WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

Carolyn Stanford Taylor, State Superintendent

Private School Choice Programs

Frequently Asked Questions for Parents – 2021-22 School Year

The information in this FAQ is based on Wis. Stats. §§118.60 and 119.23 and Wis. Admin. Code PI 35 and PI 48.

The Private School Choice Programs (Choice or Choice Program) include the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program (MPCP), the Racine Parental Choice Program (RPCP) and the Wisconsin Parental Choice Program or statewide program (WPCP).

In the Frequently Asked Questions, parents or legal guardians are referred to as "parents."

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Program Eligibility, Required Documentation, and Application Periods

1. **How do I know which Choice program I am eligible to apply for?**

   This is based on where the student lives at the time of the application. When applying you enter your address and school district and the application will automatically determine which program you may apply for and will guide you through the correct program application.

   - **Milwaukee Parental Choice Program** (MPCP): the student must live in the **city** of Milwaukee.
   - **Racine Parental Choice Program** (RPCP): the student must live in the Racine Unified School District.
   - **Wisconsin Parental Choice Program** (WPCP): the student must live in Wisconsin but outside of the city of Milwaukee and the Racine Unified School District. Residents of Milwaukee county cities that are not in the city of Milwaukee must apply to the WPCP.

2. **Do I have to submit an application every year for the Choice program in the Online Parent Application?**

   Yes. All students that would like to participate in any Choice program must apply every year using the Online Parent Application, available at dpi.wi.gov/choice. This includes students that participated in the Choice program in the prior school year.

3. **How does a student qualify for a Choice program?**

   Student eligibility, established by state law, is a combination of where the student resides at the time the parent applies to the program, income (if applicable), and age. Generally, for the RPCP and WPCP, students must also be applying to certain grades or have met a prior year attendance requirement. Each year, all students must apply at dpi.wi.gov/choice and provide the required documentation to the school.

   Students for all programs must be ages 4 - 20 on or before September 1 are eligible to apply for the Choice program. A student must be at least the following age on or before September 1: 4 years old for K4, 5 years old for K5 and 6 years old for grade 1.

   Milwaukee Parental Choice Program (MPCP): The student must reside in the city of Milwaukee (this does not include the other cities in Milwaukee County). A new student must have a family income less than or equal to the MPCP income limits in Table 1 below. Continuing students and students on a MPCP prior year waiting list are not required to meet income limits.

   Racine Parental Choice Program (RPCP): The student must reside in the Racine Unified School District. A new student must have a family income less than or equal to the RPCP income limits in Table 1 below. Continuing students and students on a RPCP prior year waiting list are not required to meet income limits.

   The student must also (1) be applying to grades K4, K5, 1 or 9, OR (2) meet one of the following prior year attendance requirements: (a) attended a public school in Wisconsin, (b) attended school in another state, (c) was not enrolled in school (includes homeschooled students for the entire prior school year), (d) participated in the MPCP, RPCP, or WPCP, (e) been on a MPCP, RPCP, or WPCP waiting list, OR (3) applying to the WPCP and on any prior year WPCP waiting list in 2015-16 or later due to a school district enrollment cap.

   Wisconsin Parental Choice Program (WPCP): The student must reside in Wisconsin and outside the city of Milwaukee and Racine Unified School District. A new student must have a family income less than or equal to the WPCP income limits in Table 1 below. Continuing students and students on a WPCP prior year waiting list are not required to meet income limits.

The student must also (1) be applying to grades K4, K5, 1 or 9, OR (2) meet one of the following prior year attendance requirements: (a) attended a public school in Wisconsin, (b) attended school in another state, (c) was not enrolled in school (includes homeschooled students for the entire prior school year), (d) participated in the MPCP, RPCP or WPCP, (e) been on a MPCP, RPCP or WPCP waiting list, OR (3) applying to the WPCP and on any prior year WPCP waiting list in 2015-16 or later due to a school district enrollment cap.

Table 1 – MPCP, RPCP and WPCP 2021-22 Income Limits

Family Size	MPCP and RPCP Yearly Income*	WPCP Yearly Income*
1	$38,280	$28,478
2	$51,720	$37,928
3	$65,160	$47,784
4	$78,600	$57,640
5	$92,040	$67,496
6	$105,480	$77,352
For each additional family member add	$13,440	$9,856

* If the student's parents on the application are married, their income is reduced by $7,000 when determining income eligibility for the program. (i.e. married family income minus $7,000 is the amount married families compare to the table).

Family income includes the income of the student's parent(s) that reside in the same household as the student applicant. Family size includes parent(s) on the application and their children by birth, marriage, or adoption, who reside in the same household as the student applicant(s).

4. What are the age requirements for students to participate in the Choice program?

Students must be age eligible for four-year old and five-year old kindergarten (K4 and K5) and first grade. By September 1 of the school year the student is applying for, K4 students must be four (4) years old, K5 must be five (5) years old, and 1st graders must be six (6) years old. Additionally, student applicants may not be 21 as of the date they apply or September 1, whichever is later.

The Online Parent Application determines if a student meets the age requirement based on the student's date of birth entered in the application.

5. Can three-year-old children participate in the Choice program?

No. The Choice program does not pay for three-year-old children. See the previous question for information on the age requirements for the Choice program. Parents should contact the private schools or their public school district for information about programs that may be offered outside of the Choice programs for three-year-olds.

