may qualify for more than one category based on different levels of programming within the agency. As the tuition cost rate categories progress from one to three, there is an increased need for additional staff to meet more intensive student needs.

**Tuition Cost Rate Category 1** facility schools are those that serve students who primarily have serious emotional disabilities and behavioral and mental health issues. These students often have experienced trauma, as well as other issues, including offense-specific behaviors, substance abuse, or criminogenic behaviors. Their program can include mental health services and family, group, and individual therapy. Some students at schools in this category may require individualized add-on services such as speech-language therapy, occupational therapy, or dedicated adult support. These add-on services are special education services needed for an individual student as identified on the student's IEP and aren't included in the tuition cost rate.

Currently, the following facility schools are listed in Tuition Cost Rate Category 1 with a tuition cost rate of **\$145.00/day**.

- Bansbach Academy - Denver Children's Home
- Community Reach Center
- Hilltop Balanced Rock Community School
- J. Wilkins Opportunity School - Griffith Center
- Joan Farley Academy - Third Way Center
- Joan Farley Academy Lowry - Third Way Center
- Mount Saint Vincent
- North Greeley Academy - Alternative Homes for Youth
- Phoenix Academy - Southern Peaks (day treatment)
- Rocky Mountain Leadership School
- Shiloh House-Family Resource Pavilion
- Shiloh House-Littleton Campus
- Shiloh House-Longmont Campus
- Skyline Academy
- Southgate School - Cedar Springs (residential)
- Tennyson Center for Children

**Tuition Cost Rate Category 2** facility schools are those that serve students who have one or more disabilities, such as serious emotional disability, autism spectrum disorders, intellectual disability, or other behavioral or mental health challenges. These students may have also had a history of trauma. Some of the students attending these schools utilize the Colorado Academic Standards, while others are working towards the Extended Evidence Outcomes. Less than 80% of these students require dedicated adult support. Their programs might include family, group,

and individual therapy, Applied Behavioral Analysis, Independent Living and Transition Skills, mental health services, and a lower student-to-staff ratio than programs in Category 1. Some students at schools in this category may require individualized add-on services such as speech-language therapy, occupational therapy, or dedicated adult support. These add-on services are special education services needed for an individual student as identified on the student's IEP and aren't included in the tuition cost rate.

Currently, the following facility schools are listed in tuition cost rate Category 2 with a tuition cost rate of **\$210.00/day**.

- Austin Center for Exceptional Students (Exceptional Program)
- Bansbach Academy LIFE - Denver Children's Home
- Phoenix Academy - Southern Peaks (Residential)
- Rite of Passage Morrison Home (ROP)
- Shiloh Family Resource Pavilion (ASD classroom)
- TACT
- Tennyson Center for Children (ASPEN)

**Tuition Cost Rate Category 3** facility schools are those that serve students who have intellectual and developmental disabilities, autism spectrum disorders, and other disabilities that require support in functional communication and behavior intervention. These students may have also had a history of trauma. Students in these facility schools often require significant support needs programming and lower staff-to-student ratios due to the high intensity of needs and behaviors. 80-100% of these students require dedicated adult support. The majority of students in these programs are working toward the Extended Evidence Outcomes. The programs might include therapy, augmentative and alternative communication devices, Independent Living, and Transition Skills Applied Behavior Analysis, mental health services, and a lower student-to-staff ratio. In this category, speech-language and occupational therapy are included in the daily rate. Other individualized add-on services may include dedicated adult support, art therapy, music therapy, equine therapy, etc., which will be included in each student's contract. These add-on services are special education services needed for an individual student as identified on the student's IEP and aren't included in the tuition cost rate.

Currently, the following facility schools are listed in tuition cost rate Category 3 with a tuition cost rate of **\$300.00/day**.

- Austin Center for Exceptional Students (Rising Stars)
- Elevation Ability Services
- Joshua School Boulder
- Joshua School Early Childhood Center
- Joshua School Englewood
- Laradon
- Learning Zone – Real Life Colorado
- Roundup Fellowship School
- Serenity Education
- Spectra Centers, Inc.



