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HERE ARE SOME STRATEGIES FOR REACHING THE OUT-OF-SCHOOL YOUTH IN YOUR COMMUNITY WITH FLEXIBLE SCHEDULING.

What is the Optional Flexible School Day Program?

The Optional Flexible School Day Program (OFSDP), enacted in 2007-08, is a non-competitive grant program that provides Texas districts with an alternative method of calculating attendance. The OFSDP allows for the development of flexible programming by lifting restrictions on the days of the week, hours and locations that students can attend classes and the locations where instruction can take place. OFSDP students must be afforded certified teachers and all other required student services that are provided to students in a traditional educational setting.

Schools may run both a traditional school program and an OFSDP program, with different students in each. However, it is not the intent of the OFSDP for a school district or charter school to move students out of an existing traditional setting to provide educational services under the OFSDP.

How can my program utilize the Optional Flexible School Day policy for the benefit of students?

The OFSDP policy can be utilized to provide extended day classes, evening and weekend classes, implement other variations of a flexible schedule, or offer credit recovery sessions during the summer.

Is my program eligible for the Optional Flexible School Day Program?

The OFSDP is designed for districts serving students who meet the state criteria for being at-risk of dropping out of school, or are attending a school implementing a state-approved innovative program. Students under 18 participating in OFSDP must obtain written parental consent.

I run a school or open-enrollment charter that could benefit from the Optional Flexible School Day Program, how do I apply? Is there an application process?

Applications for participation in OFSDP are approved on an annual basis by TEA's funding staff (see below). The application must come from the district and include a description of the program of study, staffing plans, schedules, mechanisms implemented for taking attendance (see attendance recording, below), program performance measures, and any relevant articulation agreements between partners. The application process also requires approval from local school boards, and local districts. Moreover, hearings must be scheduled for public input.

Send applications to:

Kim Wall
State Funding Division
Texas Education Agency
1701 North Congress Avenue
Austin, TX 78701

How is average daily attendance (ADA) generated under the Optional Flexible School Day Program?

A student attending an OFSDP may be counted in attendance for the actual number of contact hours the student receives, not to exceed 1,080 hours per twelve-month period (180 6-hour school days, where one day is the equivalent of 360 minutes of teaching) including summer and vacation sessions, which is equivalent to one full-time student. The reported total number of instructional days may not exceed 45 days for the first five weeks of classes or 90 days for the 6th six-week attendance-recording period.

Students enrolled in the OFSDP will have an ADA eligibility code of 7. It is in the best interest of the charter school to serve students in the traditional program **whenever possible**. For example a student served for 2 hours each day in the regular program may generate a maximum of .5 ADA, where a student in the OFSDP program may only generate a maximum of .33 ADA.

What are the minimum and maximum attendance requirements for students under the Optional Flexible School Day Program?

Under OFSDP, schools and open enrollment charter schools **must** ensure that students receive between 45 minutes and 10 hours (or 600 minutes) of instruction time in order to generate average daily attendance (ADA) funding for a student on that day.

What are the requirements for PEIMS coding for OFSDP participants?

For reporting purposes, students cannot be tagged as belonging to both an OFSDP and a traditional school program simultaneously (i.e., tagging a single student with both a 400 and 500 coding in the Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS)), except if a student has switched enrollment from one program to another during the school year. If a student is taking courses under both a traditional program of study while participating in an OFSDP, the district must report them using the PEIMS 500, 505 and 510 series records.

What are the state's reporting requirements?

OFSDP approved sites are required to submit progress reports with information on student enrollment, demographics, high school graduation, and additional performance indicators included in the approved application. TEA will inform programs 45 days in advance of when their progress report is due.

How should my program record attendance so we can claim ADA funding for our students?

OFSDP sites are required to submit information on the systems and processes they will implement to collect and record student attendance in their applications to the Texas Education Agency (TEA). Corresponding school districts and school boards must approve the OFSDP attendance accounting plan.

If appropriate, a district can adopt a policy to require students to attend regularly scheduled instruction for the OFSDP accounting that differs from the typical district attendance procedures (e.g., taking attendance at second and fifth period only). The teacher is responsible for recording the amount of time each student is in attendance on any given day. The time is recorded in minutes in PEIMS. Time between classes, breaks and lunch does not count towards attendance minutes.

How should my program report attendance for students receiving instruction in OFSDP and traditional education settings?

The Texas Education Agency's 2009-2010, Student Attendance Accounting Handbook, Texas legislation, and the Commissioner's regulations do not mandate additional methods and procedures for the collection and reporting of attendance data beyond instructing programs to maintain a separate log recording OFSDP instructional time in minutes. Programs and schools are also required to keep another separate log to track the instructional time (also in minutes) received by OFSDP students in traditional settings that can also be counted toward meeting state high school graduation requirements. For reporting purposes, programs and school districts must consolidate their attendance records and report total delivered instructional time to the state.

These logs are to be made available to TEA when conducting an audit of the district's data collection records. TEA does provide guidance to sites in developing attendance collection protocols through their sample Daily Contact Register, available online at http://www.tea.state.tx.us/index2.aspx?id=7733&menu_id=645&menu_id2=789.

When will my school district receive reimbursement for OFSDP attending?

School districts are reimbursed for OFSDP attendance the following September based on the attendance figures reported to the PEIMS.

SUMMARY OF TIPS FOR IMPLEMENTING OPTIONAL FLEXIBLE SCHOOL DAY PROGRAM

General Guidelines

- > It is not the intent of the OFSDP for a school district or charter school to move students out of an existing traditional setting to provide educational services under the OFSDP.
- > If your district is considering implementing an OFSDP, be aware that the only optional or flexible elements pertaining to the OFSDP are the hours, days of the week, or locations within the district that educational services are provided. OFSDP students must be afforded certified teachers and all other required student services that are provided to students in a traditional educational setting.
- > A student attending an OFSDP may be counted in attendance for purposes of funding only for the actual number of contact hours a student receives, which is not to exceed 1,080 hours per twelve-month period.

Data Reporting Provisions for Generating ADA

- > Total minutes each reporting period will be converted to days to calculate ADA and FTEs.
- > Attendance will be reported through PEIMS 500, 505, and 510 records.
- > Students enrolled in the OFSDP will have an ADA eligibility code of 7.

Attendance-Taking Requirements for OFSDP

- > Attendance-taking practices for OFSDP must either align with standard district practices for calculating ADA or a district can adopt a policy with school board approval to implement attendance policies specific to the OFSDP.

Additional Tips for Charter Schools Offering An OFSDP

- > It is in the best interest of an open-enrollment charter school to serve students in the traditional program **whenever possible**. For example, a student served for 2 hours each day in the regular program may generate a maximum of .5 ADA, where a student in the OFSDP program may only generate a maximum of .33 ADA.

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION PLEASE SEE THE FOLLOWING RESOURCES:

Commissioner's Rules:

19 Texas Administrative Code §129.1027, Optional Flexible School Day Program

Student Attendance Accounting Handbook

http://www.tea.state.tx.us/index2.aspx?id=7739&menu_id=645&menu_id2=789

Texas Education Agency's Optional Flexible School Day Web site

http://www.tea.state.tx.us/index2.aspx?id=7733&menu_id=645&menu_id2=789

Texas Education Code: §29.0822, Optional Flexible School Day Program

This brief was developed by JFF at the request of the Texas Dropout Recovery Pilot Program for technical assistance purposes and should not be considered a legal document.

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