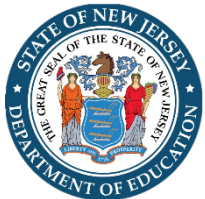# Interdistrict Public School Choice Program Procedures & Policies

**Technical Assistance for Choice Administrators**

Updated 2023

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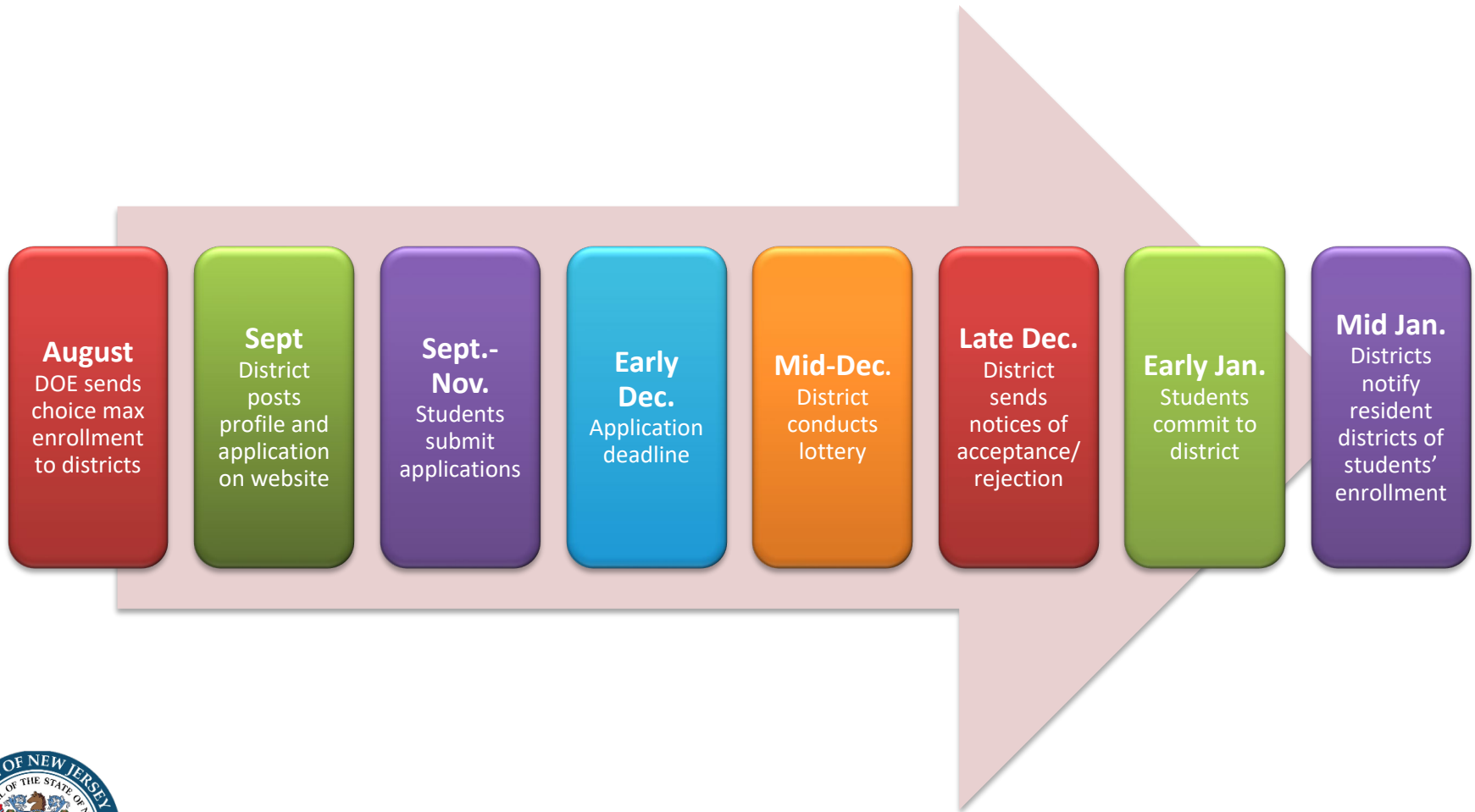2. Timeline for determination of choice funding

II. Program Policies
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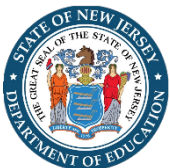
Student Application Process for Districts
(see accessible slide #5)

