

State of Delaware

**Fiscal Year 2023  
Interagency Collaborative Team  
Annual Report  
July 1, 2022 – June 30, 2023**

*Under 14 Del. C. §3124*



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**Interagency Collaborative Team  
Annual Report for FY 2023  
July 1, 2022 – June 30, 2023**

The Interagency Collaborative Team (ICT) is authorized under Title 14 Delaware Code, Chapter 31, Section 3124, [Delaware Code Title 14 Section 3124](#). The purpose of the ICT is to provide a collaborative, interagency approach to service delivery for children and youth with disabilities who present unique educational needs that cannot be addressed through the existing resources of a single agency or the regularly offered free, appropriate, public education programs of the State. In addition to planning for individual children, the ICT identifies impediments to collaborative service delivery and engages with partner agencies to recommend strategies to remove them. As established in Delaware Code, the ICT consists of members of specific agencies whose representatives for the FY 2023 reporting period follow:

Aileen Fink, Director, Division of Prevention and Behavioral Health Services, DSCYF  
(Jandy Albury, designated representative)

Trenee Parker, Director, Division of Family Services, DSCYF  
(Monica Morris, designated representative)

Renee Ciconte, Director, Division of Youth Rehabilitative Services, DSCYF  
(Olivia Hearne, designated representative)

Jody Roberts, Director, Division of Developmental Disabilities Services, DHSS  
(Karen Wilson, designated representative)

Joanna Champney, Director, Division of Substance Abuse and Mental Health, DHSS  
(Danielle Gumbs, Lezley Sexton and Rian Bullock, designated representatives)

Cerron Cade, Director, Office of Management and Budget  
(Nicholas Konzelman, designated representative)

Ruth Ann Miller, Office of Controller General  
(Kiley Thompson, designated representative)

Dale Matusevich, Chair, Director, Exceptional Children Resources, DOE

Monica Minor Gant, Associate Secretary, Academic Support, DOE

In addition, Rachael Rudinoff, Ed.D., ICT Coordinator, Exceptional Children Resources, coordinates and attends all ICT meetings and completes all related work. Interagency Collaborative Team case review meetings include representatives of the responsible local education agency (LEA), the parent/guardian or Educational Surrogate Parent, and other invited participants who work with and have knowledge of individual student cases.

Under Delaware Code (14 Del. C. §3124), private placement with financial aid may be sought when an Individual Education Program (IEP) team finds that an eligible child with a disability cannot benefit from the regularly offered, free appropriate public education programs (FAPE), which include regular classes, special classes or special schools. The determination shall be made by the IEP team and the Department of Education that no LEA or other state agency has a suitable program of education for the particular child with a disability. Such private placement shall be in a school or program approved by the Department of Education.

The ICT is responsible to review all initial and renewal applications for Unique Alternative services prior to requesting funding approval by the Secretary of Education. The ICT reviews existing information related to the student's evaluations and assessments, confirms provision of individualized services, discusses proposed educational plans, makes recommendations for alternative education services, and ensures coordinated interagency service delivery and funding are available to youth. The coordinated services may include behavioral health treatment plans.

## **Delaware Department of Education Data Reporting Requirements**

The reader can refer to the full reporting requirements necessary to protect each student's personally identifiable information: <https://www.doe.k12.de.us/Page/3024>.

Please note the following suppression rules for all tables:

1. Any cell whose population value is less than fifteen (15), regardless of the cell's value.
2. Any cell whose corresponding population value is at or above fifteen (15), but whose cell value is less than five (5).

Any cell whose corresponding population is at or above fifteen (15), but whose cell value is within five (5) of the population.

## **Interagency Collaborative Team Procedures**

The Interagency Collaborative Team meets monthly to review Unique Alternative applications and twice monthly during the summer months to review annual renewal applications prior to August 31, as required in Code. The ICT reviewed 43 unduplicated cases during FY 2023, which represented 14 more case reviews than during the previous fiscal year. This is comparable to the number of cases reviewed prior to virtual and hybrid instruction implemented due to COVID-19 restrictions. Of the 43 unduplicated cases, the ICT approved all initial requests for ICT support. Additionally, one student's District and IEP team requested extended or increased services, which the ICT approved. The following chart summarizes the ICT approvals and service activities FY 2007 through FY 2023.

