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Washington Office of Superintendent of
PUBLIC INSTRUCTION
Chris Reykdal, Superintendent

November 16, 2026

(X) Action Required
Due date: March 12, 2027 and May 7, 2027
(X) Informational

BULLETIN NO. 038-26 SPECIAL EDUCATION

TO: Educational Service District Superintendents
School District Superintendents
School District Business Managers

FROM: Chris Reykdal, Superintendent of Public Instruction

RE: Special Education Safety Net Application for 2026–27

CONTACT: Amber O'Donnell, Assistant Director of Special Education Data Operations
Contact 360-725-6075, amber.odonnell@k12.wa.us

PURPOSE/BACKGROUND

Safety Net funding is available to Local Education Agencies (LEAs) that have special education costs that are higher than the state and federal funding they receive. This bulletin explains how to apply for special education Safety Net funding in the 2026–27 school year.

The Special Education State Oversight Committee makes Safety Net funding decisions in accordance with state laws and rules (RCW 28A.150.392 and (WAC 392-140- section 600 through section 685). Funding decisions are based on information submitted by the LEA and information available to the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI). OSPI will post application instructions, training materials, and other resources on the Safety Net website as they become available.

Key Changes in 2026–27

- **Quarterly Safety Net Payments:** Eligible LEAs can now receive Safety Net funding on a quarterly basis if they meet specific requirements. LEAs may qualify based on prior-year out-of-state placements or by meeting the definition of a second-class district under RCW 28A.300.065. LEAs receiving quarterly payments **must** submit a complete Safety Net application in March 2027. Additional information is available in the Quarterly Payment Guidance.

- **IEP Submission Requirements:**
    - Applicants now only need to submit the student's current IEP. Submit previous IEPs only if they differ significantly from the current IEP.
    - Applicants do not need to submit Emergency Response Protocols (ERPs), Behavior Intervention Plans (BIPs), and High School and Beyond Plans (HSBPs) as part of the application. This may change in future years.
- **Worksheet C Overview:** The Worksheet C Overview no longer includes individual school and IEP calendars.
- **Medicaid Reimbursement Calculator:** OSPI will publish a simplified version of this form with application materials.
- **LEA Staff Travel:** LEAs may claim reimbursement for staff travel to an out-of-state nonpublic agency (NPA) to evaluate, observe, or serve a student. Required annual visits to review the placement are also eligible.

Allocated Funding

The amount of state Safety Net funding will be determined in the upcoming legislative session. Federal Safety Net funding in the amount of $14,787,000 is available to the state for the 2026–27 school year. If approved Safety Net funding exceeds the available state and federal funds, OSPI will request additional funding from the Legislature.

Information about prior-year Safety Net applications and funding is available on OSPI's Safety Net website.

TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES/TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

OSPI staff will offer training sessions, tutorials, webinars, and office hours. For training opportunities and instructions on submitting applications, visit OSPI's Safety Net website. To request additional training opportunities or technical assistance for LEA-specific questions, please email the Safety Net team.

Online Training

The following online training courses are available. These videos are updated each year.

- Safety Net Overview
- EGMS Safety Net Application Overview (available soon on the Safety Net website)

Q&A Sessions

The Safety Net team will set up Q&A sessions at each Educational Service District (ESD). Check with your local ESD for information about when your region's Q&A session will take place.

Office Hours

Safety Net EGMS office hours will begin January 4, 2027, and will continue through to May 5, 2027.

- Join Monday office hours from 1–2.
- Join Wednesday office hours from 11–12.

APPLICATION DEADLINES AND MEETING DATES

Deadline for Receipt of Application at OSPI	Type of Application	Oversight Committee Meeting Date	Meeting Location
March 12, 2027	High-Need Individuals (HNI)	June 22-23, 2027	Teams
May 7, 2027	HNI Updates Only	June 22-23, 2027	Teams
	Final Verification & Award Meeting	August 10, 2027	Teams

Download this one-pager that includes calendar invites, due date reminders, and meeting links.

