

MEMORANDUM

TO: District Superintendents
Illinois Directors of Special Education

FROM: Dr. Nakia Douglas
Director of Special Education
ISBE Special Education Department

DATE: May 20, 2025

SUBJECT: State-Approved Director of Special Education Designation

The ISBE Special Education Department has received numerous technical assistance inquiries regarding the designation of “State-Approved Director of Special Education.” [Per Section 14-1.10, 14-13.01\(d\) of the Illinois School Code](#) and ISBE rule provided in [23 Ill. Adm. Code 226.800\(g\)](#), each stand-alone district or the special education cooperative entity of which it is a member must “employ a full-time director of special education, who shall be the chief administrative officer of the special education programs and services of the district or cooperative entity. Each director or assistant director of special education shall hold a valid Professional Educator License and a Director of Special Education endorsement issued pursuant to [23 Ill. Adm. Code 25.365](#) and a master’s degree, including 30 semester hours of coursework distributed among all the areas specified in 23 Ill. Adm. Code 25.365(b).” Directors and assistant directors of special education have been subject to the requirements of [23 Ill. Adm. Code 29.140](#) (Director of Special Education) since July 1, 2005.

The definition of “full time” is a qualified individual who is employed a minimum of 180 days and gives 1.0 time and effort to the position. There is no provision for the position of director to be split between two individuals or have duties that conflict or divide the individual’s time and effort of being full time as director. In addition, there is no allowance for a “provisional” director who is not fully qualified. An individual who is seeking the [Director of Special Education \(DSE\)](#) endorsement must follow ISBE licensure requirements and contact the ISBE Educator Effectiveness Department to pursue DSE endorsement.

It is important to note that the ISBE Special Education Department does not approve or deny licensure endorsements for Illinois educators. The ISBE Special Education Department **verifies** through the [ISBE Educator Licensure Information System \(ELIS\)](#) that an individual has an active, approved DSE endorsement; **identifies** that the stand-alone district or special education cooperative will employ one chief administrative officer as the State-Approved Director of Special Education; and **communicates** this name and title to other ISBE systems to ensure all information is appropriately documented, as required. Please ensure that the special education director candidate possesses all of the proper licensing and credentials, per ELIS, prior to an offer of employment.

The ISBE Special Education Department maintains the official [directory of Illinois State-Approved Directors of Special Education](#). When a new director of special education is appointed for a special education cooperative or stand-alone district, the title of “State-Approved Director of Special Education” must be requested and approved through this department to serve as the “**chief** administrative officer of the special education programs and services.” It is important to note that while a stand-alone district may employ more than one special education administrator, only one individual may be employed as the chief “State-Approved Director of Special Education.” If member districts are part of a special education cooperative, the director of the cooperative is appointed as the “State-Approved Director of Special Education.” Please notify our department as changes occur so we can keep this directory as accurate and up to date as possible.

Stand-alone districts or special education cooperatives must submit a letter or memo that includes the name of a new State-Approved Director of Special Education, the individual’s Illinois Educator Identification Number, and the effective date of the director appointment. In addition, please include the appointed individual’s educational contact information, which should include mailing address, phone number, fax number, and email address, on official letterhead. Please review the [current directory of Illinois State-Approved Directors of Special Education](#) and submit director updates to the attention of the ISBE Special Education Department at ISBESpecEd@isbe.net.