## **Benefits of the New Process**

The previous tuition cost system lacked transparency and was very complicated. It involved a multi-step process that began in the summer and required individual data submissions at multiple intervals. Per the tuition cost staff-to-student ratio, only a portion of the staff serving students with disabilities could be entered into the tuition cost application. Therefore, it did not accurately represent the actual staff salary and benefits. If a facility school was unable to hire a special education teacher before the deadline, they were essentially penalized and unable to add staff later. In addition, the final tuition cost rates were often not approved by the State Board of Education until November, requiring facility schools and districts to either pay back or bill each other for the costs from August, September, and October. Lastly, new programs that applied to become a facility school could not apply for a tuition cost rate until July each year.

The new tuition cost system will:

1. Provide more consistent base rates among facility schools.
2. Eliminate the time and effort involved in re-billing or back-billing for new rates.
3. Decrease the time required for an application process for facility schools.
4. Allow facility schools ample time to hire qualified special education staff.
5. Enable newly approved facility schools to apply for a tuition cost rate at any time during the year.
6. Provide more transparency in services and billing between facility schools and school districts.
7. Provide districts with a more consistent understanding of total costs.

## **Annual Review of Rate Increase**

Tuition cost rate increases will align with an annual inflationary rate, consistent with the rate CDE uses for budget projections. CDE sources the Consumer Price Index (CPI) to project the inflationary rate. The tuition cost rates will be approved annually by the State Board of Education in June.



**Tuition Cost Category Rubric**

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Category 1</b>	<b>Category 2</b>	<b>Category 3</b>
<b>Students</b>	Some students have an IEP	Most students have an IEP	All students have an IEP
<b>Focus of program</b>	The primary challenges of students are emotional, behavioral, mental health, or medical	Many students may have more than one disability, including autism spectrum disorders and/or cognitive impairments	Most of the students have more than one disability, including autism spectrum disorders and/or cognitive impairments, and/or use AAC devices
<b>Special Services</b>	Speech/OT are provided by contracted therapists or school district personnel	Speech/OT may be provided by contracted therapists or school district personnel or may be provided by agency	Speech/OT are provided by agency-paid therapists or agency-paid contracted therapist
<b>Dedicated adult support</b>	Very few students require dedicated adult support	Less than 80% of students required dedicated adult support	80-100% of students require dedicated adult support
<b>Student to classroom staff ratio</b>	Student to classroom staff ratios are equal or greater than 8 students to 1 adult	Student to classroom staff ratios are 6 students to 1 adult.	Student to classroom staff ratios are typically less than 6 students to one adult.
<b>Day treatment/residential only (does not include specialized day schools)</b>	The program offers individual and family therapy, affective education, and trauma-informed care	The program may offer individual, group therapy, and affective education trauma-informed care	The program offers a therapeutic milieu, affective education, and trauma-informed care
<b>Standards/Instructional Support</b>	All students utilize the Colorado academic standards. All students in grades 3-11 take the Colorado Measures of Academic Success (CMAS), PSAT, and SAT	Students utilize either the CO State Standards or the Extended Evidence Outcomes. In grades 3-11, take the Colorado Measures of Academic Success, PSAT and SAT or the Colorado Alternate Assessment (CoALT)	The majority of students utilize the Extended Evidence Outcomes; most students take the Colorado Alternative State Assessment (CoALT)
<b>Total</b>			



**Tuition Cost Breakdown:** This information must be included on the front page of the agreement between facility schools and school districts.

Tuition Cost Breakdown		
<b>Student Name:</b>		<b>Notes:</b>
<b>DOB:</b>		
<b>School District:</b>		
<b>Tuition Cost Category:</b>		
Tuition Cost Rate:		
Additional Education Costs:		
Individualized Add-On Costs:		
Day Treatment Costs:		
<b>Total Cost:</b>		
<b>The facility school will provide:</b>		
<i>Service</i>	<i>Cost</i>	<i>Notes</i>
Speech Language Therapy		
Occupational Therapy		
BCBA		
Additional Adult Support		
Other		
Total for all facility provided services:		
<b>The school district will provide:</b>		
<i>Service</i>	<i>Cost</i>	<i>Notes</i>
Speech Language Therapy		
Occupational Therapy		
Transportation		
Translation Services		
Other		
Total for all district provided services:		



## **Sample Wording for Agreements between Facility Schools and School Districts**

This contract is between **(School District of Jurisdiction)**, hereafter referred to as hereafter referred to as the District  
AND

**(Provider District/Facility)** hereafter referred to as Provider to **(Student Name, DOB)** who resides at **(Address of student)** and attends school at **(Name and address of facility)**.