The State Oversight Committee approves or denies funding requests during its scheduled meetings. For the 2026–27 application cycle, the Committee will make conditional awards in June 2027, and final awards in August 2027. OSPI will notify applicants of the Committee's decisions in writing after each meeting.

Applicants may observe the State Oversight Committee meetings on June 23, 2027, and August 10, 2027. Meeting access information will be available to all applicants. Before each meeting, all LEAs will receive a draft summary of their submitted applications by email, regardless of whether they attend. OSPI will email award notifications after each meeting. Following each meeting space will be held for public comments.

The deadline for most High-Need Individual applications is March 12, 2027. The May 7, 2027, deadline is available only for:

- Students who enroll in the LEA after March 12, 2027.
- Students whose services or placement change significantly after March 12, 2027.
- Students receiving extended school year (ESY) when the ESY decision occurs after March 12, 2027.

APPLICATION PROCESS

Demonstration of Capacity (Worksheet A)

Worksheet A helps show whether an applicant has capacity to receive a Safety Net award. Applicants must submit Worksheet A, and all required supporting documents with High-Need

Individual applications. Although Worksheet A establishes potential funding capacity, it does not guarantee a Safety Net award. For help completing the form, refer to the Worksheet A Line-by-Line Instructions.

Worksheet A compares special education revenues and expenditures. If special education expenditures are greater than the available revenues, the LEA demonstrates capacity on Worksheet A. When available, Worksheet A is pre-populated with:

- Budgeted revenues and expenditures from the 2026–27 F-195 report (typically available in December).
- Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Part B Sections 611 and 619 federal allocations and any available carryover funds.
- The LEA's federal restricted indirect rate plus one percent.
- Actual year-end financial data from the 2025–26 F-196 report (typically available in January).

Upload the following items in the Supporting Documents Checklist section of EGMS:

- Worksheet A Template
- Worksheet A Budget Reconciliation, **if applicable**
    - The Budget Reconciliation is an **optional** tab within the Worksheet A Template. It compares the LEA's budgeted expenditures with annualized year-to-date expenditures based on the LEA's detailed expenditure reports.
    - For the conditional award review, the analysis uses the lower of the budgeted expenditure amount or the annualized year-to-date expenditures. If the LEA believes a different amount is more appropriate, they may provide an explanation on the reconciliation worksheet.
    - For the final award review, the analysis uses annualized year-to-date expenditures unless the LEA provides an explanation for using a different amount.
- The most recently completed **detailed** monthly expenditure reports for the special education programs that show both budgeted and actual year-to-date expenditures. The reports must include subtotals at the following levels:
    - Object (i.e., 21-27-5)
    - Activity (i.e., 21-27)
    - Program (i.e., 21)

High-Need Individual Applications

- LEAs may request Safety Net funding for eligible resident students with high special education costs. Safety Net funding only covers direct special education and related services documented in the student's IEP.
- To qualify, a student's annual special education costs must exceed a funding threshold based on the statewide average per-pupil expenditure (APPE). For the 2026–27 school year:

    - LEAs that meet the criteria in RCW 28A.150.392(8) use a threshold of **$35,503** (**1.8 times the APPE).**
    - All other LEAs use a threshold of **$39,448 (2.0 times the APPE).**
- For each High-Need Individual application, applicants must submit the student's current IEP that is in effect for the 2026–27 school year. OSPI and the Committee use the IEP to verify the special education services provided and the costs included in the reimbursement request.
    - If the student's services changed significantly during the school year, submit all IEPs that were in effect during that year. Significant changes may include, but are not limited to:
        - A change in student's placement.
        - Adding a service included in the reimbursement request (for example, a paraeducator added during the year).
        - Removing a service included in the reimbursement request.
        - Change in student service minutes of 10% or more.
- Students with disabilities who receive services in residential schools, Department of Corrections juveniles programs, or programs operated under city and county jails may also qualify for Safety Net funding.
- To be eligible for reimbursement, the student must be receiving services during the 2026–27 school year, and services must be quantified in the student's IEP.
- Use the teacher's November caseload report to calculate the teacher's caseload. If the student is not on the teacher's caseload in November, use the caseload report from the first month the student appears on the teacher's caseload.
- The LEA must submit a complete and accurate application that includes all required documentation. OSPI staff may contact the LEA to request missing information or documentation. The State Oversight Committee may also request additional documentation during its review. If there are concerns about the accuracy of financial records, the information may be referred to the State Auditors' Office (SAO) or the Washington Integrated System of Monitoring (WISM) for further review.

