

NJDOE News

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Districts That Accepted Evacuee Students Eligible for Federal Assistance

New Jersey school districts that enrolled students who were evacuees from Hurricanes Katrina and Rita are eligible for the emergency impact aid recently authorized by Congress to assist with the cost of educating those students, DOE officials said today.

Parents of displaced students who have been enrolled in non-public schools may also apply for tuition assistance, but they must apply through the district in which the non-public school their children attend is located.

The federal Hurricane Education Recovery Act, approved by Congress on December 30, authorizes emergency funding for the 2005-06 school year to offset the costs of districts that enrolled displaced students, even if the children only stayed in the school district for part of the year.

"We have been communicating with districts about the possibility of federal assistance since mid-December so that they could get their records together, and an advisory was e-mailed to all districts last week about the extremely short turn-around time for submitting the information," said acting Commissioner of Education Lucille E. Davy.

"We want to make sure that all districts receive the federal assistance to which they are entitled, and the first step is getting that initial application filed with DOE," the Commissioner said.

Payments will be up to \$6,000 for each non-disabled student and up to \$7,500 for children with disabilities. The amounts will be pro-rated depending on how long each individual student remained enrolled in the district.

Non-public schools that enrolled displaced children will be eligible for tuition, fees and transportation for up to the amounts provided to public schools. In order to receive the federal funds, non-public schools must have either waived tuition for the displaced students or agreed to reimburse their parents for tuition paid.

In mid-October of last year, approximately 380 children displaced by the two hurricanes had been enrolled in New Jersey public schools. That number has since declined as evacuees either returned to their homes or moved elsewhere.

The applications, instructions and a "Frequently Asked Questions" document are available on the DOE web site at <http://www.nj.gov/njded/grants/entitlement>.

Districts must submit the number of displaced students enrolled in the district and at non-public schools within the district boundaries as of October 1, 2005 and December 1, 2005, broken out by children with disabilities and children without disabilities.

The applications must be sent to New Jersey DOE by Thursday, January 26. DOE will then consolidate the information and submit a state application to the US Department of Education next week.

The funds will be paid to the state quarterly, and DOE will, in turn, distribute the funds to the districts. The state is permitted to retain up to one percent of its allocation to pay for the administration of the program.

For additional information, please contact the DOE Office of Public Information at 609-292-1126.