6. How do parents apply for the Choice program for their student(s)?

Every year parents must submit an online application for each student using the Online Parent Application. The application is available on the dpi.wi.gov/choice webpage. An email address is required to use the online system. Parents may apply to one or more schools during an open application period for grades K4-12 for their student(s). Please see the list of schools, along with the school's location(s), participating in the MPCP, RPCP, and WPCP on the dpi.wi.gov/choice webpage.

Note: MPCP and RPCP parents who apply in multiple open application periods should only include the

schools and students they want to apply to during that open application period in the Online Parent Application. Applications that are submitted by in the Online Parent Application are electronically submitted to the school. Removing a student or a school for a student from the Online Parent Application does not delete the application that was electronically submitted to the school in a previous open application period.

Parents must also provide documentation directly to the schools (not the DPI) showing proof of eligibility during the open application period in which they apply or the application is ineligible.

- All parents must provide residency documentation to each school they apply to.
- Parents of new students must also provide income documentation. Parents of new students may either: (1) provide their social security numbers or taxpayer identification number and have the Department of Revenue determine whether the student is income eligible for the program; or (2) use the Department of Public Instruction's income determination method by answering a series of income questions in the Online Parent Application and providing supporting income documentation to the school(s).
- Students continuing in the program and students on a Choice waiting list in the prior year for a program with the same income limits they are applying are not required to provide income documentation.

Parents will not be allowed to complete an application in the Online Parent Application for a student if the student does not meet the age requirements for the Choice program.

If a RPCP or WPCP student does not meet the application grade or prior year attendance requirement, the parent will be not allowed to complete an application in the Online Parent Application for that student.

7. How do parents know the status of a Choice application for their student(s)?

Parents should contact the private schools directly to find out the status of a Choice application. A list of participating private schools and their contact information is available on the dpi.wi.gov/choice webpage.

MPCP and RPCP schools must inform parents (a) how many Choice program slots are open by grade level; (b) the date, if necessary, of a lottery to select Choice students if more applications are received than there are Choice slots available; and (c) within 60 days of the end of the open application period during which the student's application is received, whether or not the student has been accepted into the Choice program. MPCP and RPCP schools must notify the parent of each applicant of their acceptance or nonacceptance via mail or email.

If a MPCP or RPCP student is placed on the waiting list, the notice of non-acceptance must indicate the student's place on the waiting list. If the school rejects a student application, the notice of non-acceptance must include the reason why the student was not accepted. Parents of students offered a Choice seat at the school must confirm their acceptance and indicate whether or not their students will attend the school.

For the WPCP, the DPI will conduct a random drawing, which includes certain required preferences, of eligible applications. The DPI notifies parents of WPCP students chosen in the random drawing and students on the WPCP waiting list directly via email in the summer. Parents of students chosen in the random drawing are given a deadline to confirm to the school their acceptance and indicate whether or not their students will attend the school. Parents may need to check their junk/spam folder(s) for the email. The email is sent to the email address the parent used for the WPCP application.

Once a student is offered a Choice seat the parent **must notify the school** *whether or not their student(s) will attend*.

8. When are the open application periods for the Choice Programs?

Open application periods vary by Choice program. Each school decides in which of the months listed below it will accept MPCP and RPCP student applications. All schools have the same open application period for WPCP students. **Applicants must submit the Choice application online and give proof of eligibility to each school they apply to during the school's open application period in which they apply.** Parents are encouraged to apply during the school's earliest open application period. See the list of participating MPCP and RPCP schools and their application periods at dpi.wi.gov/choice.

MPCP and RPCP parents who apply in multiple open application periods should only include the schools and students they want to apply to during that open application period in the Online Parent Application. Applications that are submitted by in the Online Parent Application are electronically submitted to the school. Removing a student or a school for a student from the Online Parent Application does not delete the application that was electronically submitted to the school in a previous open application period.

2021-22 Choice Program Open Application Periods

MPCP Open Application Periods	RPCP Open Application Periods
February 1 – February 22	February 1 – February 22
March 1 – March 22	March 1 – March 22
April 1 – April 20	April 1 – April 20
May 1 – May 20	May 1 – May 20
June 1 – June 21	June 1 – June 21
July 1 – July 20	July 1 – July 20
August 1 – August 20	August 1 – August 20
September 1 – September 14	September 1 – September 14
October 1 – October 20	
November 1 – November 22	WPCP Open Application Period
December 1 – January 7	February 1 – April 15

Many parents complete the Online Parent Application in early February. As a result, the Online Parent Application and OAS may be slow in the beginning of February. If a school offers an open lab for parents to complete the Choice application, you may want to consider attending. Applications received in the same open application period *are not* accepted on a first come, first serve basis.

9. Is there a student participation limit for any of the Choice programs?

For the 2021-22 school year, state law mandates that no more than 6% of student membership of a public school district may participate in the WPCP. The DPI does a random drawing, which includes certain required preferences, of all eligible applications. DPI notifies parents of student acceptance and makes a wait list for students not selected in the random drawing.

The participation limit does not apply to the MPCP or the RPCP.

10. What information can private schools use in admitting or denying admission to students into the Choice program?

The only information private schools can use to determine eligibility for the Choice program is family income, prior year attendance, residency, and age of students entering grades K4, K5, and 1. Information about a student that a school cannot use during the admissions process for the Choice program includes but is not limited to: a student's race, ethnic background, religion, prior test scores, grades, recommendations or

membership in a church or parish. Choice schools must accept all eligible Choice applications during each of the school's open application periods. For the MPCP and the RPCP, the school must, at the end of the open application period, have a random drawing to select Choice students if there are more eligible Choice applications submitted than seats available. DPI will conduct the random drawing for the WPCP.