Quarterly Payments

Quarterly payment requests for the 2026–27 school year were due September 30th. LEAs that received quarterly payments must still submit a complete Safety Net application by the March application deadline.

Quarterly payments are advance payments based on projected eligible costs. OSPI may adjust costs after the final application review. LEAs must notify OSPI as soon as possible if there are changes that could affect eligibility or costs, such as a student withdrawing, a change in placement, or a significant reduction in costs.

OSPI distributes quarterly payments through the apportionment process in November, February, May, and August. The August payment is the final adjustment and will ensure the

total quarterly payments match the final Safety Net award amount. If an LEA received more or less than its final award, OSPI will adjust the August payment accordingly.

- Review the Quarterly Payment Guidance

Items Required for Each High Need Individual Application

- Application Forms (in EGMS platform)
  - Worksheet C Student Overview
  - Worksheet C IEP Staff and Other Staff Costs (if applicable)
  - Worksheet C ESY Staff and Other Staff Costs (if applicable)
  - Worksheet C Student Summary
- Application Files (attachments in EGMS platform)
  - Medicaid Reimbursement Calculator (if applicable)
  - Billing Percentage Calculator for Contracted 1:1 Providers (if applicable)
  - Transportation Cost Calculator (if applicable)
  - The student's complete current IEP for the 2026-27 school year. If the student's services changed significantly during the 2026–27 school year, include any previous IEPs that were in effect as well (see page 5 for more details). Include any related documents referenced in the IEP, such as IEP amendments and Prior Written Notices (PWNs).
  - Purchase orders, contracts, and invoices for any contracted services or purchased materials included in the reimbursement request and required by the student's IEP. For contracted providers, include both the name of the contracting agency and the individual providing the service.
  - The November caseload report used to calculate teacher caseloads on Worksheet C. The report must show service minutes for all students served by the teacher. If a student was not on the November report, include the report from the month used to calculate the teacher's caseload.

Allowable Costs

The following costs may be eligible for Safety Net funding. This is not a complete list.

Services Provided Directly to the Student

The student's IEP must include and quantify the amount of service provided.

Examples include:

- Special education teacher services
- Paraeducator services
- Interpreter services
- Nursing services
- Related services provided by district staff or contracted providers, such as:

    - Speech-language pathology (SLP)
    - Occupational therapy (OT)
    - Physical therapy (PT)
    - Teacher of the Visually Impaired (TVI)
    - Teacher of the Deaf (TOD)
    - Orientation and Mobility (O&M)
    - Counseling services
- Transportation, if specified in the student's IEP, for:
    - Student travel to a residential placement.
    - Student travel to an out-of-district placement. Include the transportation cost calculator. Funding is only available if transportation reimbursement rate is less than 100%.
    - Student travel for ESY services. Include the transportation cost calculator.
    - Parent or guardian travel to a student's residential placement to transport the student to the placement, or to participate in IEP required services.
- Braille translation if specified in IEP.
- After-school activity supports, such as interpreting or nursing, if included in the IEP and supported by documentation (timesheets, and event, sport, or activity calendars)
- Supplies and equipment required for individualized instruction, if included in the IEP. Include purchase orders (POs) and invoices.
- Out-of-district placement costs. IEP should document the placement. Include POs, contracts, and invoices.
- ESY (extended school year) costs. Include the ESY Addendum.
- LEA staff travel to an out-of-state nonpublic agency (NPA) to evaluate, observe, or serve a student. Required annual visits to review the placement are also eligible.

