**Special Education Circuit Breaker Program**

**Online Claim System Questions and Answers**

(updated March 26, 2025)

[Overview 4](#_Toc193889392)

[1. What is the new, online circuit breaker claim system? 4](#_Toc193889393)

[2. Why is DESE launching a new circuit breaker claim system? 4](#_Toc193889394)

[3. What are some of the key benefits of the new claim system? 4](#_Toc193889395)

[4. Have any regulations changed for the circuit breaker program? 4](#_Toc193889396)

[5. What are three important things districts can do to prepare for FY25 claiming? 4](#_Toc193889397)

[6. Do districts need to notify DESE of their intention to file for Extraordinary Relief? 5](#_Toc193889398)

[7. What is the per-student claim threshold for reimbursement for FY25? 5](#_Toc193889399)

[Claim System Access 5](#_Toc193889400)

[8. Who can log into the new Circuit Breaker Claim system? 5](#_Toc193889401)

[9. How does a new user activate their account and set their password? 6](#_Toc193889402)

[10. Is there a deadline for users to activate their accounts? 6](#_Toc193889403)

[11. What happens if a user misses their account activation email or the link has expired? 6](#_Toc193889404)

[12. Where does a district user need to go to login to the claim system? 7](#_Toc193889405)

[13. Can all district users perform the same functions when logging into the claim system? 7](#_Toc193889406)

[14. What’s the right way to seek help if I cannot log into the system? 7](#_Toc193889407)

[Claim Mechanics and Stages 7](#_Toc193889408)

[15. What does a circuit breaker claim look like now? 7](#_Toc193889409)

[16. What are the “stages” of a claim? 8](#_Toc193889410)

[17. How can a district determine the stage of their claim? 9](#_Toc193889411)

[18. Is there any difference in the functionality at each claim stage? 9](#_Toc193889412)

[19. Does a district need to submit a Relief claim to be progressed to the next claim stage? 9](#_Toc193889413)

[20. Can a district begin their Final year-end claim during the Relief cycle? 9](#_Toc193889414)

[21. Why does the system include claim data for prior fiscal years? 10](#_Toc193889415)

[Creating In-District Summer Programs 10](#_Toc193889416)

[22. Why are districts asked to create in-district summer programs in the new claim system? 10](#_Toc193889417)

[23. Should a district define an in-district summer program when the program begins in June and continues into the next fiscal year? 10](#_Toc193889418)

[24. What is being asked by the “holidays excluded” checkbox? 10](#_Toc193889419)

[Adding Students and Expenses 11](#_Toc193889420)

[25. How are students added to the new system for expense claiming? 11](#_Toc193889421)

[26. Does the district need to add a student to their claim if the same student was claimed in a prior year? 11](#_Toc193889422)

[27. What is a student's SIMS certification status and how is that used in the new claim system? 12](#_Toc193889423)

[28. What are "Special Indicators" and how are they used? 12](#_Toc193889424)

[Approved Program Placements 12](#_Toc193889425)

[29. Why have program codes been updated to 8-digits, rather than 5-digits? 12](#_Toc193889426)

[30. Does the claim system know tuition costs at approved special education programs? 13](#_Toc193889427)

[31. Does the new claim system improve the way tuition price changes are handled? 13](#_Toc193889428)

[32. What is a "Q code" at a private, approved placement? 13](#_Toc193889429)

[Collaborative Placements 13](#_Toc193889430)

[33. What "Annual Rate" is entered for a collaborative program? 14](#_Toc193889431)

[34. Are separate placements required for summer and school year collaborative programs? 14](#_Toc193889432)

[35. How are individual one-to-one services claimed at collaboratives? 14](#_Toc193889433)

[36. How should programs run by the Capital Region Educational Council (CREC) in Connecticut be claimed? 14](#_Toc193889434)

[Claiming Services Requiring Pricing Authorization 14](#_Toc193889435)

[37. What types of services require authorization prior to claiming? 14](#_Toc193889436)

[38. How will the new claim system enforce price authorizations? 15](#_Toc193889437)

[39. Is there a single place districts can look to see all the price authorizations that have been approved for their district? 15](#_Toc193889438)

[40. What is the most common error in claiming placements using authorizations (ISPs or IPAs)? 16](#_Toc193889439)

