



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTION (FAQ) ON ALTERNATIVE ROUTES TO TEACHING AND EMERGENCY PERMITS FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHERS

INTRODUCTION

On December 10, 2015, Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)¹ reauthorized the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA) and on June 30, 2017, the U.S. Department of Education published final regulations under Parts B and C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) in the Federal Register. The final regulations of IDEA included conforming changes needed to implement statutory amendments made to the IDEA by ESSA.

The ESSA amended the IDEA by removing the definition of “highly qualified” in section 602(10) and the requirement that every special education teacher be “highly qualified” by a specific deadline as required by ESEA as amended by No Child Left Behind Act. The ESSA also amended section 612(a)(14)(C) of the IDEA by incorporating the requirement previously included in section 602(10)(B) that a person employed as a special education teacher in elementary school, middle school, or secondary school must: 1) have obtained full certification as a special education teacher (including certification obtained through alternative routes to certification), or passed the State special education teacher licensing examination and hold a license to teach in the State as a special education teacher; 2) not have had special education certification or licensure requirements waived on an emergency, temporary, or provisional basis; and 3) hold at least a bachelor’s degree. In replacing the highly qualified teacher requirements, the ESSA gave more discretion to states to decide what qualifies teachers while reestablishing prior standards for ensuring that special education teachers have the skills necessary to serve in the roles they are assigned.

This guidance is the first of a two-part question and answer (Q&A) series prepared by Indiana Department of Education Office of Special Education (OSE) and the Office of Educator Licensing to address some of the most frequently asked questions and important issues raised regarding licensure and certification of special education personnel through traditional and alternative routes to special education teaching.

Part 1: Q&A document provides guidance to parents, aspiring teachers, local education agencies (LEA), institutes of higher education (IHE), advocacy organizations, and other interested parties with information to facilitate appropriate implementation of the IDEA special education teacher requirements. Highlighted are the requirements that any teacher participating in an alternative route to special education licensure program must

¹ The full text of the ESSA is available at <https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/BILLS-114s1177enr/pdf/BILLS-114s1177enr.pdf>.

adhere to as well as transition guidance for the 2021-2022 school year for those teachers who have already committed to an alternative program for special education and the employing LEAs.

Part 2: A second Q&A will address licensing requirements for school year 2022-2023 as well as additional guidance and resources to promote alignment of teacher preparation program options, ongoing professional development, and supervision to special education teachers in alternate route to teaching preparation programs, and technical assistance with federal and state licensing regulations.

Please email your comments or questions to licensinghelp@doe.in.gov or specialeducation@doe.in.gov and include (EP/T2T Alternative Routes to Teaching) in the subject of your email.

General Questions

Q.1: Who does this guidance impact?

Any teacher currently serving as a special education teacher who is participating in a licensure program or holds a permit (T2T and Emergency Permit) that allows him/her to teach as a special education teacher while obtaining college coursework and testing to obtain full licensure in special education.

Q.2: Pursuant to federal and state special education law, what additional licensure requirements apply to special education teachers?

511 IAC 7-36-3 (a):

A special education teacher who teaches in a public elementary, middle, junior high, or high school in the state must meet the following requirements:

1) The teacher has obtained full state licensure as a special education teacher (including licensure obtained through an alternative route, as described in subsection (b), or passed the state special education teacher licensing examination and holds a license to teach in the state as a special education teacher.

2) The teacher has not had special education licensure requirements waived.

