

To the District and ESC Testing Coordinator Addressed:

The purpose of this email is to notify school districts and education service centers of the following important changes for the 2018 State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR®) administrations. Please communicate these changes to relevant testing personnel.

Medical Exemptions for STAAR

With the implementation of the new accountability system in 2018, the Texas Education Agency (TEA) will more closely monitor participation rates for campuses, districts, and charter schools. To ensure that students who have experienced a significant medical event do not impact participation rates, a new process has been developed for a medical exemption from STAAR.

Eligibility Criteria

To be considered to receive a medical exemption from STAAR, the student must be absent during the testing and makeup window and all efforts to assess the student have been unsuccessful. Medical exemption requests will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis for students who meet one of the specific medical conditions listed below. The information used to make the medical exemption determination must reflect the student's situation throughout the testing and makeup window.

- The student is unable to receive sufficient or consistent homebound services due to medical issues. (This means that the student is currently receiving homebound services; however, the homebound teacher is unable to provide services for the majority of the documented time due to the medical issues.)
- The student is unable to respond to test questions due to a terminal or degenerative illness. (This means that the student's diagnosis is actively/currently affecting his or her daily activities such that no available accommodations can reasonably mitigate these factors.)
- The student is receiving extensive short-term medical treatment due to a medical emergency or severe injury (e.g., coma, major head trauma, organ failure). Note: appendectomy, tonsillectomy, or broken arms/legs do not constitute a severe medical issue.
- The student is unable to interact with peers or educators without the risk of infection or contamination to himself or herself or others (e.g., measles, respiratory illness, malaria). Note: colds and flu do not constitute a significant medical emergency.

Identification Process

The information used to make the medical exemption determination must reflect the student's situation throughout the testing and makeup window. For a student who meets one of the eligibility criteria listed above, the district or charter school must review, verify, and maintain a copy of the medical documentation (e.g., licensed physician's note). To request a medical exemption, the district testing coordinator (DTC) must complete a Medical Exemption Request form for each student who qualifies. The form can be found at: <http://txetests.com/medexemption>. Forms must be submitted by the Friday of the week following the test administration. Once the form is submitted, it will be reviewed by the Student Assessment Division for approval to ensure that criteria have been met. The form must be submitted for each STAAR administration.

If a student meets one of the eligibility criteria listed above, the student's answer document should be marked "A" for Absent. The Student Assessment Division will provide a file of all approved medical exemptions to Performance Reporting for exclusion from participation rate calculations.

Transcribing Student Responses for STAAR

Student responses recorded in a STAAR test booklet may be transcribed onto a blank answer document. Please note that this change is a departure from previous years, as well as information in current test administration materials.

Test administrators must actively monitor the testing room while students are working. All test administrators are required to verify that students have marked their responses on their answer documents by the end of the testing session. Before a student leaves the room, the test administrator should scan the completed answer document to be sure the student has recorded answers as instructed.

In cases where the testing time has ended, and a test administrator discovers that a student has not recorded his or her responses on the answer document, DTCs may grant permission to trained district or charter school personnel to view the test booklet. If the student marked his or her responses in the test booklet, the trained personnel may transcribe the answers from the test booklet onto the student's answer document.

Districts and charter schools must follow general transcribing procedures.

- Transcription must be done by a trained test administrator who has signed the Oath of Test Security and Confidentiality for Test Administrator document, including the bottom section of the oath for test administrators who are authorized to view secure state assessments.
- The scribe should be a certified employee of the district or charter school. Any person completing transcription must be an adult non-relative of the student.
- The scribe should record student responses verbatim on the answer document. The scribe may not edit or alter student responses in any way. Responding to test questions, making notes about test questions, and discussing the content of the test at any time are prohibited and would constitute a severe breach of security.
- The transcription should be verified by a second trained test administrator to ensure that no errors occurred. It is recommended that two adults be present at the time of transcription.
- Districts and charter schools are required to submit a testing irregularity report to document the monitoring error which resulted in the transcription.

These two changes are available in separate documents posted on the Student Assessment Division homepage under "What's New" at <https://tea.texas.gov/student.assessment/>. If you have questions regarding these changes, or if you need further assistance, please call TEA's Student Assessment Division at (512) 463-9536.

Texas Education Agency
Student Assessment Division
512-463-9536