

EMERGENCY JUSTIFICATION

The Office of Children and Family Services (Office) finds that immediate emergency adoption of these regulations is necessary to protect the general welfare of children that are determined to be in need of highly specialized educational residential services by local school districts' Committee on Special Education (CSE), due to the intensity of their mental health, developmental or behavioral health needs. The purpose of this rule is to remove an existing regulatory barrier that precludes maintenance reimbursement for residential CSE programs when a student has been absent from the program for more than 15 days, in recognition that widespread, unanticipated absences in excess of 15 days have occurred in residential CSE programs as a result of COVID-19 and the state of emergency declared in relation to the pandemic within New York.

Specifically, this rule would authorize reimbursement for residential CSE maintenance where there has been an absence in excess of 15 days and such absence was directly related to a state of emergency and determined by the local department of social services to be necessary for the health and safety of a child. Residential CSE providers receive tuition and maintenance reimbursement for the cost of the special education programs. The maintenance reimbursement attendant to the residential component of CSE placement are regulated by the Office and are made on a per-diem basis for the present year's care days but are reflective of the prior year's operating costs of the programs.

Sufficient capacity at residential CSE programs is crucial to maintain the availability of these placements for children who are determined by a CSE to need these services to receive a free and appropriate public education. This rule is required on an expedited basis to preserve the availability of residential CSE placements and to remove existing regulatory barriers to receiving reimbursement that the programs may rely on to continue to operate, as a result of an absence resulting from a state of emergency where the absence was necessary for the health and safety of a particular child.