11. Where do I take the required supporting documentation that is identified in the Online Parent Application and confirmation email?

Parents are required to take the documentation identified in the Online Parent Application and the confirmation email to the school(s) before the open application period ends or the application is ineligible. Do not provide the supporting documentation to the Department of Public Instruction.

12. Can parents email the required supporting documentation to the school(s)?

Parents should contact the schools directly regarding how to provide the supporting documentation to the schools. A list of participating private schools and their contact information is available on the dpi.wi.gov/choice webpage.

Please note that some schools accept the supporting documentation via email. Parents may check the school's website to see if the school has posted information for parents regarding how to provide the supporting documentation to the school or for school contact information.

Parents must provide the supporting documentation during the open application period, as directed in the Online Parent Application and the confirmation email, or the application is ineligible. Parents should contact schools directly with questions about the application process or status of their application.

Completing the Online Application

13. What should I do if I cannot remember my password for the Online Parent Application?

Click the "Forgot your Password?" link on the "Sign In" page under "Returning Users". Then enter your email address and click the "Send Password" button. The system will send an email with the subject of "Private School Choice Programs Information You Requested". The password is in the first line of the email in bold font.

Below is part of a sample email that a parent receives. The password abc123 is in bold font in the first line of the email.

Subject: Private School Choice Programs Information You Requested

Here is the information you requested: **abc123**

14. What should I do if I cannot remember, no longer has access to, or want to update my email address used in the Online Parent Application?

Register a new email address under "New Users" and complete an application. The application will identify the continuing students as long as their first names, last names, and dates of birth entered in the application match the information in the system from the prior year.

15. How do I update or change my email address in the Online Parent Application?

Sign into the Online Parent Application under "Returning Users" with the old email address and password. On the "Review Login Data" screen, click "Change Email Address" and then follow the instructions on the screen to update/change the email address.

16. What should I do if I'm having trouble verifying my email address?

If you are using the same email address that you used in prior school year(s), you ***are not*** required to re-verify your email address each year. You may sign in with the same email address and password used in prior school year(s).

Parents applying for the first time and parents using a new email address to apply must register under "New Users" and verify their email address prior to completing an application. Please see the "Online Application Parent Print Screens" at dpi.wi.gov/choice for sample screens. After registering an email address, sign in to receive a verification email (see sample below). You will be instructed in the email to click on the blue "Confirm Email Address" link in the verification email. Then sign into the Online Parent Application and complete an application.

Tips:

- Parents should check their spam and/or junk email folders if they do not receive the verification email in their inbox. An email may take up to 24 hours to arrive.
- Parents should ensure that the email address they are using to sign into the Online Parent Application is their correct email address.
- Some parents sign in multiple times to the Online Parent Application prior to completing the email verification process which results in the system sending the parent multiple verification emails. Parents must click on the blue "Confirm Email Address" link ***in the most recent email*** to complete the email verification process.
- Parents can copy and paste the entire link found in the email (begins with https://sms.dpi.wi.gov/...) into their Internet Browser if the blue "Confirm Email Address" link in the email does not work.

Sample Verification Email:

Subject: Verify your School Choice Program Email Address

Welcome to the Private School Choice Programs System

Confirm your email address to get started with the Online Parent Application System

Confirm Email Address

The email abc123.org was used to register for the Private School Choice Programs Online Application.

Click the above Confirm Email Address link or paste the following link in your Internet browser https://sms.dpi.wi.gov/ChoiceParent/VerificationComplete.aspx?h=e0f5360fe9e2e7956f047dceaeabcac85b1e206c&i=abc123.org to complete the process to verify this email address.

Help and Support
If you have questions about the Private School Choice Programs, please contact the school(s) you would like to apply to. A list of the schools participating in the program and their contact information is available at http://dpi.wi.gov/choice under "School Lists and Contact Information" and then choose the list that corresponds to your program.

If you have technical questions regarding using the Online Parent Application, please Contact Us.

Private School Choice Programs
Department of Public Instruction
Web site: http://dpi.wi.gov/choice
Email: PrivateSchoolChoice@dpi.wi.gov
Toll-free Phone Number: 888-245-2732, ext. 3

17. Who may complete the application for a student?

The parent(s)/legal guardians(s) with the authority to make educational decisions for the student may complete the application. If both parents/legal guardians have the authority to make educational decisions for the student, the parents/legal guardians may determine which parent/legal guardian will complete the application for the student. A parent includes a student who is at least 18 years old as of the time he or she applies for the Choice program.

18. Who must complete the application for a student that does not reside with a parent or legal guardians?

If a student does not reside with the parent(s) /legal guardian(s), the parent(s)/legal guardian(s) with the authority to make educational decisions for the student must complete the application. *The address on the application is the address where the student resides, not the address of the parent(s)/legal guardian(s).* The Alternative Residency Documentation Form, which is available on the dpi.wi.gov/choice webpage, would be completed by a parent/legal guardian and a person where the student resides.

19. May students who are at least 18 years old complete the application?

Yes. Students who are at least 18 years old at the time that they apply may complete the application as the parent and include only their income in the income determination, if applicable. The address on the application is the address where the student resides. On the Parents screen of the application, the students enter their name as the parent name and respond "Yes" for the question "Is the above person also one of the students applying (age 18 or older)?" The student may complete the Alternative Residency Documentation Form, which is available on the dpi.wi.gov/choice webpage, if applicable.

