



Budget Briefs from the Legislative Reference Bureau

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YOUTH OPTIONS PROGRAM AT TECHNICAL COLLEGES

I. INTRODUCTION

The biennial state budget act (1997 Wisconsin Act 27), passed by the legislature and signed by Governor Tommy Thompson on October 11, 1997, renamed the Postsecondary Enrollment Options (PSEO) Program the "Youth Options Program" and established separate criteria for high school students attending Wisconsin's technical colleges, beginning with the Fall 1998 semester.

II. ELIGIBILITY, APPLICATION AND APPEAL PROCESS

Act 27 modified the previous PSEO program, which was created in 1991 to allow students to enroll in public and private institutions of higher education with credit applied to high school graduation requirements or postsecondary programs. Under the Youth Options Program, provisions for classes at the UW System and private, nonprofit colleges in Wisconsin remain the same, except that tribal colleges were added to the program. However, the technical college enrollment procedures changed. As amended, the law provides that a public school pupil, upon the pupil's request and with the written approval of the pupil's parent or guardian, may attend a technical college and take one or more courses if the technical college ensures the courses meet high school graduation requirements. To be eligible, the pupil must have completed tenth grade, be in good academic standing and not be a "child at risk" as defined by state law. The technical college can refuse to admit an otherwise qualified applicant only because of disciplinary problems.

A pupil who wishes to participate in the Youth Options Program must notify the local school board by March 1 preceding the fall semester and by October 1 for the spring semester. At least 30 days prior to the semester, the local school board must provide written notice to the student if the proposed course does not meet high school graduation requirements or if it is comparable to a course offered by the school district. If a student disagrees with the school board's decision, the matter may be appealed to the State Superintendent of Public Instruction within 30 days of the decision. Because the technical college may receive higher tuition payments for serving students with exceptional educational needs (EEN), the school board may refuse to permit an EEN student to participate in the Youth Options Program if the cost would be an undue financial burden to the district.

III. PAYMENT OF TUITION AND FEES AND STATE AID

The amount of tuition the school board must pay to the technical college depends on the number of credits. If the pupil is enrolled for less than seven credits that are eligible for high school credit, the district pays an amount equal to the student's cost for tuition, course fees and books. If the pupil enrolls at the technical college for seven or more credits that are eligible for high school credit, the district must pay an amount equal to 50% of the school district's average per pupil cost for regular instruction and instructional support services for the previous school year. The amount is prorated if the number of credits is more than 6 but less than 15. It may also be reduced if the courses the student takes at the technical college are comparable to courses the high school offers. A pupil attending a technical college under the Youth Options Program would be included in the school district's membership for state aid purposes.

IV. TRANSPORTATION

A school board is not responsible for transporting a pupil to and from the technical college. Act 27 does, however, provide that parents who are unable to pay transportation costs, especially low-income families, may apply to the State Superintendent of Public Instruction for assistance. (Total aid allocated for transportation under both the Youth Options Program and interdistrict Open Enrollment Program is limited to \$20,000 per year statewide.)

V. ANNUAL REPORTING

The Technical College System Board must submit annual reports to the Department of Administration, the Department of Public Instruction, the Department of Workforce Development and the legislature regarding participation in the Youth Options Program, including detailed information about students who participated in the program and then enrolled in a technical college within one year of high school graduation.

VI. FOR MORE INFORMATION

For copies of Sections 38.04 (21), 118.33 (3m), 118.33 (4) and 118.55, Wisconsin Statutes, relating to technical college participation in the Youth Options Program, contact the Legislative Reference Bureau at (608) 266-0342. For more detailed information on the program, contact the Technical College System Board, Division of Finance, Planning and Policy, at (608) 266-7983.