



2024-2025 Special Education Staff Stipends Frequently Asked Questions and Answers

Please visit the [2024-25 SPED Staff Stipends Grant Webpage](#) for more information, including Grant Guidance. Please send additional questions to ode.spedstipends@ode.oregon.gov.

Answers to additional questions will be added to this document as they are received.

Contents

Applying for and Receiving Funds	1
Use of Funds	3
Qualifying Staff Definition	4
Revenue and Expenditure Recording	8

Applying for and Receiving Funds

1. Can eligible entities (i.e. school or education service districts) opt out of receiving funds?

The Legislature has the expectation that these funds will reach every qualifying staff member. ODE has developed a process to make it as easy as possible for districts to access and distribute these funds. However, there is no legislative requirement that districts engage in this process. ODE is not able to pay individuals whose districts choose not to participate.

2. Who submits the application, claims funds, and is responsible for reporting for staff employed at charter schools (including virtual) or other programs that have contractual relationships with districts (e.g. Early Intervention/Early Childhood Special Education)?

The entity that is the employer of the staff should count the staff and will receive funds for the stipend. If a charter school or program uses a district as their fiscal agent for ODE, they will need to work with their fiscal agent to access funds.

3. What happens if districts miss the deadline or fail to apply but want to?

Per [OAR 581-017-1000](#), applications will not be accepted after the deadline on 5PM January 13, 2025.

4. Does our district need to enter into a collective bargaining process with local unions regarding the use of these funds?

The language of Section 209 of SB 5701 (2024) says that funds are to be used for “stipends to licensed educators and classified school employees working in special education during the 2024-2025 school year.” ODE recommends that you consult with your legal counsel.

5. Will the stipends be paid from the general fund, area 320, increasing Maintenance of Effort or should they be run through a special revenue fund and exclude area 320? Should the expenses be recorded through the general fund, area 320, to be reflected as part of maintenance of effort (MOE)?

These funds are restricted Special Revenues from the state. This one-time funding should not be included in ongoing Maintenance of Effort (MOE), and should not be reported under AofR320. Additionally, these are earmarked resources, non-discretionary, so they will be received and paid from Special Revenues at the district, not General Fund.

6. Do special education staff of charter schools also receive this stipend?

Per [OAR 581-017-1000](#), qualifying staff working at public charter schools, including virtual charter schools, can receive the stipend as long as they meet the other qualifications listed in the guidance. Please visit [ODE's Charter Schools webpage](#) for the list of 2024-25 approved public charter schools.

7. Will ODE be able to provide messaging to staff about these extra stipends? Or are individual districts crafting communication to staff about these one time monies?

ODE is not able to directly communicate to staff employed in districts. However, ODE is able to provide support to districts in developing communications for use with staff. Please reach out to ode.spedstipends@ode.oregon.gov with any questions or needs.

8. Who should apply on behalf of staff who are employed across multiple districts?

Each qualifying individual may only receive the stipend once. Individuals who are employed across multiple districts should work with their employers to coordinate their participation in one application.

9. Should we fill out the application form even if the number of people who qualify is zero?

Districts do not need to fill out the application form if they do not have any qualifying staff. ODE may contact districts that do not apply to inquire about the reason.

10. Our district is trying to determine the financial impact of associated payroll costs. Since we have no way of knowing prior to applying for the grant what the cost to the district will be, it is

hard to budget for it. Can apply and then later refuse the grant award if it is not financially feasible to pay the associated payroll costs?

Yes, entities may decide not to participate after receiving the award notice. However ODE cannot redistribute funds so this will mean funds will be returned back to the Legislature and the per person stipend amount for all recipients across the state will be lower if the district opts out after the award notification.

11. Do Long Term Care and Treatment (LTCT) facilities or programs qualify?

LTCT sites are not included in the list of eligible entities in [OAR 581-017-1000](#), unless they are located within one of the listed entities. CLARIFICATION: LTCT staff may qualify if they meet the qualifications and are directly employed by one of the eligible entities. Staff who are employed by another organization that contracts with an entity on the list (i.e. a private, non-profit, or university organization type not listed) are not eligible.

12. What happens if a district needs to re-submit their Qualifying Staff List (excel doc) prior to the January 13, 2025 deadline? For example, if a district needs to add staff member(s) who were left off the previously submitted list.

To update a Qualifying Staff List (Excel document template) prior to the January 13, 2025 deadline, a district should complete a new [Application Form](#) and indicate that the district is submitting a Revised Qualifying Staff List on the form. With the new [Application Form](#), the district will attach the revised Qualified Staff list (please include all the qualifying staff, not just the new staff). ODE will then delete the previously submitted application form and Qualified Staff List.

13. What position code should be used in the Qualifying Staff List template for substitutes?

Substitute teachers are reported in ODE's Staff Position collection depending on several factors that are discussed in [ODE's Staff Position Manual](#). If a district includes substitutes that qualify for this stipend, but who are not reported in the district's staff position collection, it is advised to use the following codes on your Qualifying Staff List: *11-Other Licensed Staff* or *21-Other Non-Licensed Staff*.