August DOE sends choice max enrollment to districts

Sept District posts profile and application on website

Sept.-Nov. Students submit applications

Early Dec. Application deadline

Mid-Dec. District conducts lottery

Late Dec. District sends notices of acceptance/ rejection

Early Jan. Students commit to district

Mid Jan. Districts notify resident districts of students' enrollment

Student Application Process for Districts:
Forms and Templates
(see accessible slides #5-6)

| **August** NJDOE sends choice max enrollment | **Sept** District posts profile and application on website | **Sept.-Nov.** Students submit applications | **Dec.** Application deadline | **Dec.** Lottery | Late Dec. District sends notices of selection/ rejection | Early Jan. Students commit | Mid Jan. Districts notify resident districts of students' enrollment |

Forms and templates:

District Profile & Student application

Resident District Confirmation of Student Enrollment (verify Tier 1 status)

Lottery notification to parents

Notice of Student Acceptance, Rejection, or Waitlisting

Notice of Student's Intent to Enroll

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Choice District Application Process:
Forms and Templates
(accessible version)

- **Step 1 (Aug.):** District receives their choice maximum enrollment from NJDOE.

- **Step 2 (Sept.):** District posts their **Choice Profile** and **Application** on their website.

- **Step 3 (Sept.-Nov.):** Students submit applications.

- **Step 4 (Early Dec.):** Applications due.

- **Step 5 (Dec.):** District sends **Resident District Confirmation of Student Enrollment** to verify Tier 1 eligibility of applicants.
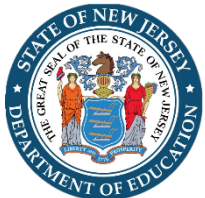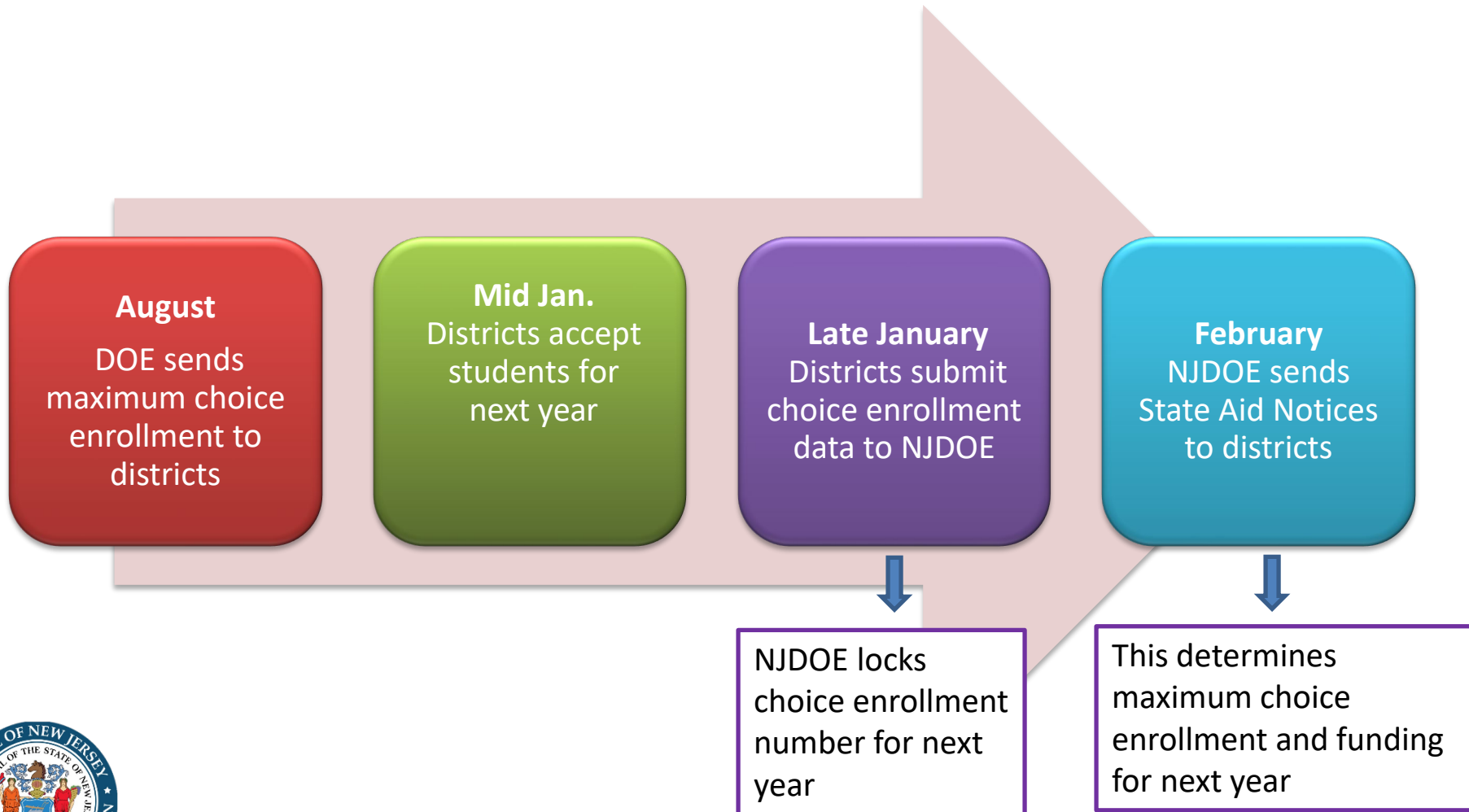
Choice District Application Process:
Forms and Templates
(continued)