Unallowable Costs

The following costs are **not eligible** for Safety Net funding. This list is not a complete list.

- Construction costs
- Costs not coded to a special education program (21, 24, 26, 29)
- Consultant costs that do not provide direct services to the student
- Evaluation costs
- General school supplies and bulk items intended for multiple-student use.
- Staff training costs
- Parent/guardian-initiated travel to a residential placement that is not documented in the IEP.
- Provider travel to and from work (bus paraeducators traveling with student are allowable).

Medicaid Adjustments

Per WAC 392-140-602, services eligible for Medicaid reimbursement are a consideration in the Safety Net application review. If a student is eligible for SBHS (School-Based Health Services) Medicaid Billing, then their application will include an individual Medicaid Reimbursement Calculator. If an LEA has health providers who are exempt from Medicaid billing, complete the Medicaid Provider Eligibility Verification form. Do not include staff listed on this form on any student's Medicaid Reimbursement Calculator.

May 7, 2027, Deadline

If submitting an update to an application submitted in March, the LEA should complete this request form. Completing this form will allow OSPI staff to unlock the current Safety Net submission in the EGMS platform.

To update an application, revise the applicable Worksheet C forms in EGMS and upload as attachments in the platform:

- The student's new IEP or IEP amendment.
- Any purchase orders, contracts, or invoices applicable to the adjusted amount.
- Other back-up documentation needed to support the adjustment.

If applying for a student **not** included in your March 12, 2027, submission include:

- Application Forms (in EGMS platform)
  - Worksheet C Student Overview
  - Worksheet C IEP Staff and Other Staff Costs (if applicable)
  - Worksheet C ESY Staff and Other Staff Costs (if applicable)
  - Worksheet C Student Summary
- Application Files (attachments in EGMS platform)
  - Medicaid Reimbursement Calculator (if applicable)
  - Billing Percentage Calculator for Contracted 1:1 Providers (if applicable)
  - Transportation Cost Calculator (if applicable)
  - The student's complete current IEP for the 2026–27 school year. If the student's services changed significantly during the 2026–27 school year, include any previous IEPs that were in effect as well (see page 5 for more details). Include any related documents referenced in the IEP, such as IEP amendments and Prior Written Notices (PWNs).
  - Purchase orders, contracts, and invoices for any contracted services or purchased materials included in the reimbursement request and required by the student's IEP. For contracted providers, include both the name of the contracting agency and the individual providing the service.
  - The November caseload report used to calculate teacher caseloads on Worksheet C. The report must show service minutes for all students served by the teacher. If a

student was not on the November report, include the report from the month used to calculate the teacher's caseload.

Revise the Total Budget Requested field on the Overview tab of the application in EGMS to reflect the new request amount listed on the Certification form.

Please note, if your LEA does not have any applications to submit in March 2027, you may submit your initial application in May 2027.

Certification

Complete the Certification Form for High-Need Individual Safety Net funding in EGMS. The form details the LEA's funding request, certifies the accuracy of the application, and outlines the conditions associated with Safety Net funding. Once complete, print and sign the Certification Form. Once signed, upload the Certification in the Application Files section of the EGMS application.

Submission Process

Submit applications through EGMS Announcement AN-OSPI-2127. The announcement is not currently open. OSPI will announce through EGMS and a GovDelivery message when the announcement becomes available.

Requests for Review and Reconsideration

After the conditional award meeting in June, an LEA may request a review and reconsideration of the conditional award decision. The LEA must submit the request in writing within twenty calendar days of the conditional award letter.

To request reconsideration, upload to the Application Files section of the EGMS application:

- A letter explaining the reason for the request.
- The reconsideration request form.
- Any supporting documentation.

