



*Maryland State Department of Education
Nonpublic School Approval
200 West Baltimore Street
Baltimore, MD 21201*

TIMETABLE AND STEPS FOR APPROVAL OF A NONPUBLIC SCHOOL

**Approved under COMAR 13A.09.09
Educational Programs in Nonpublic Schools**

Deadlines at a Glance

- Sept. 1-May 1:** Timeframe for submitting completed blue Information Sheet and zoning approval
- June 1:** Last day to submit a complete Application for a Certificate of Approval and all required documents
- August 1:** Last day to submit acceptable revisions to Application documents
- August 15:** Last day for an onsite monitoring visit
- Notice:** Inability to meet the above deadlines will result in termination of the approval process by
the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE).

What The Law Says

A nonpublic school may not operate in Maryland until a Certificate of Approval has been issued by the Maryland State Board of Education (State Board) or the school has been registered as a church-exempt school¹. Any school operating without a Certificate of Approval or church-exemption registration is operating in violation of State law and is subject to the penalties thereof.

¹ A church-exempt school is a nonpublic school that has registered with the State Department of Education as exempt from education regulations because the school is governed and operated by a bona fide church organization.

When A School May Begin Operation

Except for a currently operating church-exempt school, the State Board approves a nonpublic school only for a complete school year that begins in September.

Deadlines for the Nonpublic School Approval Process

Applicants for Kindergartens, Elementary Schools (grades 1 through 8), and Secondary Schools must adhere to the following deadlines:

September 1 - May 1 is the timeframe for submission of the completed blue "Information Sheet" for proposed nonpublic school (Information Sheet) and written approval from local zoning authorities for the location of the nonpublic school.

It is recommended that the blue "Information Sheet" and zoning approval be submitted as early as possible because experience has shown that preparation of a complete Application package usually takes 6-9 months.

Important Note: The blue "Information Sheet" is **not** the Application for a Certificate of Approval. Submission of a complete and acceptable blue "Information Sheet" (including zoning approval) is required by **May 1**. The Applicant will be sent an Application to complete only **after** the completed blue Information Sheet and zoning approval have been received.

June 1 is the last day to submit a complete Application for a Certificate of Approval including all required documentation.

August 1 is the last day to submit acceptable revisions to the Application documents, as requested by MSDE.

August 15 is the last day that MSDE can conduct an onsite monitoring visit at the school to verify the school's onsite compliance with COMAR 13A.09.09.

Notice: Failure of the applicant to meet any of the above deadline dates will result in termination of the approval process by MSDE. An applicant must contact the Chief, Nonpublic School Approval Branch, to begin the approval process for the following school year.

Steps in the Nonpublic School Approval Process

Phase I. – Submitting the Information Sheet *

- Step 1.** The Applicant must contact the zoning officials in the county where the school will be located and obtain documentation stating that it is permissible to operate a nonpublic school at the location listed in Item 2 of the blue "Information Sheet" for Proposed Nonpublic School.

- Step 2.** The Applicant must attach the written evidence of zoning approval to the completed blue "Information Sheet" and submit both items to the Nonpublic School Approval Branch on or before **May 1**.
- Step 3.** The Chief, Nonpublic School Approval Branch, will review the documentation submitted and assign an Approval Specialist if the documentation is acceptable.

Phase II. – Completing and Submitting the Application Packet

- Step 4.** The Approval Specialist will send the Applicant an Application Packet and the Manual for Applying for a Certificate of Approval to Operate an Educational Program in a Nonpublic School in Maryland under COMAR 13A.09.09.
- Step 5.** The Applicant must follow the directions provided in the Manual for securing, developing, and submitting the documents required.
- Step 6.** On or before **June 1**, the Applicant must submit the completed Application form and all required documentation to the Approval Specialist. **MSDE will accept only a complete Application that includes all required documents. An incomplete Application will be returned to the Applicant for completion. Regardless of whether or not an incomplete Application is returned, the June 1 deadline for the submission of the completed Application form and all required documentation must be met.**
- Step 7.** The Approval Specialist will review the submitted Application for compliance with COMAR 13A.09.09.

* Visit www.BLIS.state.md.us to learn about the other responsibilities of a Maryland business

- Step 8.** The Approval Specialist will communicate with the Applicant regarding the acceptability of the Application documents and, if necessary, request revised and/or additional documentation.
- Step 9.** On or before **August 1**, the Applicant of the proposed school must submit revised and/or additional documentation, as requested by the Approval Specialist.

Phase III. – Conducting the Onsite Monitoring Visit

- Step 10.** When the Approval Specialist and Chief, Nonpublic School Approval Branch, determine that the Application materials demonstrate compliance with COMAR 13A.09.09, the Approval Specialist will schedule an onsite monitoring visit with the Administrative Head of the proposed school and the Head of the school's Legal Authority. This monitoring visit must be held by **August 15**. The purpose of the monitoring visit is to verify that the school is prepared to operate consistent with the

Application documents submitted and to comply with the requirements of COMAR 13A.09.09.

Phase IV. – Issuing the Certificate of Approval

- Step 11.** When the Application and onsite monitoring visit result in findings of compliance with COMAR 13A.09.09, the Nonpublic School Approval Branch will recommend that a Certificate of Approval is issued by the State Board.

- Step 12.** If the provisions of COMAR 13A.09.09 and Annotated Code of Maryland, Education Article, §2-206, are met, the State Board of Education will issue a Certificate of Approval to the Legal Authority responsible for governing and operating the nonpublic school.

Returning an Incomplete Application

If the Application is not in compliance with COMAR 13A.09.09 or the onsite monitoring visit is not completed by **August 15**, MSDE will return the Application and the documents submitted. An Applicant may begin the approval process again for the following school year by contacting the Chief, Nonpublic School Approval Branch, at (410) 767-0407.