Handbook for Referring Districts and Agencies



Alternative Education Programs

Sonoma County Office of Education

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Link to SCOE Website - Alternative Education

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About Alternative Education Programs

"The mission of Alternative Education Programs is to provide alternative pathways that connect each student to opportunities for learning and living."

Sonoma County Office of Education (SCOE) Alternative Education Programs provides education for students in grades 7-12 who are seriously at risk of school and/or societal failure. The two programs are Court School and Community School, which includes Independent Study and a Teen Parent Program. These programs provide instruction for students who are detained or referred, who self-select, or who may benefit from a program based on alternative instructional strategies. The programs are more fully described below.

Court School provides educational services to children and youth who are wards of the court including incarcerated youth and minors under the protection of the court because of parental neglect or abuse. Court School has classrooms located within the Juvenile Justice Center to serve girls and boys, ages 12 to 19, who have been arrested and booked on criminal charges and who are awaiting disposition by the court.

Community School provides an alternative learning environment for students in grades 7 through 12 who are experiencing difficulties in a traditional school setting or who are exhibiting negative behavior patterns in school or in the community. The program serves students who have been expelled from school, identified as habitually truant, placed on probation by the court, or otherwise referred by a school district, probation, or social service agency. Community School classrooms are located in Santa Rosa and Petaluma. The emphasis of the program is to reestablish the educational direction of students and to transition them to a regular school setting or other learning environment that meets their needs within 6-12 months. Counseling and other support services are provided through a combination of on-site staff, community-based organizations and partner agencies.

Independent Study is another option available to qualifying students who have specific educational needs, work interests, personal issues and/or family obligations that preclude success in a daily classroom setting. The Independent Study Learning Lab is located on the Amarosa Academy campus.

The Teen Parent Program provides education and support services assisting pregnant and parenting students to continue their education. Support services include preparation for childbirth and parenting, career development, and bilingual child care as well as referrals for other services.

Counseling Services are offered based on the belief that when a student has support with the social issues in his or her life, she or he is better able to succeed academically. The Alternative Education Program offers counseling to students at the Community School sites. This school-based service is free to students and designed to focus on issues that may be interfering

with a student's success in school. All counseling services are confidential except as mandated by California state law.

Students will be offered individual, group and educational counseling opportunities which can include anger management, conflict mediation skills, life skills and diversity training, and drug/ alcohol/tobacco education. All students participate in counseling but priority in terms of amount of counseling provided will be given to students who: 1) have counseling as a condition of their return to district rehabilitation plan; 2) are in crisis; or 3) have behavioral issues that interfere with their success at school, home and in the community. The goal is to make high quality, low cost mental health counseling available to students at their school site.

Administrative Staff

School Office General Information	(707) 524-2876	
Directors of Alternative Education		
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Support Staff

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Students Under Juvenile Court Jurisdiction

Many of the students who are referred to Community School are under the jurisdiction of Juvenile Court as specified in the following sections of the Welfare and Institutions Code.

Section 601

Any person under the age of 18 who persistently or habitually refuses to obey the reasonable and proper orders or directions of her/his parent, guardian or custodian, or who is beyond the control of such person, is classified under Section 601 of the Welfare and Institutions Code. A student who is classified as 601 is a status offender and may demonstrate behaviors such as running away or school truancy which would not be considered violations if the minor were over 18 years of age. Juvenile Court in Sonoma County does not currently declare 601 offenders wards of the court and police agencies do not arrest minors for status offenses. ***However, if students persist in "incorrigible" behaviors at school and schools can document a history of failed interventions, a student may be referred to Community School and receive a 601*** **Certification following an Individual Review by Juvenile Probation.**

Section 602

Section 602 refers to any person who is under the age of 18 years when he or she violates any law of this state or nation or any ordinance of any city or county of this state, which is within the jurisdiction of the Juvenile Court. Juvenile Court may adjudge a 602 minor to be a ward of the court. The Court may order the minor to be supervised for six months by Probation, declare the minor a ward of the court and place the minor under the supervision of a Probation Officer in her/his own home, or remove the minor from parent/guardian custody and order out-of-home placement in a relative's home, foster home, group home or institution. In Sonoma County, the Juvenile Court reviews the cases of all wards of the court every six months.

Section 654

In lieu of filing a petition to declare a minor a ward of the court under Section 601 or 602 and with the consent of the minor and his/her parents, a minor can be placed on Informal Probation for a period of time not to exceed six months and attempt thereby to adjust the situation which brought the minor to the attention of a Probation Officer. Failure to fulfill informal probation contracts can result in a petition being filed and formal jurisdiction.