- **Step 6 (Dec.):** District sends lottery notification to each applicant, with date and number assigned to the applicant.

- **Step 7 (Dec.):** Upon completion of the lottery, the district sends to each applicant a **Notice of Conditional Acceptance, Rejection, or Wait Listing** and a **Notice of Intent to Enroll Form** to accepted applicants.
  - ➤ Accepted applicants commit to enroll by sending back completed *Notice of Intent to Enroll Form*

- **Step 8 (Jan.):** District sends a copy of each accepted student's *Notice of Intent to Enroll Form* to student's resident district.

- **Step 9 (March):** District sends the **Application for Transportation** to all accepted students' resident districts.

Timeline for Determination of Choice Funding (see accessible slide #8)

| **August** DOE sends maximum choice enrollment to districts | **Mid Jan.** Districts accept students for next year | **Late January** Districts submit choice enrollment data to NJDOE | **February** NJDOE sends State Aid Notices to districts |

NJDOE locks choice enrollment number for next year

This determines maximum choice enrollment and funding for next year

Timeline for Determination of Choice Funding (accessible version)

- **August:** DOE sends approved choice enrollment maximum to districts.

- **December-January:** Districts receive applications and accept choice students for next year.

- **Late January:** Districts submit choice enrollment data to NJDOE. NJDOE locks choice enrollment number for next year.

- **February:** NJDOE sends *State Aid Notices* to districts. This determines funding and choice enrollment maximum for next year.

Choice Program Policies:
Choice Enrollment Maximum

- Choice districts cannot exceed their DOE-approved choice enrollment maximum, except:
  - applicants with choice siblings and choice send-receives
  - students with an approved choice waiver application

- If a district wants to enroll more non-resident students and exceed their choice enrollment maximum, then they may enroll *district-funded* tuition students outside the choice program. Choice rules do not apply to these students: they will not receive choice funding and will not be treated as choice students. Choice districts that want to take students through this option must receive tuition from the resident district, pursuant to revised N.J.S.18A:38-3.

- Choice districts may add new students and/or accommodate late applicants up to their approved choice enrollment maximum *until October 14* of the enrollment year. Exception: students with an approved choice waiver application can be accepted at any time.

Choice Program Policies:
Student Enrollment Preference & Eligibility

- **Students who may be given enrollment preference over all other applicants:**
  - have a siblings who is a currently enrolled choice student and the sibling will continue to be enrolled in the following year
  - attend a choice district that terminates before 12th grade with a send-receive agreement or constituent relationship with a sending choice district
  - move out of the choice district and wish to stay as choice students, *if seats exist*

- **Tier 1 applicants are considered for enrollment before Tier 2 applicants.** Tier 1 applicants must be enrolled in their resident school district for the full year preceding enrollment in a choice district; includes:
  - Charter school students
  - Homeless/displaced students

- **Tier 2 students** have *not* attended their resident public school for the full year prior to enrollment and do *not* meet the requirements for Tier 1

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Choice Program Policies:
Conducting Lotteries

- When a choice district receives more applications than there are available seats, the district must hold a public lottery to determine which students may enroll in the choice district and to create a waitlist.