3) The teacher holds at least a bachelor's degree. 20 USC 1412(a)(14)(c); 34 CFR 300.156; 511 IAC 7-36-3(a)

7-36-3 (b):

A teacher will meet the requirements of 511 IAC 7-36-3 (a)(1) if that teacher is participating in an alternative route to special education licensure program under which the:

(1) teacher:

- A. receives high-quality professional development that is:
 - i. sustained;
 - ii. intensive; and
 - iii. classroom-focused;in order to have a positive and lasting impact on classroom instruction, before and while teaching;
- B. participates in a program of intensive supervision that consists of structured guidance and regular ongoing support for teachers or a teacher mentoring program;
- C. assumes functions as a teacher only for a specified period of time not to exceed three (3) years; and
- D. demonstrated satisfactory progress toward full licensure as prescribed by the state. 20 USC §1412(a)(14); 34 CFR §300.156(a); 511 IAC 7-36-3(b)

Q.3: Can I get licensed in special education just by passing a test?

Indiana requires completion of an approved preparation program (traditional or alternative) that includes coursework and testing for licensure in special education areas.

Q.4: Where can I find a current list of approved preparation programs for special education areas?

Approved educator preparation programs for either initial licensure in special education or for the addition of special education to an existing instructional license can be found here: <https://www.in.gov/doi/educators/educator-licensing/indiana-approved-educator-preparation-programs/>

Approved Transition to Teaching (T2T) programs for individuals with a bachelor's degree from a regionally accredited higher education institution seeking an initial license can be found here:

<https://www.in.gov/doi/educators/educator-licensing/approved-transition-to-teaching-programs/>

School Year 2021-22 for Emergency Permit Holders

FAQ for emergency permit holders in special education content areas (i.e., mild intervention, intense intervention, blind and low vision, or deaf and hard of hearing):

Q.5: I have been hired to teach special education on an emergency permit. What does that mean?

An emergency permit is a temporary license to teach that is valid for one school year at a time; it expires on June 30 at the end of the school year. An applicant for an emergency permit must already hold a bachelor's degree from a regionally accredited institution. The purpose of an emergency permit is to allow an individual to teach in a specific content area while completing coursework and testing to obtain a full teaching license in the content area of the permit.

During the first year on the permit, you must enroll in a special education licensure preparation program or a Transition-to-Teaching program that leads to special education licensure. Accepting employment to teach on an emergency permit requires you to commit to pursue a teacher preparation program for full licensure.

If you have already completed a traditional or alternative preparation program for special education licensure but you have not passed the licensure tests, a school employer may hire you to teach on an emergency permit while you are completing testing requirements.

Q.6: Will emergency permit be issued after the 2021-2022 school year?

No. Emergency Permits will not be issued for special education after the 2021-2022 school year.

Q.7: How do I renew my emergency permit for the 2021-2022 school year?

To renew an emergency permit for the 2021-2022 school year, you will need to provide proof that you are making progress toward meeting full licensure requirements in the special education content area. This means you will be required to upload transcripts of coursework you have taken during the prior school year or summer. If testing is your only deficiency, you must upload score reports verifying test attempts. Emergency permit applications are accepted by the DOE on or after July 1 annually.

Q.8: What if I have already been teaching on a special education emergency permit for three or more years?

During the 2021-22 school year, teachers who are teaching on their third (or more) special education emergency permits will need to complete their coursework and testing requirements to apply for full licensure. The DOE will not issue additional renewals for special education emergency permits after the 2021-22 school year.

School Year 2021-2022 for T2T holders

Q.9: What is a Transition to Teaching (T2T) program and where do I find information on how to enroll?

A Transition to Teaching (T2T) program is an alternative route to licensure for individuals already holding a bachelor's degree from a regionally accredited institution. T2T programs provides candidates with pedagogical preparation needed for the grade setting in which they are seeking licensure. Options include Early Childhood (P-3); Elementary Education (K-6); Secondary (5-12); and All-Grade (P-12). Secondary programs must not exceed 18 preparation hours and P-3, K-6, and P-12 programs must not exceed 24 preparation hours, with the additional six hours of preparation in reading instruction. These programs are based on the premise that a candidate holding a bachelor's degree already has the expected content knowledge in the licensing area and needs pedagogy training. Those seeking admission to a T2T program must demonstrate their content knowledge by meeting the admission requirements. Please visit <https://www.in.gov/doe/educators/educator-licensing/approved-transition-to-teaching-programs/> for information about each of the approved T2T programs, and for admission requirements, visit <https://www.in.gov/doe/educators/educator-licensing/transition-to-teaching/>.