Parent(s) with the authority to make educational decisions for the student may complete an application for these students.

20. If a student's parents are divorced or separated, which parent should complete the application?

If one parent has the authority to make educational decisions for the student, that parent would complete the application for the student.

If both parents have the authority to make educational decisions for the student, the parents may determine which parent would complete the application for the student.

The address on the application is the address where the student resides. If the student does not reside with the parent that completes the application, the Alternative Residency Documentation Form, which is available on the dpi.wi.gov/choice webpage, would be completed by the parent and a person where the student resides.

If the student is new, the income eligibility determination is based on the family income and family size of the parent(s) that complete the application. The family income is the federal adjusted gross income of the parent(s) included in the family size. A family is a group of two or more people who reside together as part of the same household and who are related by birth, marriage, or adoption. Family size includes parent(s) on the application and their children by birth, marriage, or adoption, who reside in the same household as the student applicant(s).

If a student's parents are divorced or separated and living in the same residence, the above information

determines which parent may complete the application for the student. As both parents reside in the same residence as the student, both parent names must be included on the application. If the student is a new student, the income of both parents must be included when determining income eligibility for the Choice program.

If the parent that completes the application is remarried, the parent and his or her spouse that reside in the same household would be included on the application and the income of both the parent and the parent's spouse would be included for the income eligibility determination regardless if the new spouse has legally adopted the student.

21. If a student's parent resides with a significant other and they are not married, should that person be included on the parent screen of the application?

If the significant other resides at the same address as the student applicant and meets the definition of a parent or is a parent of the student applicant, the person should be included on the parent screen in the Online Parent Application and his or her income would be included for the income eligibility determination.

For the Choice program, a parent means a biological parent, a parent by adoption, or a step parent that resides at the same address as the student applicant.

To be included as a step-parent on the Choice program application, the person must be married to the student applicant's parent and reside at the same address as the student applicant.

22. My 12th grade student will graduate this year and will not be in the Choice program for the school year for which my family is applying. Should I remove my 12th grade student from application for the upcoming school year?

If the 12th grade student is not going to participate in the Choice program in the upcoming school year for which the family is applying, the student should be removed from Student page in the Online Parent Application. This will not affect the student's status or funding as a Choice student for their current 12th grade school year.

23. If a parent will be moving to Wisconsin with my student, can the parent submit an application before they move to Wisconsin?

No. *Students* must meet program residency requirements at the time of the application in order for the parent to apply for the student for the Choice program.

If a student will be moving to Wisconsin, the parent may apply for the Choice program for the student **once the student resides in Wisconsin during a school's open application period**.

Parents that reside in Wisconsin but whose student(s) will be moving to Wisconsin at a later date, may apply for the Choice program for the student once the student resides in Wisconsin during a school's open application period.

If the student moves to Wisconsin after the school's open application period(s) for a school year, the parent may apply for the student for the Choice program for a future school year if the student meets the Choice program eligibility requirements.

24. How do I complete an application if my family participates in in the Safe at Home program?

Families that participate in the Safe at Home program will have a Safe a Home card from the Wisconsin Department of Justice. The parent(s) with the authority to make educational decisions for the student may complete the application, which is available on the dpi.wi.gov/choice webpage. The address on the

application is the address on the Safe at Home card. The school district on the application is the school district in which the student resides. The parent must provide a copy of the Safe at Home card to the school for residency documentation and provide income documentation to the school, if applicable.

The Safe at Home card may be used for the residency documentation until the expiration date. In some circumstances for WPCP students, the Choice school will be required to confirm whether the student resides in the same school district as of the 3rd Friday in September as the district on the application.

25. How do I complete the Online Parent Application if I'm applying in multiple application periods for the MPCP or RPCP?

This information does not apply to the WPCP as there is only one application period for the WPCP. Parents applying to the WPCP who re-submit their application during the WPCP open application period should not remove any students or schools from the application unless they do not want to apply for those students or schools for the WPCP for that school year.

The information below only applies to the MPCP and RPCP.

The parent should only include the student(s) and school(s) they want to apply for the MPCP or RPCP on the application for the current application period in the Online Parent Application. The parent should remove any students(s) and school(s) in the Online Parent Application to which they do not want to apply during the current application period. The applications submitted by the parent in the Online Parent Application during any previous MPCP or RPCP open application period(s) will not be deleted. The student applications will remain with the school.

The parent should do the following when applying in the Online Parent Application for the MPCP or RPCP.

- Go to dpi.wi.gov/choice and click on "Click HERE for the Online Parent Application for the Choice Program" in the middle of the page. Next, click on the "Click Here to Enter the Private School Choice Programs System" and sign in with their email address and password under "Returning Users".

- On the Schools screen:
    - Click the blue "Remove School" link to the left of the school name to remove any school(s) that the parent will not apply to for their student(s) during the current application period.
    - Click the "Add Another School" button to add any school(s) that the parent will apply to for their student(s) during the current application period.

- On the Students screen:
    - Click the blue "Remove" link to the left of the student name(s) that will not be included in the application for the current application period.
    - Click the "Add Another Child" button to add any student(s) that the parent wants to apply for that are not already listed in the application for the current application period.
    - Click the blue "Edit" link to the left of the student name(s) and click through the screens and pick the school(s) the parent wants to apply to for each student.

- Finish and submit the application. Click through all screens in the Online Parent Application, update information as needed, and click the "Send Updates to DPI" button.

