**Commonwealth of Massachusetts Virtual Schools**

A Commonwealth of Massachusetts Virtual School is a public school

Like a charter school, a virtual school is an autonomous, single-school district that operates independently of any existing school district.

The Board of Elementary and Secondary Education grants a certificate to the board of trustees of a virtual school. The school and its board then becomes a state entity, directly accountable to the Board and the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

Like all public schools, a virtual school cannot discriminate in the enrollment of students on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, gender identity, ethnicity, sexual orientation, mental or physical disability, age, ancestry, athletic performance, special need, English language proficiency, or academic achievement.

**Questions and Answers for Parents/Guardians**

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**What is a Commonwealth of Massachusetts Virtual School (CMVS)? Is it a public school?**

A Commonwealth of Massachusetts Virtual School (CMVS) is a public school operated by a board of trustees where teachers primarily teach from a remote location using the Internet or other computer-based methods and students are not required to be located at the physical premises of the school. Each CMVS determines what grade levels it will serve and what particular programs it will offer. Two virtual schools have been issued certificates to operate in Massachusetts: [Greenfield Commonwealth Virtual School (GCVS)](http://profiles.doe.mass.edu/general/general.aspx?topNavID=1&leftNavId=100&orgcode=39010000&orgtypecode=5) and [TEC Connections Academy Commonwealth Virtual School (TECCA)](http://profiles.doe.mass.edu/general/general.aspx?topNavID=1&leftNavId=100&orgcode=39020000&orgtypecode=5). Both enroll students in kindergarten through twelfth grade.

**Who can attend a CMVS?**

Any student who resides in Massachusetts can apply for admission to a CMVS. If more students apply to a CMVS than there is space available, the school will hold a lottery to determine which students will be admitted. Once admitted to a CMVS, a student is entitled to attend in subsequent years without reapplying. For information about a particular CMVS, or to apply for admission, contact the school directly.

**How can I determine if a CMVS is right for my child?**

[A Parent’s Guide to Choosing the Right Online Program](https://aurora-institute.org/resource/promising-practices-in-online-learning-a-parents-guide-to-choosing-the-right-online-program/) can help you determine whether your child is prepared to thrive in an online program.

**When can I enroll my child in a CMVS?**

Both GCVS and TECCA have enrollment policies that describe how to enroll your child. Each school requires applications and holds a lottery in cases where applicants exceed spots available. Each school limits enrollment at each grade level and has an overall enrollment “cap” established by the state: GCVS may enroll a maximum of 1,050 students and TECCA may enroll a maximum of 2,700 students. Students who apply beyond the enrollment cap for a specific grade or for the school as a whole will be placed on a waitlist until a space becomes available. For more information about how to enroll your child, contact the school directly.

**Can my child take courses at a CMVS without enrolling full time?**

Your child may take individual courses at a CMVS provided that there is an agreement between the CMVS and your local school district to do so.

**What do I need to do if I want to enroll my child in a private virtual school?**

If the private school is based in a city or town in Massachusetts, the [law requires that the school committee of that town approve the school](http://www.doe.mass.edu/lawsregs/advisory/100207privateschool.html). If you wish to enroll your child in a private virtual school that is not based in Massachusetts, state law would treat your child as a [homeschooled student](https://www.doe.mass.edu/finance/schoolchoice/choice-guide.html). In that case, you would need to have your educational plan reviewed and approved by the school district in which you reside.

**Can my child take courses at a private virtual school and have them count towards his or her high school diploma?**

Consult with your child’s public school prior to enrolling your child in a course offered by a private virtual school. In addition to asking whether your child will be able to earn credit(s) toward his or her high school diploma (and how much), also ask whether your child’s grade in the course will be calculated in his or her grade point average (GPA, if your child’s public school calculates GPAs). Always seek written approval from the public school before enrolling your child in courses offered by private virtual schools.

**Does Massachusetts accredit private virtual schools?**

No, Massachusetts does not have a process for accrediting private virtual schools, nor does the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) collect or report data on the quality or performance of private virtual schools.

**Can my child play high school sports for his/her hometown team if they are enrolled in either a CMVS or a private virtual school?**

Most high school sports programs in the state belong to the [Massachusetts Interscholastic Athletic Association (MIAA)](http://www.miaa.net/). For a virtual school student to play for his or her hometown high school team, they must follow a waiver process established by the MIAA: (1) The student should first speak to the principal of the public high school in the community s/he resides to seek agreement from the principal to participate. (2) If the principal is in agreement with the student participating, the principal must request a waiver of MIAA Rule 52 (MIAA White Book of forms, page 14). (3) A letter of agreement must be signed by both the student's virtual school principal and high school principal in the town of residence (MIAA White Book of forms, page 15) and included with the waiver request.

**Will my child be eligible to play sports at a Division I or Division II college or university upon graduation from or taking courses offered a CMVS or a private virtual school?**

The National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA), a private organization, requires all prospective student athletes to complete appropriate course work in order to qualify for NCAA programs. Parents are strongly encouraged to contact the virtual school prior to enrolling their child to determine whether the school's high school courses meet NCAA core-course criteria. For more information, visit the [NCAA Eligibility Center](http://web1.ncaa.org/ECWR2/NCAA_EMS/NCAA.jsp).