## Historical Summary of Unique Alternative Services

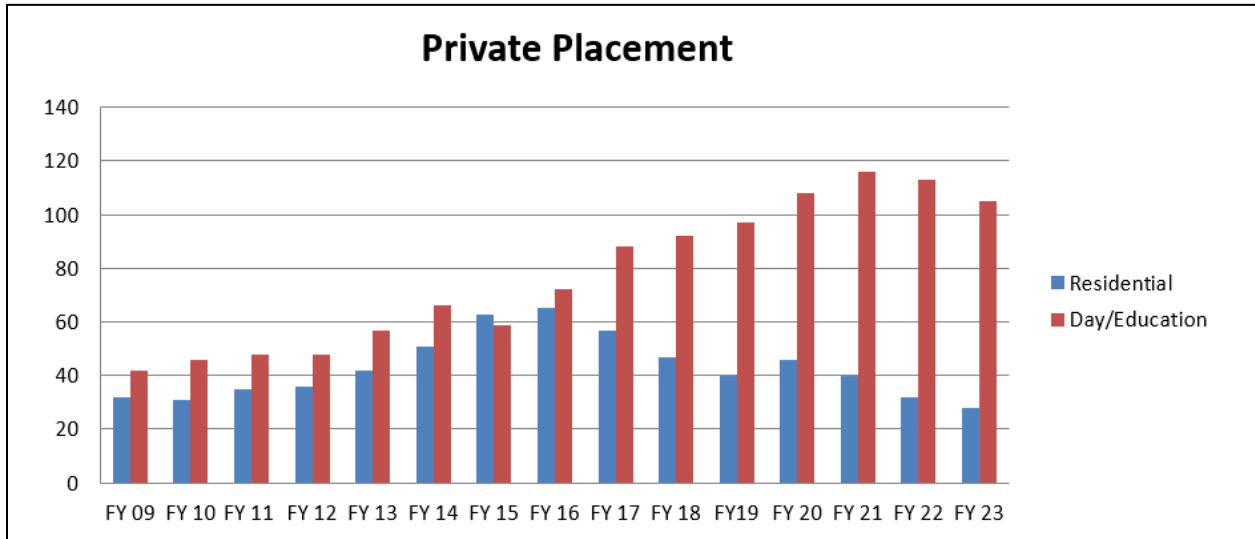
	'07	'08	'09	'10	'11	'12	'13	'14	'15	'16	'17	'18	'19	'20	'21	'22	'23
<b>Total # of Cases Reviewed: New, Continuing, Increased Services</b>	77	61	58	46	32	32	43	42	68	37	41	44	47	39	19	33	54
<b>Total Served in Private Programs 7/1 – 6/30</b>	220	160	182	105	90	105	120	144	140	142	139	138	154	156	135	133	125

During FY 2023, the ICT supported 124 students in private programs, which included day and residential placements. This represents 9 fewer students than in FY 2022. Since some students transfer between day and residential programs, as well as to temporary mental health treatment or detention centers, the data in this report represent each student’s most recent placement during FY 2023. The number of students approved for residential programming at the conclusion of FY 2023 was 31, with a number of those students awaiting placement at the conclusion of the fiscal year. This represents 3 more students approved for residential services than in FY 2022. A number of additional students received education support while in residential programs through agency placement. The number of students approved for private day programs increased by 10 to 109 students, with a number of those students awaiting placement at the conclusion of the fiscal year.

Due to students’ progress in residential programs, a number of students transferred from ICT- and LEA-supported, out-of- state residential programs to day programs during 2022-2023. Additional students transferred from Agency- and LEA- supported, out-of-state residential programs to day programs. This reflects the progress of individual students, as well as the LEAs’ and IEP teams’ work with students, partner agencies, and private programs to successfully transition the youth to day programs with or without outpatient or in-home therapeutic support services.