**(School district of jurisdiction)** is responsible under state and federal law for providing Special Education and related services to all identified children with disabilities who are residents of the District. Colorado Revised Statutes 22-20-107.5 (1981 cum. supp) defines residence to be within the district based on the residence of the child's parent/guardian. See the [Out of District Manual](#) (OOD Manual) regarding school district jurisdiction rules.

### **(Parent/Guardian Name and Address)**

The District's local board of Education is empowered and charged to enter into agreements as needed with other public schools and/or other providers for the purpose of providing education services to children with disabilities.

The term of this contract is between **(admit date)** and **(end of the school year)**, and it is not to exceed the maximum number of school days approved by the Colorado Department of Education (CDE). Either party may terminate this contract with 30 days' notice upon mutual agreement or when the student is discharged from the program.

### **THE PROVIDER ASSURES AND PROVIDES:**

- The District will be sent prior written request for IEP reviews, annual reviews, and meetings to determine ESY eligibility and transition services.
- Copies of current IEPs and reports/assessments will be sent to the District within 30 days of the IEP date.
- Billings for educational services will be sent to the District monthly based on enrollment and will include the Colorado Department of Education's approved base tuition rate.
- Final billing for contracts covering the regular school year will be mailed prior to **(date)**
- Any amendments to this agreement shall be in writing.
- A policy or policies of comprehensive general liability insurance acceptable to the District is/are in place at the provider's expense. Limits of liability are not less than **(\$150,000)** per person and **(\$600,000)** per occurrence. Proof of such insurance will be provided to the District upon request.
- The educational program meets the requirements of all applicable federal and state statutes and regulations.
- Policies and procedures are in place regarding procedural safeguards, confidentiality, non-discrimination, and due process, which are in accordance with all applicable federal and state statutes and regulations pertaining to the education of children with disabilities, anti-discrimination, and protection of family privacy rights.
- State and federal reporting information will be provided to the District on request.
- In the event the provider wishes to initiate a change in educational programming or placement, the provider will notify the appropriate agencies and the school district involved.

### **THE DISTRICT ASSURES AND PROVIDES**

- Services will be paid within 30 days of invoice at the rates detailed above.
- **(Name, address, phone, email)** will serve as the District contact person, coordinate all payment processing or information requests regarding the child or this agreement, and assure compliance with all applicable federal and state regulations.
- The District will send copies of current IEPs and assessments to the provider within 30 days of receipt of the request.



- If the District places the students, the District shall provide transportation services or any services as determined by the IEP, including payment, scheduling, and providing proper supervision during the transportation of any student.

**Declarations:**

- Reevaluation meetings will be scheduled collaboratively by the District and the Provider.
- If a District representative cannot attend, he/she may request the IEP team meeting be rescheduled at a mutually agreeable time or delegate district representation to a member of the IEP team, and the District will abide by the decision.
- A draft copy of the IEP will be sent to the District for agreement.
- This agreement is not transferable, and the responsibilities of the school provider may not be reassigned without prior written consent of the District.
- In the event that the student's whereabouts are unknown for five (5) consecutive days, and the placement has been terminated, the provider will notify the District contact person, and this agreement will be temporarily suspended, including charges for tuition costs.

**Agreement Regarding Dispute Resolution**

In the event of any dispute or claim arising under or related to this agreement regarding the placement, manner of placement, or any costs accruing to either, the District and the Provider shall use their best efforts to settle such dispute or claim through good faith negotiations with each other. If the dispute or claim cannot be settled, the parties agree that the Commissioner of Education or the Commissioner's designee shall have the authority to review all such disputes and make a final written determination. The parties further agree that any such dispute shall not interfere with the provision of appropriate educational and educationally related services prior to the settlement of the dispute.

**Authorized Signatures**

School Provider

<b>Signature</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Date</b>
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District of Jurisdiction

<b>Signature</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Date</b>
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## Tuition Cost Annual Financial Report

This is a screen shot of the cover page and instructions for the Tuition Cost Annual Financial Report. A fillable document will be sent via secure email in July and will be due on October 31 of each year.