[41. Can districts create placements for expenses that do not (currently) have authorization? 16](#_Toc193889440)

[42. Do districts still need to email self-authorized IPAs for one-to-one services that cost $20 or less per hour? 16](#_Toc193889441)

[43. Can districts check the status of applications for price authorizations that have not yet been approved? 16](#_Toc193889442)

[Cost Shares 17](#_Toc193889443)

[44. Where are cost shares reflected in the claim system? 17](#_Toc193889444)

[45. Should the cost share amount entered describe what is paid by the district or paid by the other cost-share entity? 17](#_Toc193889445)

[46. How should districts provide information supporting cost shares? 17](#_Toc193889446)

[In-District Placements 17](#_Toc193889447)

[47. What updates have been made to in-district service categories? 17](#_Toc193889448)

[48. What updates have been made to rates used for reimbursement of in-district services? 18](#_Toc193889449)

[49. Do districts still need to convert service hours in each category to days-in-cycle to specify frequency? 18](#_Toc193889450)

[50. Can districts price in-district services to determine if expenses for an individual student meet the reimbursement threshold? 18](#_Toc193889451)

[Reviewing Issue Status and Resolving Problems 19](#_Toc193889452)

[51. Why can districts add expenses to their claim, even if they cannot be submitted? 19](#_Toc193889453)

[52. How do districts identify where claims have issues that need resolution? 19](#_Toc193889454)

[53. What are examples of issues that will need to be resolved prior to claim submission? 19](#_Toc193889455)

[54. What should a district do to submit their claim, even with outstanding issues? 20](#_Toc193889456)

[Certifying and Submitting Claims 20](#_Toc193889457)

[55. What steps need to be taken prior to claim submission? 20](#_Toc193889458)

[56. Who can submit claims on behalf of their district? 20](#_Toc193889459)

[Claim System Training and Support 21](#_Toc193889460)

[57. What claim system training is available? 21](#_Toc193889461)

[58. If I have additional questions, how can I get help from the circuit breaker office? 21](#_Toc193889462)

## Overview

1. What is the new, online circuit breaker claim system?

The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education will roll out a new special education Circuit Breaker claim system in February 2025. This upgrade will provide an online platform for districts to claim expenses for reimbursement through the Circuit Breaker program and will replace use of an Excel-based claim file.

1. Why is DESE launching a new circuit breaker claim system?

The overall goal is to make it easier for public school districts to be reimbursed for high-cost special education expenses.

The new claim system is intended to provide more straightforward data collection and be easier to navigate. It also modernizes real-time information exchange and moves validation checking upfront, allowing districts to confirm claim data prior to submission.

1. What are some of the key benefits of the new claim system?

The new claim system is web-based rather than a Microsoft Excel file, making it easier to access; allows concurrent users, rather than restricting use to one person working on a single file at a time; provides screen flows that request relevant information for each expense category, making it easier to understand what information is required for each type of expense; and tracks each district’s OSD authorizations so they can be associated directly to claims.

1. Have any regulations changed for the circuit breaker program?

No. Expenses qualified for reimbursement, claim cycles, reimbursement schedules, and reimbursement calculations all remain the same. The new claim system only updates the mechanics of submitting claims and does not change any other aspect of the program.

1. What are three important things districts can do to prepare for FY25 claiming?
2. Be sure to establish users for the claim system and make sure these users have activated their accounts. (See the Claim System Access section of this document.)
3. Ensure all students are included in SIMS reporting. Districts participate in three SIMS reporting periods annually (October, March and June), and students need to be certified in SIMS to be included on a circuit breaker claim.
4. Secure all necessary OSD approvals as soon as you know the services will be part of your district's expenses:

* Districts [apply for Individual Student Placements (ISPs)](https://www.doe.mass.edu/prs/sa-nr/) at unapproved programs through DESE PRS and get pricing approval from OSD.
* Districts [apply for Individual Pricing Authorizations (IPAs)](https://www.mass.gov/how-to/request-special-education-individual-pricing) for one-to-one services greater than $20 per hour through OSD.

These OSD approvals need to be in place for associated expenses to be submitted on a circuit breaker claim.

1. Do districts need to notify DESE of their intention to file for Extraordinary Relief?

No. All districts are welcome to begin adding expenses to their FY25 claim in February, when the Extraordinary Relief claim period is opened (Relief In Progress stage). All district claims will be unlocked and available without requiring notification to the DESE circuit breaker office.