Eligibility Criteria

Education Code 1981 states that the County Board of Education may enroll in Community School any of the following:

1. Students who have been expelled from school while attending traditional classes, opportunity classes, or alternative classes.

2. Students who have been referred to the COE Community School by a school district as a result of the recommendation of a School Attendance Review Board (with 601 Certification).

3. Students who are Probation referred pursuant to Sections 601, 602, or 654 of the Welfare and Institutions Code. (If a student is referred by Probation, the school district must be notified by the referring party and receive documentation that this referral has occurred.)

4. Students who have been referred for voluntary placement, with parental consent, by a school district.

Scope of Instruction

Education Code 1983 includes the following definition of the scope of instruction:

1. Students enrolled in the COE Community School shall be assigned to sites/classes or programs deemed most appropriate for reinforcing or reestablishing educational development.

2. Such classes or programs may include, but need not be limited to, basic educational skill development, on-the-job training, tutorial assistance, independent study requirements, and individual guidance activities.

3. An individually planned educational program based upon an educational assessment shall be prescribed for each student.

4. The course of study of a COE operated Community School shall be adopted by the County Board of Education and shall enable each student to continue academic work leading to the completion of a regular high school program.

5. The Community School program implements a holistic approach to educating students that includes rigorous instruction, academic intervention, access to mental health services, and social-emotional development.

The SCOE Alternative Education Program is accredited by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) and has established the following Learner Outcomes, aligned with the Sonoma County Portrait of a Graduate.



Referral Information

It is anticipated that districts will first attempt to serve students through their own programs. Documentation of interventions, reasons for the referral, and information about how 504 and English Language Learners (ELL) issues, if applicable, have been addressed must be provided by the district.

Community School serves students with a wide range of needs - appropriate services will be provided to those students who meet Education Code 1981 eligibility requirements. If a student has an active Individualized Education Plan (IEP), and the referring party believes Community School may be an appropriate educational option, the district must send the student's current IEP and Psychological evaluation report for review. After review of the IEP, and other documentation, it is determined that Community School can meet the student's special needs, the IEP team at the district of origin must convene a transition IEP meeting, which must include the responsible Special Education Teacher from SCOE Alternative Education. Placement of a special education student will not be considered until this process has been completed and the referring district will be responsible for any special education costs.

Referral does not guarantee acceptance into the program. Upon receipt of the completed referral form, records will be assessed for completeness and accuracy. The student's academic strengths and challenges, as well as behavior history and intervention attempts, will be reviewed and a determination will be made as to whether Community School can accommodate the student's needs.

Referral Procedures

1. School districts or agencies that need referral forms or have questions should contact the Alternative Education Office at 524-2876. Referrals are made only through the Alternative Education Office, ***not through individual Community School sites or instructors*.**

2. Completed referral forms, including required documentation, should be sent to the Alternative Education Office. A referral becomes activated only upon receipt of the referral packet ***with all required documentation***.

3. Referrals from districts require the following information to accompany referral form:

Expelled Student

District completes referral including all supporting documents as indicated on referral form:

- Petition for expulsion and hearing findings
- Academic transcripts
- Current Grade Report
- Standardized test (CAASPP) results
- Immunization record
- Vision and hearing screening
- District statement of Education Code violation
- Copy of Rehabilitation Plan describing academic and behavior goals the student must meet in order to be considered for readmission to district school
- ELPAC Scores if student is an English Language Learner
- Copy of current IEP, if applicable, along with psychological, psycho-educational, speech and language assessments, past and present
- Documentation of all efforts made to solve problems within the school, including how 504 issues have been addressed.
- Completed and signed 601 Certification form (send to Juvenile Probation for review and signature) See Forms. 601 Certification is required before a student can be accepted into the Alternative Education Program

SARB Referred Student

Please Note: ***Where truancy is the only issue and there is no record of disruptive behavior at school, a referral to Community School may not be appropriate***. However, if students persist in "incorrigible" behaviors at school *and* schools can document a history of failed interventions, a student may be referred to Community School through the SARB process and receive a 601 Certification following an Individual Review by Juvenile Probation. ***601 Certification is required before a student can be accepted into the Alternative Education Program.***

District completes referral including all supporting documents as indicated on referral form:

