

Therapeutic Classroom Claims Legislative Report

December 1, 2023



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Legislative Requirement Senate File 2360 and Iowa Code Chapter 256.25A

On or before December 1, 2023, the director of the department shall review the data collected through the claims process and shall prepare and submit to the general assembly a report containing an analysis of the efficacy of claims reimbursement in accordance with this section and recommendations for changes as appropriate.

Section 1: Department and School District Activities to Implement Senate File 2360 and Iowa Code Chapter 256.25A

On June 29, 2020, Governor Reynolds signed Senate File 2360, an Act, which provides a comprehensive approach to create a safe learning space for students and teachers. The requirements included in SF 2360 encompass five different topic areas including: Response and Reporting of School Behavioral Challenges, Professional Responsibilities and Protections, Therapeutic Classroom Incentive Grant and Claims Reimbursement, Evidence-based Standards and Guidance and Requirements of Institutes of Higher Education.

Specific to the therapeutic classroom claims reimbursement, the legislation requires the Iowa Department of Education (Department) to review the data collected through the therapeutic classroom claims process and prepare and submit a report to the general assembly which contains an analysis of the efficacy of claims reimbursement and recommendations for changes as appropriate.

SF 2360 and Iowa Code chapter 256.25A address two types of therapeutic classroom claims, claims reimbursement for therapeutic classroom services and claims reimbursement for transportation to a therapeutic classroom. The legislation identifies the requirements for reimbursement eligibility, the timeline for claims submission and warrants, and calculations for the reimbursement amounts.

The legislation requires that school districts with eligible claims submit their claims by June 15 annually. The Department is required to provide the claims forms to the school districts and draw warrants payable to the school districts by July 1.

To ensure accurate reimbursement and data reporting, the Department requires school districts with therapeutic classroom programs sign assurances in the Consolidated Accountability and Support Application (CASA) that their therapeutic classroom program meets the required criteria under 281 - Iowa Administrative Code chapter 14, section 13.

All districts are required to submit data on student entry and exit of the therapeutic classroom through their district's Student Information System (SIS). This data is uploaded to the State Reporting in Iowa (SRI) system. Based on end-of-the year data submitted by each school district, the Department provides each eligible school district with pre-populated claims forms containing the available data.

Therapeutic Classroom Services Claims

Legislation requires an appropriation from the general fund to the Department in an amount necessary to pay all approved claims submitted for therapeutic services each year, beginning on or after July 1, 2022. A school district that provides a therapeutic classroom to students enrolled in a school district or an accredited nonpublic school may submit claims for students assigned to the therapeutic classroom who do not have an assigned special education weighting under Iowa Code chapter 256B.9, subsection 1, paragraph "b," "c", or "d", and for whom behavioral intervention plans have been implemented.

Therapeutic Classroom Transportation Claims

Legislation specifies that reimbursement of therapeutic classroom transportation claims requires an appropriation from the General Assembly. If the general assembly appropriates funds for transportation claims reimbursement, the following is required in order for a school district to be eligible for therapeutic classroom transportation reimbursement:

- The school district who provides transportation during a school year is required to submit the claim.
- The services must be more than 30 miles from the student’s designated school or accredited nonpublic school.
- The student must be enrolled in the resident school district or accredited nonpublic school located within the boundaries of the school.
- The student has not been assigned a weighting under Iowa Code chapter 256B.9 during the period for which services are claimed.
- The student has a Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP) during the period for which services are claimed.
- The school district or accredited nonpublic school must have a shared agreement to provide the therapeutic classroom services.

Section 2: Therapeutic Classroom Claims Reimbursement

In 2021, the Legislature appropriated \$500,000 for therapeutic classroom transportation claims reimbursement and appropriated \$500,000 for therapeutic classroom transportation claims reimbursement in 2022.

Table 1 provides a summary of the total claims submitted and reimbursed for therapeutic classroom services and transportation in the school year 2021-22.

Table 1: School Year 2021- 22 Therapeutic Classroom Claims

School District	Claim Total Submitted and Reimbursed for Therapeutic Classroom Services	Claim Total Submitted and Reimbursed for Therapeutic Classroom Transportation
Washington CSD	\$60,901.69	\$0.00
Total	\$60,901.69	\$0.00

Table 2 provides a summary of the total claims submitted and reimbursed for therapeutic classroom services and transportation in the school year 2022-23.

Table 2: School Year 2022-23 Therapeutic Classroom Claims

School District	Claim Total Submitted and Reimbursed for Therapeutic Classroom Services	Claim Total Submitted and Reimbursed for Therapeutic Classroom Transportation
Ames	\$36,828.33	\$0.00
Bellevue	\$59,571.96	\$0.00
Clinton	\$181.08	\$0.00
Ottumwa	\$18,251.24	\$0.00
Total Year 2 Claims	\$114,832.61	\$0.00

Analysis of Data and Recommendations

No school district submitted a reimbursement claim for transportation to therapeutic classrooms in the 2021-22 or 2022-23 school years. The eligibility requirements for the transportation claim reimbursement are specific. The eligibility criteria ensure access to therapeutic classroom services for students who do not have an assigned weighting under Iowa Code chapter 256.B.9 and who reside in a school district without a therapeutic classroom. While no school district has yet submitted a reimbursement claim for providing transportation to a therapeutic classroom, it will be important that funds are available when needed.

Reimbursement for therapeutic classroom services for students without an assigned weighting under Iowa Code chapter 256.B.9 increased from \$60,000 in the school year 2021-22 to \$114,832.61 in the school year 2022-23. It is anticipated that reimbursement for therapeutic classroom services will continue to increase as more districts establish therapeutic classrooms and expand the continuum of quality behavioral supports for learners. The funding for therapeutic classroom services ensures access to needed services for students who do not have an assigned weighting under Iowa Code chapter 256.B.9.

Based on the review and analysis of the claims data, the Department respectfully submits the following recommendations:

1. Allow the appropriation for therapeutic classroom services claims reimbursement to include reimbursement for the transportation to therapeutic classrooms, while maintaining the eligibility requirements for both claims.
2. Allow the Department to retain and repurpose unspent therapeutic classroom transportation claim funds to support additional therapeutic classroom incentive grants.