Districts that wish to file for Extraordinary Relief should submit their claim by the March 28, 2025 deadline. Districts that do not submit a Relief claim by that deadline will be progressed to the Final In Progress stage automatically at the conclusion of the Relief cycle.

Any claim information entered by the district during the Relief In Progress stage will be maintained on the claim as it is progressed to the next stage. See the Claim Mechanics and Stages section of this document for additional information.

1. What is the per-student claim threshold for reimbursement for FY25?

The claim threshold for FY25 is $52,419, which is a 1.35% increase over FY24. Reimbursement is calculated on a per-student basis when the total cost of services exceeds this eligibility threshold.

## Claim System Access

1. Who can log into the new Circuit Breaker Claim system?

Special Education Directors need to specify the user(s) within their districts that should have access to submit circuit breaker claims in the new online system. DESE will provide login credentials only to the individuals approved by the district to access the claim system.

For districts to approve access, claim system users should be added to the “Circuit Breaker Claim Contact” function in their district’s School Profiles listing with DESE. Special Education Directors should work with their Directory Administrator(s) to assign the appropriate person, or persons, to this function.

Districts are asked to specify no more than three “Circuit Breaker Claim Contact” users. Districts that require more than three users should reach out to their [Circuit Breaker Liaison](https://www.doe.mass.edu/finance/circuitbreaker/liaison.html) to discuss. Special Education Directors and Directory Administrators should work together to maintain accuracy of the Circuit Breaker Claim Contact function, along with all other functions specified in School Profiles, including regular updates as personnel changes.

1. How does a new user activate their account and set their password?

Claim system users will receive an email from “**noreply@salesforce.com On Behalf Of Circuit Breaker / CHAMP2**” with the subject “**Welcome to Circuit Breaker / CHAMP2**”. The email includes a link to the claim system where the user will activate their account and set their password.

The link will expire after 24 hours, so users need to click the link and activate their accounts within 24 hours of receipt. If a user misses this 24 hour window, they should fill out the online [claim system support form](https://app.smartsheet.com/b/form/113a30c5fa284abdbe27f341560d1783) to request assistance.

1. Is there a deadline for users to activate their accounts?

Yes. Users have 24 hours after receiving email notification to activate their accounts. The email includes a link to activate and set a password, and the link expires after 24 hours.

1. What happens if a user misses their account activation email or the link has expired?

If a user does not activate their account within 24 hours of receiving their activation email, they will need to fill out the online [claim system support form](https://app.smartsheet.com/b/form/113a30c5fa284abdbe27f341560d1783) to request assistance.

Within one business day, the user will receive another email to activate their account (this one with the subject, "Your new Circuit Breaker / CHAMP2 password"); and will again have 24 hours to complete that action before the activation link expires.

1. Where does a district user need to go to login to the claim system?

District users can login to the circuit breaker claim system by going to: [**https://dese.my.site.com/portal**](https://dese.my.site.com/portal)

Please make sure to include the **/portal** portion of the full URL to reach the appropriate claim system login portal.

1. Can all district users perform the same functions when logging into the claim system?

No. Only one user per district can certify and submit claims on behalf of their district. By default, this role has been assigned to the person designated the district’s Special Education Director in [DESE School Profiles](https://profiles.doe.mass.edu/). All other functionality (adding students and expenses to claims, reviewing claim data, viewing approved authorizations, etc.) is the same for all users.

1. What’s the right way to seek help if I cannot log into the system?

Users should fill out the online [claim system support form](https://app.smartsheet.com/b/form/113a30c5fa284abdbe27f341560d1783) to request assistance. Please expect a response within one business day.

## Claim Mechanics and Stages

1. What does a circuit breaker claim look like now?

In the online system, each district will have a single circuit breaker claim created per fiscal year, which will be named with the format:

CB FYxx DistrictName ####

where xx specifies the fiscal year, and #### is the district’s four-digit LEA code. For example, the claim for expenses incurred by Abington during fiscal year 2025 will be named:

CB FY25 Abington 0001

Users will see circuit breaker claims for their own district(s) when logging into the system and clicking “Circuit Breaker” in the top menu. Claims for prior years (back to FY22) are available for viewing but are locked and cannot be changed. The only claim that will be open for a district to modify is the current year claim.