Use of Funds

14. Our district is already providing stipends to special education staff with other funding. Can we use these funds to offset those stipends?

The intent of this legislation is for state-sponsored stipends to be issued to special education staff. These stipend funds are to supplement and not supplant any other funding sources, so they may not be used in place of nor to reimburse the district for other, local payments made to staff by the district.

15. Are stipends prorated for part-time staff?

No, stipends may not be prorated for part-time staff. Per [OAR 581-017-1000](#), all stipends issued to staff must be in the amount published by ODE.

16. Can funds be used to cover associated payroll taxes?

No, funds cannot be used to cover payroll taxes. Per [OAR 581-017-1000](#), all funds received by a district must be distributed as stipends to qualifying staff in the per-person amount identified by ODE.

17. Can districts pay for indirect or other administrative costs with these funds?

No, these funds cannot be used for indirect or other administrative costs. Per [OAR 581-017-1000](#), all funds received by a district must be distributed as stipends to qualifying staff in the per-person amount identified by ODE.

18. Are stipends considered taxable income?

Yes, stipends received by individuals under this grant are considered taxable income.

19. Can an employee that qualifies opt out of receiving the stipend?

Yes, any qualifying staff member can opt-out of receiving the stipend.

20. Can we decide to issue the stipends on our May 25th payroll to those who were still employed on May 1st?

Yes, districts will need to pick a spring date on which employees will still be employed (i.e. May 1) in order to receive the stipend with their next paycheck (i.e. May 25). This could be any time after ODE has confirmed with the district that it will receive the funds (expected to be by mid-February) but no later than June 30. It is recommended that payment of the stipend occur in April or May, but districts can decide. Districts will need to return funds if they do not issue all of the stipends. Alternatively, districts can choose to claim funds from ODE after issuing stipends to prevent the need to return funds.

Qualifying Staff Definition

21. How do we understand what is meant by “75 percent or more of the educator or employee’s student caseload” for staff who do not work based on an assigned caseload?

The language comes from Section 5 of Senate Bill 283, and the legislative intent is to identify those staff who provide “significant special education support” within a school system. ODE understands that many staff work in classrooms or other school settings where they are not assigned a specific student caseload, but where they spend a significant portion of their time working with students who have an IEP. Therefore, this requirement can be understood as

applying to staff who spend at least 75% of their work time **supporting students with IEPs/IFSPs**, whether that is based on their work time in a classroom or school assignment, performing job duties, or any combination of activities. The following examples could all qualify for the stipend under this law:

- District Special Education director or administrator
- Instructional assistant or paraeducator serving in a special education classroom
- Special education teacher employed by an ESD that travels to multiple school sites to serve students with IEPs
- Instructional assistant, paraeducator, or special education teacher serving students with IEPs in inclusive classrooms
- Substitute teacher that teaches special education
- EI/ECSE teacher providing early intervention services in a school district
- School Psychologist, Occupational Therapist, Speech Language Pathologists, etc. primarily serving students with IEPs
- Bus driver for special education students
- Nutritional services staff serving a special education program

22. Do staff who work in a school or program that is in an inclusive environment (where the majority of the students in a classroom may not have an IEP, but the student or students they are primarily supporting and working with do have an IEP) qualify?

Yes, if 75% or more of their day is working with students with IEPs in a classroom with a majority of students who don't have IEPs, the staff does qualify for the stipend.

23. Do ELL staff and nurses qualify for the stipend?

These staff may qualify if they meet the qualifications described, namely if they work in a role through which 75% or more of their student caseload or time is spent serving students with IEPs.

24. Do part-time staff qualify for the stipend?

Yes, part-time staff qualify for the stipend. There is no minimum FTE requirement for qualifying staff.

25. Are early learning and care educators and providers (serving children birth to age 5) eligible?

Yes, staff who are employed at an eligible entity, who serve students with an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP), may be eligible so long as they meet the qualifications.

26. Are staff who serve in Long Term Care and Treatment programs or Regional Inclusive Services programs eligible?

Yes, so long as the program is administered by an eligible entity and the staff meet the qualifications.

27. Are only staff that are assigned area 320 and within the range of standard SPED related functions eligible (as long as they also meet the >75% of caseload on an IEP)?

No, any staff member meeting the qualifications described may receive a stipend.

28. For classified staff, does this include the office staff who provide support to the Special Education director and process IEP records requests when students transfer?

Yes, non-instructional staff can qualify under the definitions in [OAR 581-017-1000](#).

29. Do contract staff or employees who are provided through a contracted service provider qualify?

No, per [OAR 581-017-1000](#), staff must be directly employed by the eligible entity to qualify for the stipend. Staff employed through a contracted, third-party provider do not qualify for the stipend.

30. We have an in-house team member who supports students with 504 plans, and her role is Student Support Plan Coordinator. Can we apply for her role?

Staff who work with students served by 504 plans, but do not work with students served by IEPs, do not qualify for the stipend.