**Facility School Tuition Cost End-of-Year Report**  
FY2024-2025

Agency Name:

Name of Facility School:

School Code:

Date of review  
(to be completed by CDE)

End-of-Year submission: Annual Financial Report (AFR)

Date:

**Name of person completing this report**

Name:

Phone No.:

E-mail:

**Name of person to be contacted regarding report questions**

Name:

Phone No.:

E-mail:

**CDE Program Staff Contact:**

Name:

Email:

Phone:

Tuition cost rate category(s)

PLEASE NOTE: This report is due no later than October 31 of each year.



Cover page			
			Please enter the agency name, school name, school code, contact information, enter the category (or categories).
Expenses sheet			
			2 categories with associated expenses and codes, Instructional/Support and Administrative/Business/Operational - Chose from the drop-down menu for each and add descriptions and notes as needed - Be specific that the instructional/support expenses are for special education only - If your site serves 100% special education students please note that in the description column for clarity in amounts reported - you may also use the Narrative tab for additional information and explanation if necessary.
Summary sheet			
			Ensure all info from expenses sheet totals in the summary appropriately. Information entered in the Expenses tab will transfer to the summary tab - no data entry needed on this sheet.
Narrative sheet			
			Please provide any additional explanation necessary for expenses - especially those under the Administrative/Business/Operational category in relation to the #/% special education population and additional costs charged to school districts in contracts.
Accounting Codes Guidance			
0100	Salaries	Instructional and Administrative	<p><b>INSTRUCTIONAL</b> - Amounts paid for personal services to both permanent and temporary school employees, including personnel substituting for those in permanent positions. Includes all Special Education Teachers, Speech-Language Pathologists, Para professionals, Library, School Nurse, OT, PT, School Psychologists, School Social Workers, Education Directors, Education Coordinators, BCBA's, IEP Coordinators, other school specific instructional/support staff.</p> <p><b>ADMINISTRATIVE</b> - Amounts paid for personal services to both permanent and temporary facility employees. Includes K-12 Teachers not licensed in special education, personnel substitutes in these positions, school registrar, CEO, CFO, Office secretary, etc.                      ***Enter a pro-rated salary amounts for those staff shared across sites.</p>
0200	Employee Benefits	Instructional and Administrative	<p>Amounts paid by the facility on behalf of employees; generally, these amounts are not included in the salary, but are in addition to that amount Such payments are fringe benefit payments and, while not paid directly to employees, never-the-less, are part of the cost of personal services</p> <p>***Enter a pro-rated benefit amounts for those staff shared across sites.</p>
0300	Purchased Professional Services	Instructional	Educational services which by their nature can be performed only by persons or firms with specialized skills and knowledge While a product may or may not result from the transaction, the primary reason for the purchase is the service provided. Included are the services of teachers, OT/PT, BCBA, school psychologists, school social workers, school nurses, audiologists, and other positions with direct student contact.
0330	Other Professional Services	Administrative	Professional services other than educational supporting the operation of the school and facility. Included are auditors, accountants, etc. that are not permanent staff members of the facility/agency.
0423	Custodial Services	Administrative	Expenditures to an outside contractor for custodial services.
0430	Repairs and Maintenance Services	Administrative	Expenditures for repairs and maintenance services not provided directly by facility personnel These include contracts and agreements covering the upkeep of buildings and equipment.
0431	Non-technology Related Repairs and Maintenance	Administrative	Contracts and agreements covering the upkeep of buildings and non-technology equipment.
0510	Student Transportation Services	Instructional	Expenditures for transporting students to and from school and other activities.



## **Tuition Cost Rate Review Process**

Tuition cost rates will be reviewed annually and may be adjusted based on the Consumer Price Index (CPI). The State Board of Education will approve the final rates.

### **Categorization Process**

Facility schools may apply to the Office of Facility Schools to reconsider their tuition cost category. This decision will be based on the Tuition Cost Category Rubric. Any significant programming changes may constitute a review of the rubric and possible recategorization.

