*****Massachusetts Department of***

***Elementary and Secondary Education***

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| Jeffrey C. Riley*Commissioner* |  |

# MEMORANDUM

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| **To:** | Commonwealth Charter School Leaders, District Data Coordinators, and Student Recruitment and Admission Coordinators |
| **From:**  | Alison Bagg, Director of the Office of Charter Schools and School Redesign |
| **Date:**  | September 30, 2021 |
| **Subject:** | New Sibling Data Elements in Student Information Systems for 2021-22 Reporting  |

Beginning in the 2021-22 school year, you will see two new data elements within your student information system (SIS) to collect sibling information[[1]](#footnote-1) from Commonwealth charter schools. The two new data elements will limit the time and effort spent by schools on sibling reporting to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (Department) compared to previous collections. Horace Mann charter schools are exempt from the collection of sibling information.

**Purpose of Department’s Collection of Sibling Information**

All charter schools are required to maintain accurate records regarding student enrollment information, including residency and sibling preference.[[2]](#footnote-2) As more districts reach relevant net school spending (NSS) caps, Commonwealth charter schools face the possibility of proration of charter school tuition. Due to the mandatory language of the charter school statute, the Department has no discretion in determining the NSS cap and must ensure that district payments to charter schools do not exceed the relevant caps. Full charter school tuition cannot be guaranteed from districts projected to be at or near NSS caps. If not already in place, the Department urges Commonwealth charter schools to develop robust systems for carefully tracking student enrollment information during the admissions and enrollment process, especially for students from districts at or near their NSS caps and for students enrolled through sibling preference.

The Commonwealth pays full tuition for siblings when the enrollment of a sibling causes a district to exceed the NSS cap.[[3]](#footnote-3) The Commonwealth continues paying full tuition for such a sibling until the continued attendance of the sibling no longer causes the district to exceed its NSS cap. If tuition payments from a district to Commonwealth charter schools do not exceed its NSS cap in any year, the district will resume payments for siblings.

The two new SIS elements will be used to identify:

(1) individual students who were enrolled through sibling preference, and

(2) the date of the enrollment offer[[4]](#footnote-4) to the individual student enrolled through sibling preference

These two pieces of information allow the Department to determine when appropriated state funds can be used to pay sibling tuition for [sending districts that are above their tuition cap](https://www.doe.mass.edu/charter/enrollment/fy2022/pre-enrollment-guide.html) for charter school enrollment. In future years, accurate record-keeping through a school’s SIS can ensure that when enrollment trends and financial conditions fluctuate, the Department has the information needed to allocate funding as appropriate.

**Commonwealth Charter School Implementation for FY22**

We recognize the ongoing challenges of this school year for all charter school staff. Considering those challenges, we developed tiered expectations for the initial implementation year of these two SIS data elements. This fall, the Department will prioritize the collection of sibling information for students who reside in at cap and near cap districts. Schools will be expected to identify all other siblings by the end of the current school year. Our singular goal is to ensure that we have sibling information that is accurate and complete to ensure our future ability to allocate funding in accordance with the charter school statute and regulations. We appreciate your cooperation now and over the course of this school year.

We will be reaching out to district data coordinators directly to support their success through scheduled office hours and individual technical assistance, as needed.

**Other Considerations for FY22**

In conjunction with these two new SIS data elements, the Department will streamline other parts of the sibling collection process, including the collection of the SASID of the original student who enabled sibling preference and estimates of sibling enrollment at the time of pre-enrollment data collection. We will provide an update in February 2022 on the development of streamlined applications within the Department’s security portal.

**Instructions for Commonwealth Charter Schools Enrolling Students from At Cap and/or Near Cap Districts**

**Deadline:** October 31, 2021

**School Action in SIS to Identify Siblings:**

1. Identify all students who were ever enrolled through sibling preference and currently reside in an at cap or near cap district. See table below for FY22 at cap and near cap districts. Schools should identify students newly enrolled for the 2021-22 school year who were enrolled through sibling preference and previously enrolled students who were enrolled through sibling preference in a previous school year.
2. For each sibling identified, provide the date of enrollment offer. If the date of enrollment offer is not known, leave the field empty. The system will produce an error notification, but you can complete your submission without the date of the enrollment offer.

**Examples:**

* A new kindergartener, who resides in Lynn, was enrolled through sibling preference for the 2021-22 school year. Students who received offers of enrollment were sent an email notification on the day after the lottery took place. The date of the enrollment offer was March 3, 2021.
* A ninth grader, who resides in Malden, was enrolled through sibling preference when they were a fifth grader for the 2017-18 school year. Students who received offers of enrollment received a phone call within 48 hours of the lottery. The date of the enrollment offer was February 23, 2017.

Office hours will be scheduled with all schools enrolling students from at cap or near cap districts during the month of October.

