



STATE OF NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

A Memo from the New Jersey Department of Education

Date: August 12, 2026

To: Local Educational Agency Leads, Administrators of Approved Private Schools for Students with Disabilities

Route To: District Registrars, District Homeless Liaisons, Principals, School Nurses, All District Staff with Enrollment Responsibilities

From: Kimberly A. Murray, Ed.D., Acting Assistant Commissioner
Division of Educational Services

Annual Reminder: LEA Responsibilities for Identifying, Recruiting, and Reporting Eligible Migratory Students

This letter serves as a reminder of the federal requirement for identifying and recruiting eligible migrant students residing in New Jersey and clarifies the distinction between the terms "migrant" and "immigrant."

Migrant vs. Immigrant

As defined under [ESSA Section 1309 \(2\)](#), a migrant student is:

- 21 years of age or younger; and
- Who is, or whose parent/guardian is, a migratory fisher, dairy worker, lumber, or agricultural worker; and,
- Who in the preceding three years has moved from one school district to another for the worker to obtain temporary or seasonal employment in agricultural or fishing work; and
- Has received a [National Certificate of Eligibility](#) (COE) which is an official record of eligibility determination for migrant students.

Under [Section 3201](#) of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), the term "immigrant children and youth" refers to individuals who:

- Are aged three through 21; and
- Were not born in any state; and
- Have not been attending one or more schools in any one or more States for more than three full academic years.

What is the Migrant Education Program?

The purpose of the federal Migrant Education Program (MEP) is: (1) to ensure eligible children of migratory farm workers and migratory fishers are provided with appropriate educational support services to help reduce the educational lags that result from repeated moves; and (2) to ensure these children have the opportunity to meet the same challenging state educational content and student performance standards that all children are expected to meet.

Two grantees were selected through a competitive grant process to assist local education agencies (LEAs) with identifying, recruiting, and providing services to eligible migratory children, youth, and their families—one serving the Northern region of the state and the other serving the Southern region. It is important for LEAs to know their [regional MEP contact](#) to ensure all eligible students are identified and receive the National COE in order to secure adequate funding to support migrant students across New Jersey’s 21 counties.

LEA Responsibilities

The New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) requires all districts to actively identify and recruit migratory students, including out-of-school youth (OSY), throughout the year.

Identification involves locating migratory children, while recruitment includes contacting families, explaining the benefits of the MEP, determining eligibility, and enrolling eligible students.

For MEP purposes, an OSY is a youth of high school-age through age 21, who is not enrolled in a K-12 institution. This may include individuals who have dropped out, are pursuing a high school equivalency program outside a K12 setting or are in the area solely for employment.

In accordance with [ESEA Section 1304](#), NJDOE must ensure educational continuity for migratory students through the timely transfer of school and health records when students or OSY move between schools. To support this requirement, LEAs must:

- Accurately identify all eligible migrant children for statewide assessments and federal reporting; and
- Correctly report migrant status in the NJDOE’s [New Jersey Statewide Longitudinal Education Data System \(NJSLEDS\)](#) database (migrant status data element); and
- Collaborate with your respective regional MEP contact to obtain a National COE.

Key Notes

- Do not designate a student as migrant in NJSLEDS until eligibility has been confirmed by your regional MEP contact.
- Children cannot receive MEP services without a National COE.
- For more information about the New Jersey MEP, please refer to [the NJDOE MEP website](#).
- As required under ESSA, LEAs must conduct consultation regarding equitable services for nonpublic school students, their teachers, and other educational personnel. Please refer to the April 23, 2025 [broadcast](#) memo for additional guidance.

Contact Information

For questions related to the Migrant Education Program (MEP), email migrated@doe.nj.gov.