For further information, please contact:

[Lori Kochevar](#), Data Systems Manager

[Kochevar\\_l@cde.state.co.us](mailto:Kochevar_l@cde.state.co.us)

720-557-0618



## Appendix B: CAFCA Final Report



**Final Reporting  
Colorado Department of Education  
Shared Operational Services Grant  
September 1, 2025**

**Year 2 – CDE Required Questions:**

- **Types of operational services that were provided or coordinated by the organization.**
- **Shared purchases that were coordinated by the organization.**
- **Analysis of cost savings for facility schools utilizing the shared services and/or purchasing.**
- **The projected sustainability of the shared operational services system after the grant program concludes.**

**CAFCA Responses:**

As proposed in CAFCA’s original grant proposal to Colorado Department of Education (CDE) for this grant, CAFCA launched the Shared Operational Services (SOS) program free of charge for all facility schools in Colorado. The SOS program offers facility schools opportunities to save money through group purchasing and shared services.

To launch the SOS program, CAFCA entered a contractual agreement with Back Office Cooperative (BOC), a national group purchasing organization serving non-profits and human services organizations. BOC, based in Chicago, IL, provides group purchasing and shared services opportunities in a variety of arenas including office supplies, medical billing, telephone purchasing, and others. Their largest and most well-established contract with Staples offers discounts on all of Staples office supplies, janitorial supplies, and technology equipment. BOC works with financial analysts to monitor purchasing contracts and pricing to remain competitive with or provide better deals than Amazon.

CAFCA’s partners with BOC free of charge, and CAFCA receives a 2.5% rebate on all purchases made through the Staples program. BOC also receives a small rebate, which is how they partner with CAFCA free of charge.

In addition to the purchasing opportunities available through the BOC partnership, CAFCA also continues to independently enter agreements and partnerships provide other opportunities for purchasing and services.

CAFCA’s SOS Program currently offers the following group purchasing or shared services opportunities to facility schools:

- Staples- office supplies, janitorial supplies, and technology equipment, through BOC agreement.
- Voyce- virtual Language translation services, offering live translations in more than 200 languages through a zoom platform, only charging agencies per minute of use. Voyce interpreters are trained to provide trauma-informed and HIPPA compliant translation services. (Voyce translation is a contract negotiated by CAFCA, not related to BOC services.)

CAFCA continues to explore additional services to offer for group purchases and shared services for facility schools, including:

- Auto leasing, rental, or group purchasing;
- Medical billing;
- Shared janitorial services;
- Shared medical personnel;
- Shared back-office services (HR, IT, payroll, etc.)

**Analysis of Participation and Demonstrated Savings for Facility Schools:**  
*(Staples purchasing program, through CAFCA’s partnership with Back Office Cooperative)*

**Number of Facility Schools Successfully Enrolled: 13**

Elevation Ability Services; Griffith Centers; Laradon; Mount Saint Vincent; Real Life Colorado; Shiloh House; Spectra Centers; Tennyson Center; Treeline Pass; Wellpower Procurement; Third Way Centers, Joshua School, CAFCA

**Number of Facility Schools Active: 6**

Griffith Centers; Shiloh House; Tennyson Center; Joshua School; Third Way Centers; CAFCA

**Estimated Average Cost Savings: 20.1%**

Ranges from 12% to 39%, depending on purchased items and spending frequency

**Top performers** (schools/organizations that most used the program):

Stand out: Third Way Center

Good usage: Shiloh House, Griffith Centers for Children

Facility School / Organization	Year / Quarter	Total Purchases
CAFCA	2025-Q1	\$919.12
CAFCA	2025-Q2	\$44.37
Griffith Centers	2024-Q4	\$1299.47
Griffith Centers	2025-Q1	\$2107.47
Griffith Centers	2025-Q2	\$1442.34

Shiloh House	2025-Q1	\$3465.06
Shiloh House	2025-Q2	\$3967.81
Tennyson Center	2025-Q1	\$412.08
Joshua School	2025-Q2	\$99.86
Third Way Center	2025-Q1	\$12,212.23
Third Way Center	2025-Q2	\$10,332.29

**Rebate Program Deliverables to CAFCA 2025 Q1 & Q2: (2.5% calculation): \$907.55**

**Additional Information:**

A larger number of schools initially signed up than are actually currently participating and buying. At least one school initially expressed interest but were unaware they were already purchasing on Staples through a competitor Group Purchasing Organization (GPO). They opted not to make the change to our program. Other organizations reached out to express interest in Staples, but despite multiple follow ups from Staples and CAFCA, they never completed the login and purchasing process. Peer influence seems to be a helpful testimonial or incentive to encourage other activity. CAFCA is exploring whether or not the messaging and opportunity is going to the decision makers at the schools. Buy-in from agency leadership and decision-makers seems to be a critical factor in agency participation.