Students also received support for their education services while they were medically placed in a pediatric nursing facility. Medicaid or family insurance funded their medical and residential services. Additionally, students received support for their education program while a partnering agency funded their residential services. The “education only” arrangement typically occurs when an agency makes a unilateral placement with the engagement of the LEA of residence. This might be due to a student’s behavioral health, family, or foster care and dependency status. However, the corresponding LEA participates in education funding through the ICT if the student has been supported by the ICT and the LEA agrees the program can meet the youth’s educational needs. If an agency makes a unilateral placement prior to ICT approval and the LEA subsequently determines it cannot provide a free, appropriate public education to the student, the LEA may apply to the ICT for support of the education program.

## Summary of Unique Alternative Placements



The chart above illustrates longitudinal ICT private placements for the past 15 years. There has been a steady decline in the number of residential placements with a notable upward trend in day placements.

During FY 2023, students were served in 23 private programs with 12 providing residential services and 17 programs providing day or education services. Programs such as Bancroft, Benedictine, Foundations Behavioral Health/LifeWorks School and Shorehaven can provide both day and residential services due to service options and proximity to Delaware school districts. Programs such as LifeWorks School, High Road School, Devereux, and YALE School operate multiple campuses.

The increase in the number of students supported in day programs continues due to the continued availability of private program options at High Road Schools in each of the State’s three counties. This enabled students who progressed to return to Delaware from out of state residential programs and receive a lower intensity of services while living at home or in a community residence. Further, the directors of the High Road School programs are responsive to the needs of students who are transient or in the custody of the Division of Family Services and have changes in foster family locations. These youth may have transferred between High Road School locations, with the benefit and stability of familiar staff who work in multiple locations.

High Road School directors continued their collaboration with school districts across all three counties with In-District classrooms (IDCs) at Caesar Rodney, Lake Forest, Laurel, Indian River, Milford, Smyrna, and Woodbridge School Districts. The High Road IDCs are staffed with a combination of High Road and local school educators. These efforts provided needed capacity within the district to serve students in the least restrictive environment, reduced private school placements and supported students’ transitions to the districts from private schools and separate schools within districts.

High Road School administrators distribute the expansions within and across districts to maintain program quality at the three private school sites that serve students supported by the ICT, as well as the current IDCs.

### **Residential Service by Location**

During FY 2023 there were 31 students supported by the ICT for residential programming. This included 9 youth who awaited placement but does not include a number of additional “education only” students who resided in private programs through partner agency support for the residential component.

Through collaboration with the Local Education Agencies and families, the ICT attempts to provide residential services to students as close to their homes as possible. During FY 2022, there were no in-state, private residential options available to students. Two of the out-of-state programs, Benedictine School and Shorehaven, are located close to Delaware in neighboring Maryland counties. Students also received residential services in New Jersey and Pennsylvania provided residential services to 12 students, as well as a number of the aforementioned “education only” students for whom partner agencies supported their residential services.

A small number of students received education only or residential services at programs located at a greater distance. This is necessary due to the unique nature of the students’ disabilities or their complex behavioral health needs. It is important to note that given a student’s behavioral health needs, it is often necessary to provide services in out-of-state programs, which are accredited to provide these necessary services.

### **Unique Alternative Initial Placement, Renewal and Discharge Processes**

The ICT Coordinator continued to provide technical assistance to LEA Special Education Directors and Coordinators regarding the program options available for new student cases, best practices to support students, and the requirements of Delaware Code and Special Education Regulations related to unique education alternatives. This included support to complete the processes for initial private placement in collaboration with partner agencies, as well as the annual renewal process. The ICT Coordinator hosted an annual training, which explored initial and renewal case review processes, navigation of application and financial documentation procedures, and identification of solutions to program and service barriers. To assist with the renewal process, the ICT Coordinator provided a list of each respective LEA’s children and youth who receive Unique Alternative service funding. The annual ICT renewal process is necessary if IEP teams plan to continue the Unique Alternative services and placement.

The ICT members prepare for the renewal process through consultation with their respective agency divisions to confirm the status of student and family support. In determining whether to continue support, the ICT members consider each student’s progress and continuing need for Unique Alternative services. Renewals typically extend through a full fiscal year. In an effort to return youth to their homes and local communities, least restrictive education environment (LRE)

and community-based services, the ICT members may request three- and six- month updates for students whose progress data indicate potential readiness to return to their home or local school. Increasingly, the ICT grants approvals for a partial year of funding and requests submission of written transition plans that detail the supports to be provided to students, families and local staff in order to facilitate students' return to the local school and community. The ICT Chair recommends that IEP teams begin transition planning at the time of admission to a private program. Transition plans may focus on return to local schools, home or post-secondary services, depending on the age and needs of the student.

