

INDIAN AFFAIRS MANUAL

Part 33

Education (Student Support Services)

Chapter 2

Certificate of Completion Policy

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1.1 Purpose. This chapter establishes the Bureau of Indian Education's (BIE) policy for offering a certificate of completion when students with significant cognitive disabilities are unable to meet the requirements for a standard high school diploma.

1.2 Scope. This policy applies to all BIE-operated schools.

1.3 Policy. It is BIE's policy to offer a certificate of completion to students with significant cognitive disabilities who are unable to meet the requirements of a standard high school diploma. The BIE encourages schools/districts to support students with disabilities in seeking and obtaining a standard high school diploma whenever possible. The minimum standards for a standard high school diploma are defined in 25 CFR 36.32 – Standard XII. A standard high school diploma is a credential recognized by employers and other educational institutions and, therefore, offers certain educational and employment advantages that a certificate of completion does not. However, the BIE recognizes that for students with significant cognitive disabilities, a certificate of completion may be appropriate.

1.4 Authority.

A. Statutes and Regulations.

- 1) 25 CFR 36.32, Standard XII – Graduation requirements for a high school diploma
- 2) 34 CFR 200.6, Inclusion of all students
- 3) P.L. Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015
- 4) 20 U.S.C. § 6301 et seq., Elementary and Secondary Education Act
- 5) 20 U.S.C. § 1400, Individuals with Disabilities Education Act

B. Guidance.

- 1) 30 IAM 20, Student Progress and Promotion Policy
- 2) U.S. Department of Education, *A Transition Guide to Postsecondary Education and Employment for Students and Youth with Disabilities*, Revised August 2020

1.5 Responsibilities.

A. Director, BIE is responsible for providing general oversight for all BIE programs and activities, including approving this policy.

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- B. Chief Academic Officer** is responsible for ensuring that Associate Deputy Directors (ADD) actively lead and support Education Program Administrators (EPAs) in providing training and other support to ensure that the provisions of this policy are fully implemented.
- C. ADD** is responsible for ensuring that EPAs actively support School Principals/Superintendents accurately implement the provisions of this policy.
- D. EPAs** are responsible for ensuring that School Principals/Superintendents are appropriately trained in the implementation of this policy and is also responsible for ensuring that each School Principals/Superintendent under their supervision accurately implements the provisions of this policy.
- E. School Principals/Superintendents** are responsible for monitoring and communicating policy to school personnel, parents, and the tribal community, and ensuring that policy is reviewed and applied consistently within their respective school(s).
- F. Individualized Education Program (IEP) team** is responsible for identifying a student's individual education plan, including making the determination whether a student qualifies for a certificate of completion.

1.6 Transition. The limitations of a certificate of completion option as compared to the standard high school diploma must be discussed with the student and their legal guardians as part of the individualized education program (IEP) process and in the context of transition planning to prepare the student for adult life.

1.7 Requirements. Whether a student qualifies for a certificate of completion is an IEP team decision. A certification of completion may be awarded when a student:

- is at least two and half to three standard deviations below the mean in both adaptive behavior and cognitive functioning;
- performs substantially below grade level expectations on the academic content standards for the grade in which they are enrolled, even with the use of adaptations and accommodations;
- requires extensive, direct individualized instruction and substantial supports to achieve measurable gains, across all content areas and settings;
- satisfactorily achieves their IEP goals and objectives during high school as determined by the IEP team; and
- satisfactorily meets high school attendance requirements.

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1.8 Limitations. Reasons for putting a student on a path to a certificate of completion will not include:

- excessive or extensive absences;
- social, cultural, or economic differences;
- existence of an IEP or identification in a specific disability category;
- a specific special education placement or services;
- emotional, behavioral, or physical challenges;
- anticipated scores on standardized tests or assessments; and/or
- concern for school-level performance ratings based on student test scores.

1.9 Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE). The BIE must make a FAPE available to any student with a disability who finishes high school with a credential other than a standard high school diploma, including a certificate of completion, until the student has exceeded the age of eligibility for FAPE under law.

1.10 Equivalency. A certificate of completion will not be considered the equivalent of a standard high school diploma and should not be described as such to students, parents, or employers, or counted as a graduation in any reports by the school.

1.11 Participation in Graduation. Students receiving a certificate of completion may participate in a BIE school's high school graduation ceremony.

Approval

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Date: 2021.12.20 11:11:15 -05'00'

Tony Dearman
Director, Bureau of Indian Education

Date