- Before conducting the lottery, the district may give **enrollment preference** to:

  - ✓ siblings of students currently attending the choice district and who will continue to be enrolled in the following year, and

  - ✓ choice students attending a district with which it has a send-receive or constituent relationship.

  - ✓ These students do not need to be entered into the lottery unless there are more "preferred" students than there are available seats.

- The choice district must assign a number to each student participating in the lottery and notify the parents of the lottery process, the date and number assigned to the applicant.

- After the lottery, the district must develop a waiting list for those students not selected in the lottery and must let the parents know their student's number on the waiting list.

Choice Program Policies: Student Admission

- "A choice district may evaluate a prospective student on the student's interest in the program offered by a designated school. The district shall not discriminate in its admission policies or practices on the basis of athletic ability, intellectual aptitude, English language proficiency, status as a handicapped person, or any basis prohibited by State law." [N.J.S.A. 18A:36B-20(b)]

Choice Program Policies:
Application Denials

- The circumstances warranting rejection of an applicant who meets the eligibility requirements are limited, according to statute:

  18A:36B-20 Applications by student to choice district. A choice district shall not prohibit the enrollment of a student based upon a determination that the additional cost of educating the student would exceed the amount of additional State aid received as a result of the student's enrollment. A choice district may reject the application for enrollment of a student who has been classified as eligible for special education services pursuant to chapter 46 of Title 18A of the New Jersey Statutes if that student's individualized education program could not be implemented in the district, or if the enrollment of that student would require the district to fundamentally alter the nature of its educational program, or would create an undue financial or administrative burden on the district.

- A student whose application is rejected by a choice district must be provided with a written reason for the rejection in the Notice of Rejection.

- A district with a special program must apply the *same admission criteria* for all students admitted to the program, whether they are choice or resident students.

Choice Program Policies:
Waiver Process

- Once a choice district has filled all its allowed seats, a late applicant **who can demonstrate good cause** may apply for a waiver of the student application deadline from the Commissioner.

- A student who can show good cause for an immediate transfer will be given priority through the waiver process over any existing waitlisted students.

- **The district may exceed its DOE-approved maximum enrollment** if a waiver is granted. The district has no obligation to agree to accept a choice student approved via a waiver.

- **Funding for the waiver student** will be provided once the student is included in the January data submission. Since funding for choice students is determined in January of the *preceding* school year and cannot be adjusted for late acceptances, a waiver student will *not be funded* during the first school year nor the following year *if enrolled after the Jan. data submission*.

Choice Program Policies:
Enrollment of Resident Students
Who Move Out of a Choice District

- If a **resident student** moves while enrolled in a choice district and choice grade/program, the **parents/guardians** of the student decide if they will stay for the remainder of the current school year.

- If the student remains in the choice district, the student becomes a **temporary choice student** for the remainder of the school year and the new resident district becomes responsible for providing transportation.

- The temporary choice student must apply for a choice seat in the next year, just like other choice applicants; no timelines are waived and no additional choice seats will be granted.

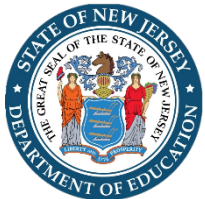# Choice Program Policies:
Parent Information Center

- Choice districts must create and maintain a parent information center to:
  - ✓ Collect and disseminate information about policies and participating programs and schools
  - ✓ Assist parents and guardians in submitting an application
  - ✓ Maintain the choice district's website with up-to-date information and application forms, including:
    - Links to all forms
    - Transportation information
    - District application policies regarding sibling preference, tier 2 students, etc.

Choice Program Funding

- Choice students are treated as resident students under the funding formula, meaning the district receives state formula aid for them as if they were any other resident student, with the exception of transportation aid which continues to be paid directly to the resident district.

- In addition to state formula aid, the state provides **Choice Aid** to the choice district to offset the local tax levy amount it would collect for any resident student.

- The resident district keeps the local levy collected for students who "choice out".

Questions?

- Website: https://www.nj.gov/education/choice/

- FAQs: https://www.nj.gov/education/choice/cdistricts/faq/

- Email: pschoice@doe.nj.gov