In past years, districts received ~~E~~xcel files from the circuit breaker office to complete each claim cycle (relief claims and year-end claims) during a fiscal year. Now, districts will have a single claim per fiscal year, which can be submitted once in March for Relief (optional), then updated and submitted again in July for year-end claims.

1. What are the “stages” of a claim?

Each district will have a single claim per fiscal year. The claim will be progressed through several stages, either by district action or automatically by DESE.

* **Not Started**: Claim is locked and not yet available to districts.
* **Extraordinary Relief In Progress**: Claim is unlocked for districts to modify, primarily in preparation for submitting Relief claims. All placements except for transportation can be created. Districts have an opportunity to move their claim from this stage to the “relief submitted” stage by certifying and submitting their completed Relief claim.
* **Relief Submitted**: Claim is locked and district cannot make changes. During this stage, the circuit breaker office will review all submitted Relief claims and determine Relief reimbursement amounts, which will be paid in May.
* **Final In Progress**: Claim is unlocked for districts to modify. All types of placements can be created. Claims will be progressed to this status automatically by the DESE circuit breaker office at the conclusion of the Relief cycle. Districts have an opportunity to move their claim from this stage to the “final submitted” stage by certifying and submitting their completed year-end claim.
* **Final Submitted**: Claim is locked and district cannot make changes. During this stage, the circuit breaker office will review all submitted claims and determine year-end Final reimbursement amounts, which will be paid quarterly.

If the claim is in an unlocked stage (“Extraordinary Relief In Progress” or “Final In Progress”), districts can make changes. All students and placements added will remain throughout the entire claim period, regardless of whether the district ultimately submits for Relief.

1. How can a district determine the stage of their claim?

The stage is indicated the header section of the main Claim Details page. It is the rightmost item under the label Claim Stage. If you do not see this item in the header, expand the horizontal size of your browser window until it appears.

1. Is there any difference in the functionality at each claim stage?

Yes. Users cannot add transportation placements when a claim is in the “In Progress” stage. The “Extraordinary Relief In Progress” stage is open primarily to support Relief claims, and since transportation expenses are not part of Relief reimbursements this category of placement is unavailable at this stage. Transportation placements can be added to student claims when the claim is in the “Final In Progress” stage.

1. Does a district need to submit a Relief claim to be progressed to the next claim stage?

No. As long as the claim is in an unlocked stage (“Extraordinary Relief In Progress” or “Final In Progress”), districts can add students and placements to their claim.

Districts need only submit claims prior to the deadline for the reimbursement cycle for which the claim should be considered (Relief in late March and/or Final in mid-July).

Districts that choose not to submit for Relief will have their claim automatically progressed to “Final In Progress” at the conclusion of the Relief cycle in preparation for Final claims. Any claim information entered by a district during “Extraordinary Relief In Progress” will be maintained on the claim when it is progressed to the “Final In Progress” stage.

1. Can a district begin their Final year-end claim during the Relief cycle?

Yes. As long as the claim is in an unlocked stage (“Extraordinary Relief In Progress” or “Final In Progress”), districts can make additions, deletes and changes to their claim.

Any claim information entered by a district during “Extraordinary Relief In Progress” will be maintained on the claim when it advances to the “Final In Progress” stage, regardless of whether the district ultimately submits for Relief.

1. Why does the system include claim data for prior fiscal years?

Each district’s historic claim data (FY22, FY23 and FY24) has been loaded into the new system for reference only. These prior year claims are locked and cannot be modified.

## Creating In-District Summer Programs

1. Why are districts asked to create in-district summer programs in the new claim system?

To claim expenses at in-district extended school year programs, those programs need to be defined by the district in the claim system. Districts should create each program offered during the claim year, including dates of operation, number of operating days, weekly days of operation, and weekly hours of operation.

Once summer programs are defined in the claim system, districts will be able to create placements at those programs as part of their student claims.

1. Should a district define an in-district summer program when the program begins in June and continues into the next fiscal year?

Yes, all days within the fiscal year of the claim should be included, including any June days of in-district summer programs. For example, if the district offers an ESY program from June 25, 2025 (FY25) to August 1, 2025 (FY26), the district should define the FY25 portion (June 25 to June 30, 2025) on their FY25 claim.