**Agency Testimonial:**

*“We are so pleased with CAFCA’s new SOS Group Purchasing Initiative, It has really been a game changer for us. We have saved time on approving orders because they allow the approvers to modify orders from their end which makes the approval process much smoother. And the improved shipping has been incredible. Through the SOS program, orders are delivered 1-2 days after approval. With the programs we used before SOS, we often had to wait a week or more for certain supplies. And best of all, we’re saving money. While actual savings vary, we’re seeing average regular savings of 20% to 30%. Plus, we’re saving an additional \$800 each year because there is no membership fee to participate in the SOS program. CAFCA did a wonderful job in creating this program and we are excited to be a part of it.”*

-Kevin Tracy, Chief Officer of Residential and Education Services, Shiloh House

**Projected Sustainability of CAFCA’s SOS Program:**

The creation of the SOS Program was made possible through the CDE grant awarded to CAFCA in 2023. The actual timeframe made available by the grant contract was less than two years total, which was not enough time for CAFCA to successfully achieve financial sustainability for the program. The conclusion of the grant funding resulted in CAFCA laying off the 1 FTE hired to help launch, manage, and maintain the program. Despite this unintended and unfortunate outcome, this grant still allowed CAFCA to build and establish the SOS Program, which remains in tact and functional through a portion of current CAFCA staff time. In summer 2025 CAFCA began yielding the first rebates from the Staples group purchasing opportunity, which is a positive outcome and ongoing income source into the foreseeable future.

The SOS Program was limited to participation by Colorado’s 33 Facility Schools, which is a small and limited pool of participants. As listed above, not all facility schools have joined, and of

those that have joined, only a few have enjoyed robust participation and savings. CAFCA will continue to encourage participation of other facility schools and will offer assistance and peer encouragement and support toward this goal.

Additionally, CAFCA has expanded eligibility for participation beyond just facility schools, and now any CAFCA member agency can participate, whether or not they have a facility school. (18 of Colorado's 33 facility schools are already CAFCA members.) By expanding agency eligibility for participation, the benefits of group purchasing will yield stronger outcomes and promotes sustainability of the program. CAFCA remains committed to investing in maintaining and growing the SOS Program until it reaches sustainability and viability ongoing.

The establishment of the SOS Program was made possible by the CDE grant, and CAFCA remains appreciative of the opportunity to launch this exciting opportunity to strengthen savings for agencies serving children and youth so that their resources can be more effectively concentrated on their missions and outcomes.

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**Respectfully submitted by:**

Becky Miller Updike, Ph.D.

Executive Director

Colorado Association of Family & Children's Agencies (CAFCA)

[Becky@voiceforcokids.org](mailto:Becky@voiceforcokids.org)

[www.voiceforcokids.org](http://www.voiceforcokids.org)



## Appendix C: Technical Assistance Center

# Technical Assistance Center

Office of Facility Schools- Exceptional Student Services Unit



## Overview

The Technical Assistance Center (TAC) is housed in the Office of Facility Schools, Exceptional Student Services Unit at the Colorado Department of Education (CDE).

Established through Senate Bill 23-219, the TAC aims to provide technical assistance to rural or remote school districts and administrative units who face significant obstacles to provide supports to serve students with exceptionally severe or specialized needs.

Students with exceptionally severe or specialized needs include those who:

- might otherwise attend a day treatment facility for a period
- have a disability
- experience behavior/mental health challenges

The primary focus is on rural areas due to their limited access to resources and proximity challenges.

## WE WANT TO SUPPORT YOU!



Scan or Click on the QR code to access the Technical Assistance Center Request Form

## What We Do

The TAC houses a coordinator who provides support to school/district and administrative unit. Some supports include:

## Training Opportunities

Some staff training opportunities may include:

- Trauma Informed Education
- ABA Strategies for classroom management
- Specialized mental health and/or behavioral techniques

## Resources

Available resources may include:

- References to curriculum materials
- Access to national organizations
- Professional development opportunities
- Access to experts in the relevant fields

Additional supports: **professional development, coaching,** and support for **resource sharing and collaboration** between AU's, Facility Schools, school Districts and BOCES.



Learn more at:

<https://www.cde.state.co.us/facilityschools>

Contact TAC Coordinator:

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