- Copy of district SARB contract (where applicable) containing: (a) identification of truancy or other "incorrigible" behaviors at school, specifying dates and incidents, documentation of history of failed interventions and (b) a list of meetings and efforts made by local school district to resolve the problems with the student and parent/guardian
- Academic transcripts
- Current Grade Report
- Standardized test (CAASPP) results
- Immunization record
- Vision and hearing screening
- Copy of Rehabilitation Plan describing academic and behavior goals the student must meet in order to be considered for readmission to district school
- ELPAC Scores if student is an English Language Learner
- Copy of current IEP, if applicable, along with psychological, psycho-educational, speech and language assessments, past and present
- Documentation of all efforts made to address issues within the school, including how 504 issues have been addressed
- Completed and signed 601 Certification form (send to Juvenile Probation for review and signature) **See Forms.** ***601 Certification is required before a student can be accepted into the Alternative Education Program***

Voluntary District Referred Student

District completes referral including all supporting documents as indicated on referral form:

- Parent Consent to Voluntary Placement
- District Plan describing academic and behavior goals the student must meet in order to be considered for readmission to district school
- Academic transcripts
- Current Grade Report
- Standardized test (CAASPP) results
- Immunization record
- Vision and hearing screening
- ELPAC Scores if student is an English Language Learner
- Copy of current IEP, if applicable, along with psychological, psycho-educational, speech and language assessments, past and present
- Documentation of all efforts made to address issues within the school, including how 504 issues have been addressed.

Teen Parent

The Teen Parent Program provides education and support services assisting expectant and parenting students to resume or continue their education. Support services include preparation for childbirth and parenting, transportation, vocational and career development, and bilingual child care as well as referrals for other services. The Teen Parent program is located in Santa Rosa at Amarosa Academy.

See Forms for the Teen Parent Program Referral and Teen Parent Program Child Care Referral forms and the additional information about documentation required. Please contact the Alternative Education Office at 524-2876 to obtain copies.

SCOE Community School Referral Process for Students with Special Education Needs

Referred students with active Individual Education Plans who are accepted into the program will continue to receive differentiated instruction through SCOE's Alternative Education Resource Specialist Program. The services are designed to monitor identified needs of students with IEPs and to meet compliance requirements of IDEA legislation. ***The district and the County Office shall be jointly responsible to ensure that requirements for services, assessment, timelines and due process are met as established in both federal and state law and Sonoma County SELPA guidelines.*** Typically, the SCOE Alternative Education Program can meet the needs of students receiving no more than two to three periods/hours a day in a Resource Specialist Program. The referring district is responsible for special education costs.

The Community School Referral specifies the documentation required when referring a student with an active IEP. ***Special education referrals also require the signature of the district's Special Education Director.*** In addition to the Community School Referral form, the following show the process for referring a student with an active IEP.

Alternative Education Office

- Notifies the referring district of any missing documentation. (This may delay review of referral)
- Notifies Special Education staff of newly referred students with current IEPs
- Assembles file with IEP documents
- Forwards file to Special Education staff for review
- After review by the Special Education Team, the referring district is notified of acceptance or denial. If accepted, an enrollment meeting is scheduled **following** the transition IEP schedule by the referring district (see below).

Community School Special Education Staff

- Reviews referral file for appropriateness of fit in Community School
- Makes recommendation to the Department Director for acceptance or denial
- If student is found appropriate, assign RSP teacher according to placement site
- For out-of-SELPA students, verifies IEP date within 30 days of administrative placemen

Referring District

- Schedules transition meeting with Alternative Education staff, and sends out meeting notices to all parties involved
- Discusses goals, objectives, placement issues and support needs
- Provide parents of IEP, Parent Rights, and Alternative Dispute Resolution
- Special Education Cost

Following Transition Meeting

- Alternative Education RSP teacher/case manager notifies the Alternative Education office that the transition meeting has been completed.
- Referring district is notified when the student has completed the enrollment process.

Exit Process: Students with IEPs who are ready to return to their districts must have an exit IEP with both Community School and district-of-residence personnel present

- Alternative Education team determines when a student has satisfied the district's Rehabilitation Plan and is ready to be recommended to return to their home school/district
- The district of residence is alerted to the possibility of student return.
- Copies of the names of eligible students for return to the district MUST be given to the Special Education Case Manager/RS Teacher within 30 days of the intended return date.
- If readmitted, the returning student Transition IEP meeting is scheduled by the Alternative Education staff to include all necessary people and district of residence staff.
- Student is exited from Alternative Education at the IEP back to the District of Residence

Independent Study

The Independent Study Option is an instructional strategy available to mature students who have specific educational needs, work interests, personal issues and/or family obligations that preclude success in a daily classroom setting. Once a student is enrolled in the Alternative Education Program, he or she may apply for this option with the recommendation of his or her classroom teacher and administrative approval.

