

AGENCY OF EDUCATION

Barre, Vermont

TEAM: School Finance

ITEM: Will the State Board of Education grant renewal of general independent school approval to serve students under the custody of the Commissioner of the Department of Corrections and initial approval in special education to serve students in the disability categories of autism spectrum disorders, deaf/blindness, hearing loss, emotional disturbance, intellectual disability, multiple disabilities, orthopedic impairment, other health impairment, specific learning disability, speech or language impairment, traumatic brain injury and visual impairment, to **Community High School of Vermont**, Waterbury, VT, based upon the review by the Agency of Education and notification of continued New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) accreditation?

SECRETARY'S RECOMMENDED ACTION:

That the State Board of Education grants renewal of general independent school approval to serve students under the custody of the Commissioner of the Department of Corrections and initial approval in special education to serve students in the disability categories of autism spectrum disorders, deaf/blindness, hearing loss, emotional disturbance, intellectual disability, multiple disabilities, orthopedic impairment, other health impairment, specific learning disability, speech or language impairment, traumatic brain injury and visual impairment, to **Community High School of Vermont**, Waterbury, VT, based upon the review by the Agency of Education and notification of continued New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) accreditation. This approval is for five years through June 30, 2023.

The school must within five days report to the Agency of Education whenever any changes occur in enrollment, programs, policies, facilities, financial capacity, staffing, or administration, during the approval period.

STATUTORY AUTHORITY: Title 16 V.S.A. §166(b)
State Board Rule 2228 et.seq.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

1. Community High School of Vermont's (CHSVT) mission is to assist "...adult students by maintaining campuses throughout the state to develop personalized learning plans and provide coordinated learning opportunities that address educational and criminogenic needs to strengthen skills in living, learning, and working.

2. CHSVT was legislatively enacted by the State of Vermont in 1988 with Senate Bill S.274 as an independent high school. The mandated population includes youth who are under the custody of the Commissioner of Corrections and who are under 23 years of age. As signed by the Governor of Vermont on June 8, 2016, House bill H.875 (Act 172) expanded CHSVT's potential enrollees to include:

All persons under the custody of the Commissioner who are under the age of 23 and have not received a high school diploma, or are assessed to have a moderate-to-high criminogenic need and are within 24 months of reentry shall participate in an education program (Vermont General Assembly, 2016).

3. CHSVT is unique in that it prepares students with criminogenic needs to return to their communities from facility and community campuses throughout the State of Vermont. The school serves students, of any age, who are seeking a high school education or preparing to enter the workforce. High school diplomas and workforce readiness certificates form the core of the Living, Learning and Working portfolio that serves as the culmination of the students' studies.
4. CHSVT operates in building spaces, which are owned or leased by the State of Vermont. These properties fall under the authority of the State of Vermont Building and General Services Department (BGS). This department is solely responsible for assuring that facilities meet all application state and federal guidelines as applied to public buildings. A CHSVT campus is defined as the individual room(s) used by education and maintained by BGS. Campuses are located within six correctional facilities throughout the state and in eight of the probation and parole offices aka community-based sites.
5. CHSVT is accredited by the New England Association of Schools & Colleges (NEASC), which is an accrediting body recognized by the State Board of Education pursuant to SBE rule #7320. Other than routine annual reports, the next major responsibility regarding accreditation will be the Five-Year Report due in 2022.
6. Prior to 2018, the provision of services to students with disabilities under the custody of the Commissioner of Corrections and enrolled in the CHSVT in all of its locations was fulfilled via a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Vermont Department of Education and Vermont Department of Corrections.
7. At the time of the special education review there was only one student being evaluated for special education and no students currently with IEPS. The team confirmed that CHSVT has the policies, procedures, and staff training to support students in all disability categories applied for. See attached report.

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS: none

STAFF AVAILABLE:

Cassandra Ryan, Fiscal and Regulatory Compliance Coordinator