

What is the Hardship Process?

A Hardship Petition is the initial step by which families of students in grades K-12 request a school transfer due to hardship caused by their child's current school placement. In March 2018, our School Committee defined new criteria as to what constitutes a hardship. If a hardship exists, the committee will offer a school that will help remedy the situation, as opposed to the parent/guardian choosing a preferred school.

The second and ***final step*** of the process is the Hardship Appeal Hearing. If the initial application is denied by the subcommittee (3-4 people), you may request an appeal. In order for your appeal to be heard, you must provide additional paperwork to support your claim that a true hardship exists and that attending the homeschool presents a very adverse situation for your child. The hearing will be an opportunity for the parent(s) to meet with 5-6 administrators/staff members to present additional information and support the original petition. None of the Appeals Committee members would have taken part in the initial screening.

General Information on Hardships:

Hardships:

- Will not be granted for parent/guardian convenience. Parent/guardian convenience includes, but is not limited to, making a request to have siblings who are elementary age in the same school as siblings who are in middle school.
- Will not override the enrollment populations numbers. If a Hardship is granted, the student's new school assignment ***must have available seats*** and must follow the requirement of school capacity balance.
- Will not be granted if the appeal is an attempt to gain admission to a specific school.
- Will be granted only when it is shown that the transfer is necessary for the physical or emotional safety of the student and must be for the direct benefit of the student.

Again, the most significant change to the Hardship policy is that Hardships may not be used to gain admission to a specific school. Many of the applications we receive are simply a preference for a school.

How do families request a transfer on the basis of hardship (harm) to the child?

Parents who can show that their child's school assignment causes a hardship may appeal their school assignment. A Boundary Exemption Petition may be downloaded from the Student Services blog or requested in person from the Student Services Office. Click link here:

After the application is filled out, you are **required** to submit the form with relevant supporting documentation to the Student Services Office, where it will be reviewed to determine if it meets the criteria. **All forms are due by June 1st for the first semester and December 31st for the second semester.**

You will receive an acceptance or denial letter in July/August (for first semester applications) or late January (for second semester applications). If you receive a denial letter and wish to appeal the decision, you will need to complete a Hardship Appeal Hearing request ([click here](#)). If your application meets the criteria, the Appeals Committee will notify you of the next available appointment for a Hardship hearing, usually within 2-3 weeks depending on the time of year.

What is supporting documentation?

In addition to the Hardship Appeal Form, parents/guardians are required to provide supporting documentation. This can include, but is not limited to:

- Copies of reports of incidents submitted to school administrators or staff members, including the number of times the report/complaint was filed
- Absence and/or tardiness reports
- Written timeline of events showing evidence of harm caused by the child's current placement, including history and/or evidence of the family's attempt(s) to work with school officials and report(s) on the outcome of any dispute resolution/mediation meetings.
- Letter(s) from a doctor or therapist, student health information, or other evidence of harm
- Medical documentation, letter(s) from a doctor/therapist, and/or parent/guardian health history documentation, if the hardship pertains to a parent/guardian illness or medical issue

Can I be denied a Hardship Appeal Hearing?

Yes. The Hardship Appeal Hearing Committee will review your form and required supporting documentation for completeness and may consult with the parents/guardians or other individuals if further clarification is needed. Your hearing can be denied if:

- the Hardship Appeal form is not complete
- supporting documentation is not submitted and/or
- the hardship appeal does not meet the criteria for a hardship as defined above

If your request does not meet the criteria, you will be notified by mail and no hardship hearing will be scheduled. This letter will explain why the Hearing was not granted, and may recommend other possible routes to meeting the child's needs. You may wish to revise your hardship appeal request and appeal for reconsideration.

What is a Hardship Appeal Hearing?

In a Hardship Appeal Hearing, the Hardship Committee will meet with a family to hear the family's appeal, or reasons why the child's current school assignment poses a hardship for the child. The Hardship Committee consists of a small group of neutral staff people who will take all matters into consideration and work within the guidelines of maintaining appropriate school populations. Hardship Committee members do not receive information about the appeals prior to the scheduled time. Families are invited to bring additional documentation to this hearing to assist with their presentation of the facts and issues involved.

How will I be notified of the Hardship decision?

The Hardship Committee will take time to deliberate and then vote on their decision. In order for a petition to be approved, the majority of the committee needs to vote favorably. For example, if the committee has 5 members, all that is needed are 3 favorable votes for approval. The committee may also decide to conditionally approve an application. For example, a different school than the one requested may be offered or a conditional approval may be suggested. In any event, families are notified of the Committee's decision by letter, usually within 1-2 weeks.

What happens if my Hardship is not granted?

If a hardship is not granted, the Committee will send you a letter, usually within 1-2 weeks. Whenever possible and when applicable, the Committee will recommend other routes to meeting the child's needs. ***This decision is final and no further appeal process or communication with Student Services, the Superintendent or the Board of Education will be honored.***

What happens if my Hardship is granted?

If a hardship is granted, the committee will work with the family to find an appropriate school for the student. In most cases, a placement will be sought that will allow an immediate transfer in order to address the student's needs. However, a new school assignment must still follow the policies and guidelines associated with school transfers.