31. Our SPED Director is not on the licensed or classified contract. They are on the admin contract. However they are a licensed admin. Our Special Ed secretary is not on the license or classified contract. She is on a separate district office contract. Would they qualify?

Yes, both of these staff qualify under the definitions of “Classified School Employee” or “Licensed Educator” in [OAR 581-017-1000](#), so long as they also meet the requirements described in the rules and grant guidance.

32. Can you provide guidance regarding classroom teachers (General Education teachers) who support students with IEPs all day/the majority of the day in their self contained classrooms, even if the IEP students are not the majority of the class?

Funds are intended for staff who provide “Significant Special Education Support” as defined in [OAR 581-017-1000](#). Caseload and work time should be based on the staff member’s assignment on December 2, 2024. Districts should first consider whether the teacher has an assigned caseload of students. If the teacher does not have an assigned caseload, then consider:

- The extent to which the individual teacher is responsible for providing accommodations or modifications required of the students’ IEP,

- How often the student is in the teacher’s class vs. pulled out for other services, and
- The extent to which the teacher has support from other staff in serving students with IEPs in their classroom.

For example, a general education classroom teacher who has one student in their classroom with an IEP as well as a paraeducator assigned to the student full time is likely not spending 75% of their time serving the student. However, a classroom teacher with 3 students, no paraeducator support, and no pull-out services is likely spending more than 75% of their time serving the students, as they must be adhering to the students’ IEPs at all times.

33. Are licensed staff required to be licensed through TSPC or are they eligible if licensed through another licensing board (i.e. Speech/Language Pathologist – licensed through Board of Examiners; Nurse – Licensed through Oregon Nurses Association; ECSE Classroom teacher – Certified through ODE).

Yes, staff licensed by an agency other than TSPC can receive the stipend. For the purposes of this grant program, the staff qualify under the definition of “Classified school employee” as defined in [OAR 581-017-1000](#). *Note: ODE recognizes this may be inconsistent with other conceptualizations of a classified school employee in other contexts.*

34. What happens when an employee is included in the application and is still employed at the stipend payment time but has transferred to a different, non-SPED role. Do they still get the stipend?

The grant guidance specifies that caseload and work time should be based on the staff member’s assignment on December 2, 2024. It is intended that stipends are issued to staff who remain serving in a Special Education role throughout the school year; however, ODE recognizes that there may be unpredicted changes in a role, so in some cases it may be appropriate for the staff member to receive the stipend.

35. How do we identify qualified substitutes? (What about substitutes who only sub for a day or two in SPED, but many days in general education classes throughout the school year? What about substitutes who only sub a few days in total throughout the school year?)

Substitutes meeting the qualifications described in [OAR 581-017-1000](#) and the grant guidance may be eligible for the stipend. Districts should include substitutes in their count that are expected to serve students with IEPs throughout the school year. CLARIFICATION: In order to qualify, substitutes must first be directly employed by the district. It is intended that stipends are issued to staff who remain serving in a Special Education role throughout the school year. It is up to each district to determine based on their unique circumstances.

36. What is the downside to excluding staff? For example, if a district were to decide to exclude a .1 FTE Substitute School Psych because it would cause friction within the staff as a whole, what would the downside be for that district?

Entities must determine who qualifies under definitions and requirements published by ODE. It is up to each entity to determine based on their unique circumstances.

37. Regarding these instructions from the Grant Guidance: *“To be eligible for the stipend, qualifying staff must be employed and working on December 2, 2024 and through the date stipends are issued by their employer in spring 2025. Staff must have an active, paid position with the entity and must not be on leave for more than half the school year.”* Will districts need to reevaluate eligibility in the springtime?

Districts can only issue stipends to staff who are still employed when stipends are paid out in the spring. If a district has funds remaining due to staff leaving the district prior to the payments being issued, those funds must be returned to ODE.

38. If someone is on leave during the spring stipend issue period, would they still be eligible (ex: Paid leave Oregon)?

Yes, they may still be eligible so long as they have been on leave for less than half the school year.

39. What about secondary teachers with multiple periods a day and varying numbers of SpEd students in their classrooms? How do we calculate whether they meet the threshold for receiving a stipend? In the same vein, what about an elementary teacher with two students on IEPs in their classroom without EA support? You can see that several possibilities aren't covered in the FAQ that would give us clear guidance.

Please see the response to Question #31, above. Entities must determine who qualifies under definitions and requirements published by ODE. It is up to each entity to determine based on their unique circumstances.

Revenue and Expenditure Recording

40. What is the best way to record the SPED stipend?

The best practice for recording the SPED stipend is:

- Run all items through a Special Revenue Fund, including the stipend and associated payroll costs.
- Then do one of two options:
 1. Do an internal transfer from the General Fund to the Special Revenue Fund to offset the associated payroll costs.
 2. Do an adjusting journal entry to move the associated payroll costs from the Special Revenue Fund to the General Fund.

- Either option may require the district to complete a supplemental budget or transfer resolution with their school board's approval to set the budget appropriations.
- Also, any of the expenses moved back to the General Fund would not include Area code 320 (Special Education), so that MOE is not affected.