- After submitting the application a confirmation screen will appear and the parent will receive a confirmation email. Parents must provide the supporting documentation during the open application period as directed in the Online Parent Application and the confirmation email, or their application is ineligible.

The "Online Parent Application Print Screens", which is available on the dpi.wi.gov/choice webpage, has

samples of the screens. The Online Parent Application also includes language to assist parents applying in multiple application periods.

State Aid, Fees, and Tuition

26. What fees are the schools allowed to charge Choice students?

A school may charge Choice students, regardless of their income, fees to recover the cost of the following as set forth in statute:

a) Personal use items, such as uniforms, gym clothes, and towels.
b) Social and extracurricular activities if not necessary to the private school's curriculum.
c) Musical instruments.
d) Meals consumed by pupils of the private school.
e) High school classes that are not required for graduation and for which no credits toward graduation are given.
f) Transportation.
g) Before-school and after-school child care.
h) Room and board at the private school.

A private school may not stop an eligible pupil from attending the private school, expel or otherwise discipline the pupil, or withhold or reduce the pupil's grades because the pupil or the pupil's parent or guardian cannot pay or has not paid fees as allowed.

27. What tuition are the schools allowed to charge Choice students?

A private school may not charge or receive any additional tuition payments for a Choice student in grades kindergarten through 8. However, a private school may, in addition to the state aid payment it receives, charge a Choice student tuition in an amount determined by the school if both of the following apply: (a) the student is in grades 9 through 12; and (b) the family income of the student exceeds 220% of the federal poverty level (See the table below).

If the student's parent(s) on the application are married, their income is reduced by $7,000 when determining income for tuition purposes *(i.e. married family income minus $7,000 is the income amount married families compare to the table below)*. The private school makes the determination whether the school can charge tuition to a student in grades 9 through 12. The private school must establish a process for accepting appeals to the governing body related to the school's determination to charge tuition to a student based on the student's family income.

Continuing 9-12 Grade Students Tuition Income Requirements
220% of the Federal Poverty Level for 2021-22

Family Size	Yearly Income Must Exceed
1	$28,072
2	$37,928
3	$47,784
4	$57,640
5	$67,496
6	$77,352

For each additional member add $9,856.

28. How do the parent and private school receive state aid payments?

The state will pay the Choice school for each eligible Choice pupil attending the school. The first two payments (in September and November) are sent to the school where the student is enrolled and attending on the 3rd Friday in September. The second two payments (in February and May) are sent to the school where the student is enrolled and attending on the 2nd Friday in January.

29. How much state aid does the Choice school receive per student in the Choice program?

For the 2020-21 school year, state aid for a student enrolled full-time in the Choice program (defined as enrolled in the Choice program and in attendance on both the 3rd Friday in September and the 2nd Friday in January) is $8,300 for students in grades K-8 and $8,946 for students in grades 9-12.

The state aid amounts for the 2021-22 school year are not yet finalized.

30. Can a school require that Choice parents raise funds or volunteer time?

A school may ask that a Choice parent raise funds for or contribute volunteer time to the school. However, it cannot be required as a condition of admission. The school cannot punish a parent or student in the Choice program for failure to participate in fundraising activities or volunteer time.

Religious Activities, Transportation, and School Policies

31. Is my student required to participate in religious activities or instruction?

No. If a Choice student's parent or guardian gives a written request to the student's teacher or the school's principal to excuse the student from any religious activity, the teacher and school must honor that request.

32. Is a Choice school required to provide transportation?

No. If a private Choice school notifies the school district of the school's attendance area and the names and addresses of its students for the following school year, sometimes, the school district will provide transportation or reimburse parents' transportation costs in part. If the school district is not required to provide transportation for the Choice student, and the Choice school chooses to provide transportation, the Choice school may charge the parent or guardian a service fee. Parents should check with the Choice school where their student hopes to attend and the school district to determine what transportation options are available, if any.

33. Are there procedures regarding student suspensions and expulsions that a private Choice school is required to follow?

Yes. State law requires private Choice schools to have written procedures in place about student suspensions and expulsions. These include procedures for appealing a suspension or expulsion. Parents should check with the Choice school they are considering for their student about their procedures. Choice schools are required to provide parents with a copy of these and some other school policies at the time of application.

34. Can parents meet with the school's governing board?

Yes. The school is required to have at least two meetings a year for parents to meet with the governing board. The school must notify parents at least 30 days prior to the meeting. Parents may also ask the school for the meeting dates.

35. Can a school determine the appropriate grade level for a student?

Yes. The school is responsible for grade placement for students. However, the only information private schools may use to determine eligibility for students in the Choice program is residency, income (for new students), and age. Generally, students applying to the RPCP or WPCP must also be applying to certain grades or have met a prior year attendance requirement.

36. Can a student repeat a grade?

Yes. A Choice student may repeat a grade as long as all other program requirements are met.

Special Education and the Special Needs Scholarship Program (SNSP)

37. Is a private Choice school required to enroll a student with special needs in the Choice program and to provide the child with whatever services are required to allow the child to learn?

A private school may not discriminate against a student with special educational needs during the admissions process for the Choice program. However, as a private school, a Choice school is required to offer only those services to assist students with special needs that it can provide with minor adjustments. Parents should contact the Choice school during the admission process about the services the school is able to provide for their student. Parents should also contact the school district in which the private school is located for more information on the services they provide students with special needs who are enrolled in the public schools and the lesser services the school district provides students with special needs who are enrolled in private schools.