601 Individualized Review and Certification

In addition to sending the Referral and all required documentation to Sonoma County Office of Education Alternative Education Programs, referring districts and agencies should simultaneously send a signed Individualized Review and Certification form to:

Chris Avilla, Legal Staff Supervisor
Sonoma County Juvenile Probation Services 7425
Rancho Los Guilicos Road, Dept. B
Santa Rosa, CA 95409-6518

Phone: (707) 565-6246
FAX: (707) 565-8639 or Chris.Avilla@sonoma-county.org

Processing the Referral

1. The referral form is received, dated, stamped, and checked for completeness by the Alternative Education Office. District staff will be notified of incomplete referral packets – ***missing documentation must be received before the referral can be processed***.

2. Upon receipt of a completed referral packet and after attending an enrollment meeting, students are assigned to a Community School site and classroom on a space available basis.

3. Attendance by student and parent/guardian is mandatory to complete enrollment. The Probation Officer may also be invited to attend, if applicable. At the enrollment meeting, the student and parent/guardian are apprised of school rules, receive information about the Community School academic program, support services and complete required paperwork.

4. If the student does not attend a scheduled enrollment meeting, Alternative Education will contact the referring party for additional contact information. If the student fails to appear after three notices of registration meetings the district will be notified so that truancy notices can be generated.

5. An Individual Learning Plan (ILP) will be established for each student within 30 days of enrollment. This plan is based on assessments in language arts and math, age-appropriate course completion requirements, Return to District Criteria if applicable, and student's educational goals and Transition/Rehabilitation plan. The ILP will be reviewed with the student and parent once each semester.

6. If within the first 30 days of enrollment, it becomes clear that Community School is an inappropriate placement for the student, the district of residence will be contacted. The Alternative Education school psychologist and resource specialist will be available to meet with district representatives to make recommendations for further evaluation and more appropriate placement of students with an IEP.

Transition Plan

California AB 1230: Expulsion Rehabilitation Plan Reform (2025) | National Center for Youth Law

AB 1230 strengthens expulsion rehabilitation plans by:

1. Requiring plans to be developed by a team of educators, tailored to the student's needs, and focused on addressing the behavior that led to expulsion.

2. Requiring school districts to help students access the resources needed to complete their plans, ensure financial or transportation barriers do not prevent readmission, and limit the extension of an expulsion term to one additional semester.

3. Requiring school districts and county superintendents to provide services authorized in individualized education plans, establish a clear readmission process, and outline transition support for expelled students.

4. Requiring school districts to use expulsion data to inform their triennial plans.

Prior to the end of each semester, Alternative Education staff will be in communication with district staff to discuss students who may be eligible for district readmission and to discuss the process for a successful transition for students who are readmitted.

Exit Procedures

Students enrolled in the Community School Program may be exited in several ways, including:

- Completion of high school graduation requirements
- Passing the **GED or HISET**
- Return to district of residence due to successful completion of Rehabilitation Plan requirements
- Return to district of residence due to inappropriateness of placement
- Referral to an adult education program or other educational option
- Termination from the program at age 18

Forms

- Community School Referral
- Community School Voluntary Referral Form
- Teen Parent Program Referral
- Teen Parent Program Child Care Registration
- Individualized Review and Certification

Community School Graduation Requirements

A summary of the requirements for graduation from the Community School program is provided below:

	Years	*Semester Credits*
Language Arts	3	30
Mathematics: Algebra/Integrated Math 1	1	10
One additional year of mathematics	1	10
Science: Life Science	1	10
Physical Science	1	10
Social Science: World History, Culture & Geography	1	10
United States History & Geography	1	10
American Government, including Civics	.5	5
American Economics	.5	5
Fine Arts, or CTE or Language Other than English	1	10
Physical Education	2	20
Electives	60	
Total Semester Credits Required for Graduation		***190***

Earning Credits

- Students can earn up to 2.5 credits per quarter in each academic course.
- Credit Recovery is available for students who need to earn more credits and are willing to work somewhat independently.

Grading Policy

- Grade and credit reports are issued to students every quarter. All grades and credits earned by students become a part of their school record and are transferable to any public school.
- Grades are based upon the satisfactory completion of assignments in school, passing any required tests and completing.
- An incomplete grade (INC) in a subject means that required course work has not been completed and that if a passing letter grade is to be received, the necessary work must be completed in the next report card period of the school year in which the work was assigned. Failure to complete the required work will result in the “incomplete” grade being converted to an “F” with no credit.