Once summer programs – including those for only a handful of days in June - are defined in the claim system, districts will be able to create placements at those programs as part of their student claims.

1. What is being asked by the “holidays excluded” checkbox?

When creating an in-district summer program, districts are required to affirm with a checkbox that any holidays between the program start and end date (such as the Fourth of July) have been taken into account, and the count of operating days is accurate.

## Adding Students and Expenses

1. How are students added to the new system for expense claiming?

The Add Students section of the new claim system provides two ways to add students to the district’s current year claim:

1. Search for a student using the student’s birth date and unique SASID. The student who matches these criteria will be found, and the district can affirm the student should be added to the claim. Once confirmed, the student will appear in the “Student Claims” section of the page, where expenses can then be added on a per-student basis.
2. Students who had expenses claimed and reimbursed by the district in the prior fiscal year but have not yet been added to the current year claim are listed under the heading, “Students for which expenses were claimed in the prior fiscal year appear below…” near the bottom of the Add Student page. These students can be added to the current year claim by selecting the checkbox next to the student’s name(s) and then hitting “next”. The selected student(s) will move from the bottom area of the page to under the “Student Claims” heading, where expenses can then be added on a per-student basis.
3. Does the district need to add a student to their claim if the same student was claimed in a prior year?

Yes. Each student for which expenses and services will be claimed in the current claim cycle needs to be added to the current year claim.

To assist districts with adding students, those students with expenses reimbursed in the prior fiscal year will be listed under the heading, “Students for which expenses were claimed in the prior fiscal year appear below…” heading near the bottom of the Add Student page. These students can be added to the current year claim by selecting the checkbox next to the student’s name(s) and then hitting “Next”. The selected student(s) will move from the bottom area of the page to under the “Student Claims” heading, indicating they are now part of the current year claim.

1. What is a student's SIMS certification status and how is that used in the new claim system?

Students need to be certified in SIMS to be included on a circuit breaker claim. Districts participate in three SIMS reporting periods annually (October, March and June), and students need to be reported in SIMS in at least one reporting period to be included on a circuit breaker claim.

If a district is trying to submit expenses related to a student that was not certified in SIMS, the district will have an opportunity to provide an explanation for lack of student certification. That explanation will be reviewed by the circuit breaker office prior to determining if the expenses can be included in the district’s claim.

1. What are "Special Indicators" and how are they used?

In the context of the circuit breaker program, “Special Indicators” are included with expenses only when a student meets a specific definition:

* State Ward: Has no parent or guardian living in the Commonwealth, was placed by the state (DCF), and is residing outside of the student’s hometown.
* Abandoned: Requires an Assignment Letter issued by DESE.
* Homeless: As confirmed by the district’s homeless coordinator.

If a student meets a “Special Indicator” definition for more than 5 months during a school year (5 months + 1 day), the student’s expenses have special indicator status for the full claim period. Expenses with special indicator status are reimbursed at higher rate than other expenses (100% over threshold, subject to appropriation).

## Approved Program Placements

1. Why have program codes been updated to 8-digits, rather than 5-digits?

Alphanumeric codes traditionally used by the circuit breaker program to refer to special education programs and schools have been transitioned to the DESE standard of numeric codes administered by the Directory Administration (DA) office. This standardization allows consistency in nomenclature between the Department’s online School and District Profile database and all DESE departments, including data collection, Office of Approved Special Education Schools (OASES), and school finance functions.

A crosswalk listing of 8-digit DA codes to legacy 5-digit circuit breaker codes can be found on the circuit breaker website here: [Program code crosswalk: in-state approved, out-of-state approved, collaboratives (XLS)](https://www.doe.mass.edu/finance/circuitbreaker/materials-tools/crosswalk.xlsx)

1. Does the claim system know tuition costs at approved special education programs?

Yes. The claim system knows the tuition rates and operating days approved by the Operational Services Division (OSD) at all special education programs approved by DESE. OSD publishes the [most current tuition rates](https://www.mass.gov/info-details/special-education-tuition-pricing-details) on their website, and the circuit breaker claim system includes a report (referred to as the “CB7”) of each rate at each program during the claim year. In all cases, the tuition rates claimed by districts need to match the rates approved by OSD to be qualified for reimbursement.