Some of the private schools participating in the Choice program also participate in the Special Needs Scholarship Program (SNSP). The SNSP is a separate program from the Choice programs. It allows a student with a disability, who meets certain eligibility requirements, to receive a state-funded scholarship to attend a participating private school.

38. How do I know if my child is eligible for the SNSP?

The eligibility requirements for the SNSP are explained in the Frequently Asked Questions available on the SNSP webpage at https://dpi.wi.gov/parental-education-options/special-needs-scholarship/student-applications.

39. Should I enroll my student in the Private School Choice Programs or the SNSP?

The Choice Programs and the SNSP are governed by different laws. As such, the programs have different student eligibility requirements; different application processes and timelines; and have different school participation requirements. **Students can begin applying to the SNSP for the 2021-22 school year July 1, 2021.**

If the student meets the eligibility requirements and the school is in the Choice programs and the SNSP, it is a parent's decision as to whether to apply to a Choice program or the SNSP. A parent may submit applications for the student to participate in both programs. However, a student can only participate in one program and the school can only receive money from one program, not both, for the student. If a parent submits applications to both programs, the parent should provide the private school with a written statement indicating which program the parent wants the student to participate in (Choice or SNSP).

The department recommends that a parent fully evaluate the options before selecting a program (Choice or SNSP). For information on the SNSP, please see the SNSP website at: https://dpi.wi.gov/parental-education-options/special-needs-scholarship.

40. If my child participated in the SNSP but is no longer eligible for the SNSP, can my child instead receive a Private School Choice Programs voucher?

A student who was previously eligible for the SNSP, and who would like to participate in the Choice programs, must apply and meet all of the Choice Programs' requirements explained in the Program Eligibility, Required Documentation, and Application Periods section. The student is not automatically eligible for the Choice Programs, even if they participated in Choice programs prior to participating in the SNSP.

Transferring, Student Records, and Changing Choice Schools

41. May a student reapply for the program if the student declined a Choice seat or withdrew from the Choice program?

Maybe. If a student meets the eligibility requirements at the time of application and if the school has a remaining open application period, the student may reapply to the Choice program. See the Program Eligibility, Required Documentation, and Application Periods section for information on the initial eligibility requirements and open application periods.

42. Can a student who hasn't moved transfer from the Choice program at one school to the Choice program at another school at any time?

No. A student may transfer from the Choice program at one school to another only during a school's open application periods and only if the second school has a Choice seat available. The student's parent or guardian must complete and submit a Choice application with proof of residency to the second school during an open application period the school offers. If a student transfers during the school year, the state aid for the student will be sent to the school where the student is enrolled and in attendance on the two count dates (3rd Friday in September and 2nd Friday in January). A Choice-eligible student can transfer from the Choice program at one school to the Choice program at another school between school years, but must apply during open application periods. If there are more applications than available seats, the Choice transfer is not guaranteed a seat at the new Choice school.

43. Can a student change Choice schools if the student moves?

Students that participate in the WPCP and move to the city of Milwaukee or the Racine Unified School District may apply as continuing students to the MPCP or RPCP, but must do so by submitting an application to the MPCP or RPCP school during an open application period that the MPCP or RPCP school offers and must provide applicable residency documentation. Note: if a WPCP student moves to the city of Milwaukee or the Racine Unified School District after the end of the WPCP application period and will continue to attend the same school, the parent should contact the school directly regarding information needed.

Students that applied to the WPCP who move between the day after the end of the WPCP application period and the 3rd Friday in August may transfer their application to another WPCP school if the private school to which the application would be transferred has space available and if the student: (1) was determined eligible to participate in the WPCP for the 2021-22 school year; (2) continues to reside in a Wisconsin school district other than in the city of Milwaukee and Racine Unified School District; and (3) resides in a school district that has not exceeded its school district enrollment cap. The parent must contact the school directly regarding eligibility for this type of school change.

Students that participate in the MPCP that move outside of the city of Milwaukee and wish to apply for either the RPCP or WPCP may apply as continuing students during an open application period that the RPCP school offers or during the WPCP application period and must provide applicable residency documentation.

Students that participate in the RPCP that move outside of the Racine Unified School District and wish to

apply for either the MPCP or WPCP may apply as continuing students during an open application period that the MPCP school offers or during the WPCP application period and must provide applicable residency documentation.

44. Can a school withhold grades, student records, or a high school diploma from a Choice student?

No. A Choice school must issue a high school diploma or certificate to each Choice student who attends the school and satisfactorily completes the course of instruction and any other high school graduation requirements. A Choice school must also provide a copy of a Choice student's records upon request from the student's parent or guardian.

45. How are Choice schools required to handle the transfer of Choice student records to the parent or guardian or to another public or private school?

Choice schools are required to send a copy of student records to another school district or school (including private Choice schools) within one (1) working day of receiving written notice from the student or the parent of a minor student that the student intends to enroll in the other school.

Upon request, a Choice school must provide a student or the parent of a minor student who is attending the school with a copy of the student's progress records. Progress records mean those student records which include the student's grades, a statement of the courses the student has taken, the student's attendance record, the student's immunization records, any lead screening records required under state law, and records of the student's school extracurricular activities.

A Choice school must keep progress records for each Choice student while the student attends the school and, unless the school closes, for at least five years after the student ceases to attend the school.

46. What happens to student records or high school transcripts when a Choice school closes?

A Choice school that closes must either; (1) transfer all progress records for Choice students to the school district in which the private school is located and send written notice to each student or the parent or guardian of a minor student that the records have been transferred, or (2) transfer the Choice student's records to an affiliated organization that will maintain the progress records for at least five years if the student or the parent of a minor student consents in writing to the release of the progress records to the affiliated organization.