**FY22 At Cap and Near Cap districts** are:

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| **At Cap Districts** | **Near Cap Districts** |
| LynnMaldenMedfordRandolphSalemUp-Island Regional | BostonChesterfield GoshenConwayHadleyHancockLeverett | New Salem WendellOak BluffsPelhamPetershamProvincetownRowe | SavoyShutesburyTisburyWalesWhatelyWilliamsburg |

**Instructions for Commonwealth Charter Schools Enrolling Students from Approaching Cap Districts**

**Deadline:** January 31, 2022

**School Action in SIS to Identify Siblings:**

1. Identify all students who were ever enrolled through sibling preference and currently reside in an approaching cap district. See table below for FY22 approaching cap districts. Schools should identify students newly enrolled for the 2021-22 school year who were enrolled through sibling preference and previously enrolled students who were enrolled through sibling preference in a previous school year.
2. For each sibling identified, provide the date of enrollment offer. If the date of enrollment offer is not known, leave the field empty. The system will produce an error notification, but you can complete your submission without the date of the enrollment offer.

**Examples:**

* A new fifth grader, who resides in Nahant, was enrolled through sibling preference for the 2021-22 school year. Students who received offers of enrollment were sent an email notification the day after the lottery took place. The date of the enrollment offer was March 3, 2021.
* A third grader, who resides in Cambridge, was enrolled through sibling preference when they were a kindergartener for the 2018-19 school year. Students who received offers of enrollment received a phone call within 48 hours of the lottery. The date of the enrollment offer was February 23, 2018.

In December and January webinars will be scheduled with all schools enrolling students from approaching cap districts, if they did not participate in the October sessions.

**FY22 Approaching Cap districts** are:

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| **Approaching Cap Districts** |
| BrookfieldCambridgeClarksburgDeerfieldEasthamEdgartownErving | Farmington RiverFloridaHatfieldHawlemontHollandMarlborough | NahantOrleansPlainvillePlymptonRichmondSandwichSaugus | SomervilleSunderlandTruroWellfleetWesthamptonWorthington |

**Instructions for All Commonwealth Charter Schools**

**Deadline:** June 30, 2022

**School Action in SIS to Identify Siblings:**

1. Identify all remaining students who were ever enrolled through sibling preference at any time. Schools should identify students newly enrolled for the 2021-22 school year who were enrolled through sibling preference and previously enrolled students who were enrolled through sibling preference in a previous school year.
2. For each sibling identified, provide the date of enrollment offer. If the date of enrollment offer is not known, leave the field empty. The system will produce an error notification, but you can complete your submission without the date of the enrollment offer.

**Examples:**

* A new kindergartener, who resides in Worcester, was enrolled through sibling preference for the 2021-22 school year. Students who received offers of enrollment were sent an email notification the day after the lottery took place. The date of the enrollment offer was March 3, 2021.
* A ninth grader, who resides in Hopkinton, was enrolled through sibling preference when they were a seventh grader for the 2019-20 school year. Students who received offers of enrollment received an email with 24 hours of the lottery. The date of the enrollment offer was February 23, 2019.

In March and April, webinars will be scheduled with all remaining schools who did not participate in the earlier sessions.

**School Implementation for FY23 and All Future Fiscal Years**

In future fiscal years, all Commonwealth charter schools must identify newly enrolled students who were enrolled through sibling preference via your SIF-compliant SIS.

If you have any immediate concerns or questions about the collection of this additional student information via SIS, please contact Brenton Stewart.

1. Siblings are children who share a common biological or legal parent. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. For Commonwealth charter schools, the first preference in enrollment is provided to siblings of those students actually attending the charter school at the time of the lottery. If the school has not reached capacity after enrolling all eligible siblings, the second preference in enrollment is provided to Massachusetts residents of the public school districts named in the school’s charter region. If the school still has not reached capacity after enrolling all siblings and residents, the school then may enroll Massachusetts residents from outside of the school’s charter region. For additional information on charter school enrollment, please review the [Charter School Technical Advisory 16-3: Enrollment Processes and FAQ's (mass.edu)](https://www.doe.mass.edu/charter/guidance/2016-3.html). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. The charter school statute specifies that the Commonwealth pays tuition for "siblings attending commonwealth charter schools to the extent that their attendance would otherwise cause the school district's charter school tuition payments to exceed 9 per cent of the school district's net school spending." G.L. c. 71, § 89(i)(2). The charter school regulations further explain that non-siblings should be skipped over but kept on the school’s waitlist if their enrollment would cause the NSS cap to be exceeded and that payment for sibling enrollment from the state is subject to appropriation. 603 CMR 1.05(10)b. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Date of enrollment offer is the date that the student and their family was notified either by email, phone call, text, or mail of the offer of enrollment to the charter school. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)