1. Does the new claim system improve the way tuition price changes are handled?

Yes. Any price changes at approved programs are automatically accounted for as part of the claim. Previously, if a tuition rate changed during the placement period, districts were required to create multiple placements, each with a single daily rate. Now, the claim system considers each daily rate over the full attendance period in calculating total cost.

1. What is a "Q code" at a private, approved placement?

A “Q” code represents an annualized day rate for an approved private day program. These are usually associated with a student placed in an approved residential program who is cost shared with another State Agency when the district is paying the approved day rate spread out over 365 days (annualized). Districts should claim expenses at these programs using Q codes when appropriate and, as always, confirm the costs paid by the district match rates associated with the program code.

## Collaborative Placements

1. What "Annual Rate" is entered for a collaborative program?

Districts need to enter the annual rate for the collaborative program being claimed for a student (cost for 180 days), regardless of how many days the student attended.

Districts also need to enter the total number of days attended, and if that is less than 180 days, the claim system will pro-rate the cost of the placement based on the number of days the student attended.

1. Are separate placements required for summer and school year collaborative programs?

Yes. If a student attends a collaborative program for both summer (extended school year) and school year, districts should reflect these costs in separate placements.

1. How are individual one-to-one services claimed at collaboratives?

The cost of individual services provided by a collaborative should be added to the total tuition cost at that same collaborative, even if billed separately. (This is different than claiming costs of individual services at private programs, which requires pricing approval through an IPA and costs claimed in a separate placement from state-approved tuition rates.)

1. How should programs run by the Capital Region Educational Council (CREC) in Connecticut be claimed?

CREC schools are public out-of-state collaborative programs, and associated expenses should be claimed as “Out-of-District LEA/Collaborative” placements. This is a change from prior years in which CREC was claimed as an unapproved program.

## Claiming Services Requiring Pricing Authorization

1. What types of services require authorization prior to claiming?

Placements at “unapproved” programs and individual one-to-one services at approved programs require prior pricing authorization from the Operational Services Division (OSD) prior to being submitted in a circuit breaker claim.

* Districts can [apply for Individual Student Placements (ISPs)](https://www.doe.mass.edu/prs/sa-nr/) at unapproved programs through DESE PRS. This is a two-step process that first requires DESE program approval, which is then passed to OSD for pricing approval.
* Districts can [apply for Individual Pricing Authorizations (IPAs)](https://www.mass.gov/how-to/request-special-education-individual-pricing) for one-to-one services greater than $20 per hour at approved programs through OSD.
* Districts can complete a self-authorized IPA within the claim system when creating a placement for one-to-one services at approved programs costing $20 or less per hour.

These approvals need to be in place for associated expenses to be submitted on a circuit breaker claim.

1. How will the new claim system enforce price authorizations?

When a district creates a placement for an expense requiring OSD authorization, the approved authorization (ISP or IPA) needs to be associated with the placement, otherwise the student with that expense cannot be included in the claim submission.

Authorizations that match the program, rate, and date information entered by the district will be displayed during placement creation. Districts need to select the matching authorization and associate it with the placement.

If no authorization matches the placement being created, this lack of association will need to be resolved prior to claim submission, either by deleting the placement or by obtaining a matching authorization that can be associated with the placement.

1. Is there a single place districts can look to see all the price authorizations that have been approved for their district?

Yes. The new claim system includes a report of all authorizations (ISPs and IPAs) that have pricing approval from OSD. This report can be found on the summary page of the district claim, as the “My Authorizations” report under the SUM ALL drop down menu in the upper right.

An authorization takes the form of A-######## (A, then dash, then eight numbers). Districts can click on the authorization number to see details of the authorization, including student SASID, approved service dates, annual rate, daily (ISP) or hourly (IPA) rate, and program name.

Importantly, clicking on the Program link within the authorization will show the 8-digit program code approved for the student. As best practice, districts should use this 8-digit code to search for the appropriate program when creating a placement for the associated expense.

It may take up to a week from the time a district receives authorization from OSD for it to be reflected in the claim system.

1. What is the most common error in claiming placements using authorizations (ISPs or IPAs)?

A common mistake is to select the wrong program when creating the placement. The placement must match the authorization exactly – including program, rates, and dates of service – in order to be associated.

Instead of searching for and selecting a program by name, best practice is to use the 8-digit numerical code for the Program from the student’s authorization when creating the placement. (See question #37 for info on viewing authorizations within the claim system, including finding the associated program code.)