47. Does the department of public instruction (DPI) have copies of student records or high school transcripts for students who participated in the Choice program?

No. The DPI does not have any student records, including high school diplomas. If a parent/former student is trying to locate their student records, they should contact the district where the private school was located to try to obtain the records or the affiliated organization where the records were transferred, if they provided the consent that the affiliated organization could maintain them.

General Income Eligibility Questions

48. What is the difference between the DPI and the DOR income Determination Method?

If parents select the DPI Income Determination method, they will need to specify the amount of income received in the previous year (**2020**) in the Online Parent Application and provide income documentation to the school. If the parents indicate that they do not have income, they will need to explain how basic needs were met in the previous year and must provide evidence of support received for government assistance programs in the previous year, if applicable.

- Parents who select the DPI Income Determination method ***that have filed their 2020 taxes***

respond yes to the question "Did parent file a 2020 Federal 1040 income form with the IRS?". The parent will be asked to enter their Adjusted Gross Income (AGI). See the DPI Method Screens section of the Online Parent Application Print Screens at dpi.wi.gov/choice for sample screens.

- Parents who select the DPI Income Determination method ***that have not filed their 2020 taxes*** respond "no" to the question "Did parent file a 2020 Federal 1040 income form with the IRS?". These parents indicate what income and/or government assistance they received in 2020. If the family only identifies government assistance, an explanation of how basic needs (food, clothing, and shelter) were supplied is required. This explanation must be sufficient to explain how basic needs were provided given the parent did not have any income. For example, the parent should not indicate they supplied basic needs by working since the income from that work needs to be reported as income. See the DPI Method Screens section of the Online Parent Application Print Screens at dpi.wi.gov/choice for sample screens.

If parents select the DOR Income Determination method, they will need to enter their social security numbers or tax identification numbers into the Online Parent Application or provide the school with their social security numbers or tax identification numbers. The income eligibility determination will be based on income for the previous year (**2020**) or two years (2019) before the current school year. Parents who filed a joint tax return in the past two years but no longer live with the other individual should consider using the DPI method. Please see the DOR Income Determination section in this resource for additional information.

49. Can parents use current year (2021) income rather than prior year income for the DPI income eligibility determination?

No, current year (2021) income is not used to determine eligibility for the Choice programs. The DPI income determination method is only completed using the prior calendar year income (2020). The DOR income determination method is only completed using the prior year calendar year income (2020) or the income from two years prior (2019).

50. Can income be excluded if a parent no longer has a job they had in a previous year or can onetime income sources (e.g. IRA distributions, bonuses, etc.) be excluded from adjusted gross income when determining if the family income meets the income eligibility requirements?

No. No adjustments may be made to income, even if some of the income is a one-time amount or if the current parent income is less than the previous year.

51. Does my family size on the Choice application have to match my tax return?

No. There is not a requirement that the people included in the family size on the application for the Choice program be the same as the people on a family's tax return. For example, a divorced parent that applies for the Choice program may not be able to include all student(s) and/or sibling(s) on their tax return that are included on the Choice program application.

52. Can I include my college student(s) as family members on the application?

If the parents consider the college student, who is a sibling of the student for whom they are applying, to be a permanent resident at the family address used in the application, the college student may be added as a family member and included in the family size.

53. Are there age limits for children to be included as family members on the application (i.e. can adult children be included)?

There are no age requirements for children added as family members in the application. The child may be

added as a family member as long as he or she resides at the same address as the student applicant and meets the requirement to be included in family size.

A family is a group of two or more people who reside together as part of the same household and who are related by birth, marriage, or adoption. Family size includes parent(s) on the application and their children by birth, marriage, or adoption, who reside in the same household as the student applicant(s).

54. If the parent does not meet the Choice income eligibility requirements with all of the unemployment compensation received during the 2020 tax year included as income, how should the parent complete the income portion of the online parent application?

In March 2021, the Federal government changed how unemployment compensation is included in the Federal adjusted gross income (AGI) for the 2020 tax year. If a parent requires this change in order for a student to be income eligible for the Choice programs, the parent should consider using the DPI income determination method.

If the parent filed their tax return prior to the change to unemployment compensation and the unemployment compensation exclusion is required in order for a student to be income eligible for the Choice programs, a parent completing the DPI income determination method must complete the following:

1) Complete the IRS Unemployment Compensation Exclusion Worksheet available at https://www.irs.gov/faqs/irs-procedures/forms-publications/new-exclusion-of-up-to-10200-of-unemployment-compensation.
2) Calculate their revised AGI as the AGI in Line 11 of their filed 2020 Federal 1040 tax form less the excluded unemployment compensation, which is on Line 10 of the IRS Unemployment Compensation Exclusion worksheet.
3) If the parent is eligible based on the revised AGI, the parent should:
    a. Enter the revised AGI in the Online Parent Application as their AGI and submit/re-submit the application.
    b. Provide the school(s) they are applying to with the filed 2020 Federal 1040 tax form and the IRS Unemployment Compensation Exclusion worksheet.

DPI Income Determination Method

55. What year will the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) method use to determine if an application is income eligible?

The DPI income determination method is based on the prior calendar year (2020) income.