After uploading all required documents, complete this notification form.

See WAC 392-140-656 for more information on the requirements for submitting a request for review and reconsideration.

CONDITIONS ASSOCIATED WITH FUNDING FOR SAFETY NET

Safety Net funding is not an entitlement. Safety Net funding is an annual grant application. Receiving Safety Net funding in one year does not guarantee funding in future years.

The following conditions apply:

- Eligibility is based on legitimate actual special education expenditures and available revenues included on Worksheet A. Worksheet A establishes the maximum amount eligible for consideration but does not guarantee funding.
- Awards may be less than the amount of capacity identified on Worksheet A and cannot exceed that amount.
- Funding is only available for direct special education and related services that are documented and quantified in the student's IEP.
- Funding is only available for resident students, as defined by state law.
- Funding is only available for the excess cost of educating students with disabilities with an IEP, as required by RCW 28A.150.392, 34 CFR § 300.16, and WAC 392-172A-01075.

FINAL APPLICATION DETERMINATIONS

The Legislature requires OSPI to make funding decisions in August. OSPI distributes state Safety Net awards through August apportionment and provides federal Safety Net awards through EGMS.

ADJUSTMENTS, RECOVERY, AND AUDITS

All Safety Net funding is subject to adjustment and recovery pursuant to WAC 392-140-630, 392-140-675, and 392-140-685. OSPI may review and verify data submitted in Safety Net applications, including certifications made by LEAs. Reviews may consider whether IEPs are properly formulated, verify student enrollment data, available revenue, and legitimate actual expenditures.

At the end of each school year, state special education revenue (Account 4121) that is not spent in the state special education program (Program 21) may be recovered by OSPI through the School Apportionment and Financial Service Office.

The State Auditor's Office (SAO) may audit LEAs that receive Safety Net funding at the request of OSPI or the State Oversight Committee. Audit findings may affect an LEA's eligibility for Safety Net funding and may result in adjustments or recovery or awarded funds.

SURVEY

Per RCW 28.150.392, OSPI must annually survey LEAs about their satisfaction with the Safety Net process. OSPI uses the survey to consider feedback from LEAs to improve the Safety Net process. The 2025–26 Safety Net Survey Legislative Report will be available in December 2026. OSPI will post the report to the Reports to the Legislature webpage once it is available.

2026–27 MEMBERS OF THE SPECIAL EDUCATION STATE OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE

Committee Member	Position and LEA
Tania May, Manager	Assistant Superintendent, Special Education, OSPI
Jennifer Acuña	Director of Special Services, ESD 114
Sue Ann Bube	Special Education Consultant, Dynamic Education Solutions
Lori Buijten	Director of Special Education, North Kitsap School District
Franklin Day	Director of Student Support Services, Cheney School District
Dana Floyd	Executive Director of Special Services, ESD 105
Cody Gardiner	Director of Special Services, Sunnyside School District
Dylan Hance	Business Manager, Central Valley School District
Gavin Hottman	Chief Financial Officer, ESD 112
Darcy Johnson	Associate Director of Student Success and Learning, ESD 171
Ivy Kardes	Director of Special Education, Shelton School District
Erika Kmieciak	Assistant State Auditor, State Auditor's Office (Non-voting)
Daniel Pham	Budget Manager, Clover Park School District
Andrea Staton	Assistant Principal, Mead School District
Alternate Jeffrey Niess	Executive Director of Specialized Services, ESD 112

INFORMATION AND ASSISTANCE

For questions regarding this bulletin, please contact Amber O'Donnell, Special Education Data Operations Assistant Director, at 360-725-6075 or email safety.net@k12.wa.us. The OSPI Telecommunication Relay Services number is 711 or 1-800-833-6384.

This bulletin is also available on the Bulletins page of the OSPI website.

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Chief Education Officer

Tania May, Ed.D.
Assistant Superintendent
Special Education

Amber O'Donnell
Assistant Director of Data Operations
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