1. Can districts create placements for expenses that do not (currently) have authorization?

Yes, districts will be able to create placements that require ISPs or IPAs, even if there is no matching authorization to associate with that placement. However, these placements will need to be corrected prior to claim submission.

To correct the placement for submission, obtain a matching authorization and associate it to the placement; otherwise, the placement should be deleted.

1. Do districts still need to email self-authorized IPAs for one-to-one services that cost $20 or less per hour?

No. In the new claim system, districts can complete a self-authorized IPA when creating a placement for one-to-one services at approved programs costing $20 or less per hour. Services greater than $20 per hour still require OSD approval through the IPA process (see question #35).

1. Can districts check the status of applications for price authorizations that have not yet been approved?

No, not within the claim system. District seeking status on their ISP or IPA applications should follow up with the organization evaluating those applications ([DESE PRS for ISPs](https://www.doe.mass.edu/prs/sa-nr/), or [OSD for IPAs](https://www.mass.gov/how-to/request-special-education-individual-pricing)).

## Cost Shares

1. Where are cost shares reflected in the claim system?

Cost shares should be indicated on each relevant placement and specified as part of the placement creation. The placement should be added with the total cost of services, and the cost share will allocate that total cost between the entities responsible for payment (second school district, government agency, per a settlement agreement, etc.)

On placement creation, districts should toggle the “Cost Share” button to “on” and fill out the additional fields of required information that appear.

1. Should the cost share amount entered describe what is paid by the district or paid by the other cost-share entity?

The cost share entered on the placement should reflect the cost paid by that entity and can be expressed either as a percentage or dollar amount. For example, if total costs are $100,000 and a district is paying 60% and DCF is paying 40%, the district should create a placement for the $100,000 total and include a cost share with DCF at either 40% or $40,000.

1. How should districts provide information supporting cost shares?

The process remains unchanged with the new claim system. Cost share agreements, including settlement agreements, are still required to substantiate claims. This supporting documentation should be uploaded to DESE through the [DESE security portal](https://gateway.edu.state.ma.us/stardust/login) special education Dropbox.

## In-District Placements

1. What updates have been made to in-district service categories?

The categories and types of services that are qualified for reimbursement have not changed. However, beginning with FY25 claims, in-district service names have been updated to more accurately reflect current naming conventions and provide additional specificity. Our goal is to make it easier for districts to describe and be reimbursed for special education services provided to students.

For example, rather than a single Counseling category, services can now be differentiated as being provided by a School Adjustment Counselor, School Psychologist, or Social Worker/Licensed Mental Health Counselor; rather than a single Nursing cost category, service levels can now be specified as Licensed Practical Nurse, Registered Nurse, and Certified Nursing Assistant; new categories requiring Endorsement from the DESE Office of Educator Licensure have been added as Autism Specialist and Transitions Specialist; and additional new categories were added as Ophthalmologist, Teacher of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, and Teacher of Visually Impaired.

More information regarding these new categories can be found in the [Updated In-District Services for Circuit Breaker Claiming memo](https://www.doe.mass.edu/finance/circuitbreaker/materials-tools/2024-1115memo.pdf) on the circuit breaker website.

1. What updates have been made to rates used for reimbursement of in-district services?

Rates are increased annually in preparation for each claim year, including within the new claim system for FY25. The in-district service categories and rates for FY25 claiming are described in the [Updated In-District Services for Circuit Breaker Claiming memo](https://www.doe.mass.edu/finance/circuitbreaker/materials-tools/2024-1115memo.pdf) on the circuit breaker website.

1. Do districts still need to convert service hours in each category to days-in-cycle to specify frequency?

No! The new claim system allows districts to claim based on frequencies written in a student’s IEP, rather than having to convert time to days-in-cycle. Specifically, service hours can now be entered per day, per week, per month, per quarter, over the school year or over the duration of a summer program, in addition to per cycle.

1. Can districts price in-district services to determine if expenses for an individual student meet the reimbursement threshold?

Yes. An [in-district services calculator](https://www.doe.mass.edu/finance/schoolchoice/calculator.xlsm) is available on the circuit breaker website as a tool to help districts identify where in-district expenses meet or exceed the claiming threshold of $52,419 for FY25.