Parents who select the DPI Income Determination method will enter the amount of income received in the Online Parent Application and provide income documentation to the school. If parents indicate that they do not have income, they will enter an explanation in the Online Parent Application for how basic needs were met in the prior year and provide evidence of support received for government assistance programs in the prior year to the school, if applicable. See the Income Verification Screens section and DPI Method Screens section of the Online Parent Application Print Screens, which is available on the dpi.wi.gov/choice webpage, for sample screens.

56. Can a parent use the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) method if the parent has not filed taxes for the prior year (2020)?

Yes. Parents who select the DPI Income Determination method that have not filed 2020 taxes may respond "no" to the question, "Did parent file a 2020 Federal 1040 income form with the IRS?". These parents will then indicate what income and/or government assistance they received in 2020. See the Income Verification Screens section and DPI Method Screens section of the Online Parent Application Print Screens, which is available on the dpi.wi.gov/choice webpage, for sample screens.

Parents who use the DPI method that have not filed taxes must include all of their income sources and cannot include any decreases/deductions to their income. If the parents are not income eligible without these decreases/deductions, the parent would need to file their 1040 tax form prior to applying to the program.

If the parents have not filed taxes for the prior year but did file taxes in Wisconsin two years ago and the parent is income eligible based on the Federal Adjusted Gross Income from the Federal 1040 for that tax year, the parent may use the DOR Income Determination method.

DOR Income Determination Method

57. When is the DOR able to determine income eligibility for a parent?

The following table summarizes the situations where a parent will generally be able to use the DOR method to determine income eligibility. In order to determine if the DOR method is available to a parent, identify the type of form filed and the method used to file it in the left column. An explanation of each form is included under the chart. Please note that if a parent filed an amended return, the information from the amended return will generally be used to determine whether the family meets the income requirements.

	Form Filed			
	Form 1-without a Schedule I	Form 1-with a Schedule I	Form 1-NPR	Amended Return
Filed by paper	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Filed by software or a preparer	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Filed using DOR's *e-file* application	Yes	No	Yes	Yes

Explanation of forms
Form 1: Income Tax Return long form
Schedule I: "Adjustments to Convert 2020/2019 Federal Adjusted Gross Income and Itemized Deductions to the Amounts Allowable for Wisconsin" schedule
Form 1-NPR: Nonresident and Part-year Resident Income Tax Return

58. What happens if the DOR is not able to determine the parent(s)' income?

The parent will be required to return to the Online Parent Application and use the DPI income determination method prior to the end of the open application period in which he or she applied. The open application periods are identified in the Program Eligibility, Required Documentation, and Application Periods section.

59. How will DOR complete the income eligibility determination for a parent that filed a joint return and no longer lives with his or her spouse/ex-spouse?

The DOR income determination method will include all income on the tax return, including that of a parent's spouse/ex-spouse, even if they are not on the application. If the parent is eligible with all income on the tax return included in the income determination for both the 2020 and 2019 tax year, the parent can use the DOR income determination method.

If the parent is not eligible with all income on the tax return included in the income determination for either the 2020 and 2019 tax year, the parent should consider using the DPI income determination method. In the Online Parent Application, the first question for the DPI Income Determination method is if the parent filed a 2020 Federal 1040 tax form. Since the parent did not file a 2020 Federal 1040 tax form that only identifies his/her income, the parent should indicate that he/she did not file a 2020 Federal 1040 tax form. The parent should then identify any income or government assistance he/she received in the Online Parent Application and bring in supporting documentation as identified in the Online Parent Application. The spouse/ex-spouse's income and government assistance should not be identified in the Online Parent Application.

60. Can a parent who lived and filed taxes in another state or country in prior tax years use the DOR income determination method?

No. The DOR income determination method is only available for parents who filed taxes in Wisconsin in at least one of the last two prior tax years. Parents who do not meet this requirement must use the DPI income determination method.

61. May I appeal the DOR's determination if my family is found not income eligible for the Choice program?

If a parent thinks the DOR income determination is incorrect within the Online Parent Application, the parent may submit the ineligible application(s) in the Online Parent Application, contact the school, and provide information to the school about why they think the determination is incorrect. The school may request copies of the first two pages of the parent's 2019 and/or 2020 Federal IRS 1040.

If a parent does not submit the ineligible application(s) in the Online Parent Application by the end of the open application period, the parent may complete and submit the ineligible student application(s) in a future open application period, if available.

In March 2021, the Federal government changed how unemployment compensation is included in the Federal adjusted gross income for the 2020 tax year. If the parent(s) on the application received unemployment compensation during the 2020 tax year and the unemployment compensation exclusion is required in order for a student to be income eligible for the Choice programs, the parent should submit the ineligible application(s) in the Online Parent Application, contact the school, and provide the school with the parent's 2020 Federal IRS 1040 and a completed IRS Unemployment Compensation Exclusion worksheet available at https://www.irs.gov/forms-pubs/new-exclusion-of-up-to-10200-of-unemployment-compensation.

Students determined to be ineligible by DOR may not switch to the DPI Income Determination method.

62. If a parent is found ineligible by DOR can the parent change to the DPI income determination method?

No. Once a parent is found ineligible by DOR the parent cannot change to the DPI income determination method.

Residency Documentation

63. What residency documents can a student provide to the schools they are applying to?

The list of permitted residency documents is available on the dpi.wi.gov/choice webpage in the document called Allowed Residency Documents.

64. What residency documentation can a student provide if they recently moved?

The most common residency documents for a family that recently moved are a new lease agreement, a confirmation letter of address change from the United States Postal Service, or a letter from the utility company establishing service at the new address. This documentation must have one of the parents' names on the application and the new address.