Q.10: Is there a T2T program specific to special education?

T2T programs are approved for grade/developmental levels, not specific content areas. The IDOE will work to engage higher education, T2T program providers, and LEAs to develop and implement alternative path programs designed to meet the requirements of 34 CFR §300.156(c) and 511 IAC 7-36-3.

All transition to teaching programs are designed and approved for specific grade levels (P-3, K-6, 5-12, or P-12) and not for specific content area preparation. There are four universities, however, that offer additional, focused preparation or training for those seeking to become licensed in special education; however, they remain within the 18 or 24 credit limits. These include Marian, Oakland City, Indiana Wesleyan, and University of Saint Francis. In some cases, universities

with transition to teaching programs may refer interested candidates to one of these programs, especially if they lack the capacity (experienced faculty, resources, etc.) to prepare one for special education instruction. While not all educator preparation providers are required to offer transition to teaching, they are expected to refer and assist interested candidates to a university/universities with this program option. All other transition to teaching programs, however, can work with and license candidates in special education so long as they meet the admission criteria and complete all program and licensure requirements, including testing.

Q.11: If I don't already hold a full license in another content area, can I enroll in a T2T program for special education licensure?

If you hold a bachelor's degree from a regionally accredited institution and you do not have a full instructional license in another subject area you may be able to enroll in a T2T program for a special education area, such as mild or intense intervention. The path you take to enrollment will be impacted by your undergraduate major, your GPA, and years of education-related occupational experience you may have already completed. Completion of the T2T program and the license content and pedagogy tests are required to obtain your full Professional Educator License at the end.

Q.12: What is a T2T permit and how do I get one?

If you are enrolled in a T2T program that leads to licensure and you are employed as a full-time teacher, you can apply for a three-year non-renewable T2T permit in the content area of your T2T licensure program. A T2T permit application must be approved by your school employer and the name of your employer will display on the permit. The three-year validity of the permit will give you time to complete the coursework and pass the licensure tests, at which point you can apply for your full Professional Educator license.

Q.13: If I hold a full instructional license in another subject area, how do I add a special education area?

If you hold a full Professional Educator instructional license in another subject area you will need to enroll in an educator preparation program that leads to the addition of the special education area to your existing license. Completion of both an approved program of coursework and passage of the content test are required to make the addition to your license

Q.14: If I hold a T2T license may I serve as a special education teacher in 2021-2022?

If you currently hold a T2T permit in a special education area that is valid through the 2021-22 school year, you may serve as a special education teacher. DOE will be providing guidance to T2T providers, LEAs, and permit holders on the training, PD, and additional support that is expected during the 2021-22 school year and beyond. DOE encourages you to strive to complete your T2T program and testing requirements for full licensure prior to the beginning of the 2022-23 school year. More guidance concerning special education alternative licensure programs, LEAs, and permit holders will be disseminated during Fall 2021.

School employers re: emergency permits in special education content areas

Q.15: What are the licensure requirements for special education teachers?

A special education teacher who teaches in a public pre-kindergarten, elementary, middle, junior high, or high school must have obtained full state licensure as a special education teacher, including licensure through an alternative route as described in 511 IAC 7-36-3(b) or have passed the state special education licensing examinations and hold a license to teach in Indiana as a special education teacher. The teacher must not have had special education licensure requirements waived on an emergency, temporary, or provisional basis.

Q.16: Are there alternative licensure paths?