## Reviewing Issue Status and Resolving Problems

1. Why can districts add expenses to their claim, even if they cannot be submitted?

Flexibility exists for districts to add expenses to their claim while knowing additional action will need to be taken prior to submitting the claim.

For example, if a district has applied for a price authorization but it has not yet been approved by OSD, the district can add a placement for those expenses and then go back into the claim later to associate the authorization with the placement once it has been issued.

1. How do districts identify where claims have issues that need resolution?

The new claim system includes Issue Status reports for all problems that need to be resolved before a claim can be submitted. These reports can be found on the main summary page of the claim. Click on the down-triangle next to the words SUM ALL in the rightmost section of the header.

Issue Status reports are numbered 1 through 5:

* 1. Placement Overlap Issues Report
  2. Placement Error Report
  3. Certification Status Issues Report
  4. Transportation Days Exceed Instruction
  5. Issues Remaining Report

As a best practice, prior to attempting to submit the claim, districts should go through these reports in order to resolve any problematic items. Please see the “[Reviewing Issue Status and Resolving Issues](https://youtu.be/VdRWw2znd-s?si=2rFO-GlFhjplL1XI)” training module for further information.

1. What are examples of issues that will need to be resolved prior to claim submission?

Issues that will need to be resolved include:

* association of an approved OSD authorization with any expenses requiring such approval
* explanation for any student missing from the district’s SIMS reporting
* resolving instances where multiple placements in the instruction/tuition or transportation category for a single student overlap dates
* resolving instances where the number of days a student is transported exceed the number of days for which tuition was paid
* correcting service hours for in-district services when they exceed reasonable thresholds, including the total number of hours in a school day
* applying all collaborative cumulative credit received by a district

1. What should a district do to submit their claim, even with outstanding issues?

Districts must either clear all issues or take the student(s) with issues off the list of students being included with the claim prior to submission. Students being excluded from submission are specified in Issue Status report #5 (Issues Remaining) by unchecking the box(es) next to Submit Relief, Submit Final or both.

## Certifying and Submitting Claims

1. What steps need to be taken prior to claim submission?

Districts should affirm all CB eligible students are claimed, that claim amounts accurately reflect actual costs paid by the district, and that claims for in-district services reflect actual services received and supported in students’ IEPs.

Additionally, as a best practice districts should go through the Issue Status reports and resolve any problematic items. Please see the “[Reviewing Issue Status and Resolving Issues](https://youtu.be/VdRWw2znd-s?si=2rFO-GlFhjplL1XI)” training module for further information.

1. Who can submit claims on behalf of their district?

Only one user per district can certify and submit claims on behalf of their district. By default, this role has been assigned to the person designated the district’s Special Education Director in [DESE School Profiles](https://profiles.doe.mass.edu/). If your district needs to change the user account with Certify and Submit permission, please contact the [circuit breaker liaison](https://www.doe.mass.edu/finance/circuitbreaker/liaison.html) for your district.

## Claim System Training and Support

1. What claim system training is available?

Circuit Breaker claim training  has gone online and can be accessed on the [DESE YouTube channel](https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLTuqmiQ9ssqvmkXmEB40TQWgSSWCN0p_r). Each training module covers a distinct topic, and chapter references are available to assist in finding specific scenarios that may be of interest. Claim system users are encouraged to go through the modules in order, beginning with the [New Claim System Overview Part 1](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N5viSp5vGJQ) (presentation) and [New Claim System Overview Part 2](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JZgRDq3X15o) (demonstration) videos.

Additional training will be added regularly, so please check the YouTube channel frequently for updates.

1. If I have additional questions, how can I get help from the circuit breaker office?

There are several ways to find answers to questions about the new claim system or to seek support:

* + 1. Visit the [circuit breaker page](https://www.doe.mass.edu/finance/circuitbreaker/default.html) on the DESE website.
    2. Attend drop-in sessions. These are scheduled regularly to provide an opportunity for district users to jump on Zoom and ask questions to the circuit breaker team.
    3. Fill out the online [claim system support form](https://app.smartsheet.com/b/form/113a30c5fa284abdbe27f341560d1783) and a member of the circuit breaker team will respond within one business day.
    4. Contact the appropriate [circuit breaker liaison](https://www.doe.mass.edu/finance/circuitbreaker/liaison.html). A specific member of the circuit breaker team is assigned to each district to provide support.