A teacher will be considered to meet the requirements above if that teacher is participating in an alternate route to special education certification program under which—

- (i) The teacher—
 - (A) Receives high-quality professional development that is sustained, intensive, and classroom-focused in order to have a positive and lasting impact on classroom instruction, before and while teaching;
 - (B) Participates in a program of intensive supervision that consists of structured guidance and regular ongoing support for teachers or a teacher mentoring program;
 - (C) Assumes functions as a teacher only for a specified period of time not to exceed three years; and
 - (D) Demonstrates satisfactory progress toward full certification as prescribed by the State; and
- (ii) The State ensures, through its certification and licensure process, that the provisions in paragraph (c)(2)(i) of this section are met.

Q.17: What is considered an alternate route to special education certification?

An alternate route to teacher certification is an option available to individuals who didn't follow a traditional teacher preparation program in college. The transition to teaching (T2T) programs may provide an alternate path for individuals who already hold a bachelor's degree from a regionally accredited institution to meet the additional requirements to obtain a teaching license.

The emergency permit (EP) has also served as a point of entry into special education teaching for others who already hold a bachelor's degree from a regionally accredited institution and commit to enter a T2T or traditional education certification program within the first year to meet the additional requirements to obtain a teaching license.

Q.18: Does this mean that a teacher with an EP or in a T2T program is considered licensed to teach special education?

Standing alone, Indiana's requirements for EPs and the T2T program do not satisfy the requirements of 34 CFR §300.156(c)(2) and 511 IAC 7-36-3(b).

Q.19: If an EP and the T2T program do not meet the special education licensure requirements, what would be an alternate route to special education licensure?

The DOE is working on requirements and guidelines for LEAs and individuals participating in an alternative route program to a special education license to ensure compliance with the requirements of 34 CFR §300.156(c)(2) and 511 IAC 7-36-3(b). DOE will engage higher education and T2T program providers in the development and delivery of these programs.

Q.20: When is it anticipated these new requirements will go into effect?

The DOE anticipates the new requirements will take effect July 1, 2022 for the 2022-2023 school year.

Q.21: What can a school do for the 2021-2022 school year if their only option for staffing a special education position is to hire a teacher on an emergency or T2T permit?

A school employer should provide all its special education teachers intense and targeted professional development and training appropriate to their positions to ensure they have the knowledge and skills to carry out their responsibilities in

delivering services to students. While there will be multiple ways to creatively meet this expectation, schools may want or need to partner with special education staff in neighboring schools or corporations, schedule training on targeted topics weekly or bi-weekly, assign a licensed special education teacher to mentor a less experienced teacher, etc., and to document those strategies/activities.

Q.22: Should teachers working on an EP or T2T be assigned as a student's teacher of record (TOR)?

A student's TOR is required to be licensed in the area of the student's disability. (511 IAC 7-36-2(a)). TORs have significant responsibilities, including: assisting in developing measurable goals and objectives; regularly monitoring the implementation of the student's IEP and providing progress reports to the student's parent; ensuring the student's IEP is accessible to each of the student's teachers and related service providers; informing each of the student's teachers of his or her specific responsibilities related to implementing the IEP; ensuring that supplementary aids and services, program modifications, and supports for school personnel are provided in accordance with the IEP; serving as a consultant and resource person to all other personnel providing services to the student; and participating in reevaluations of the student. 511 IAC 7-32-97; 511 IAC 7-42-8(c).

A teacher who is not fully licensed as a special education teacher will not likely have the education, knowledge, and skills required to fulfill the responsibilities of a TOR. Schools need to ensure that appropriately licensed and trained teachers are providing the services and support to ensure that the needs of all students are met. If a school is utilizing the services of a teacher with an EP or in a T2T program to provide special education services, the school must take steps to ensure that the responsibilities of the TOR are fulfilled by appropriately licensed personnel or that appropriate support is provided to the teacher.

Q.23: If the alternative path to special education licensure is limited to three years, what about teachers who have had EPs for three or more years?

During the 2021-22 school year, teachers who are teaching on their third (or more) special education emergency permits will need to complete their coursework and testing requirements to apply for full licensure. The DOE will not issue additional renewals for special education emergency permits after the 2021-22 school year.