Approval of annual renewal applications is required in Regulation to be completed by August 31 of each year. During the Summer 2023 renewal period the majority of LEAs submitted timely renewal applications. The ICT Coordinator worked closely with novice coordinators to facilitate their completion of the renewal process. Additional barriers to timely completion of the renewal process can include LEAs' difficulty involving some parents in the process, families' movement across districts or out of state, or maintaining the engagement of students who have reached the age of majority. The ICT Coordinator collaborates with LEA, partner agency, and private program representatives to address these barriers.

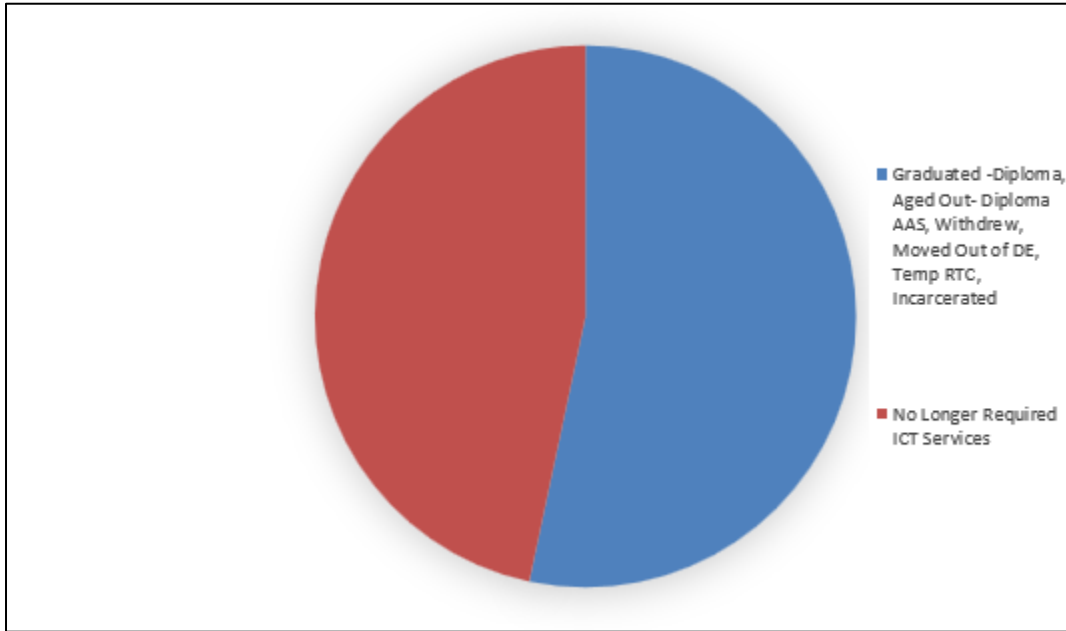
### **Student Discharge and Exit Summary**

When students discharge from Unique Alternative services, the LEA is required to notify the ICT Coordinator with an explanation, the date of discharge, and submit final cost information if applicable. A small percentage of students who withdraw may return to the ICT for support in subsequent years.

The graph below summarizes the reasons 30 students exited Unique Alternative services throughout FY 23:

- students no longer required the increased level of service,
- students moved out of state,
- students transitioned to residential treatment centers through an agency,
- students withdrew from the education system, some to be homeschooled,
- student(s) became incarcerated,
- students graduated with a regular diploma, or
- students aged out at the conclusion of the school year in which they reached 22 years of age, earning a Diploma of Alternate Achievement Standards.

## Student Exit Summary



Students who attain the age of 22 after August 31 of a school year are eligible for services throughout that year. If the IEP team determines a student requires extended school year services, these youth may continue to receive school-age services through August 31 of their final school year. Students who age-out typically continue to need specialized and supportive living and work arrangements, provided through the adult services systems. Collaborative, interagency efforts to support students' transitions to post-secondary education or training, as well as supported or independent employment and living, are the responsibility of the LEAs and IEP teams.

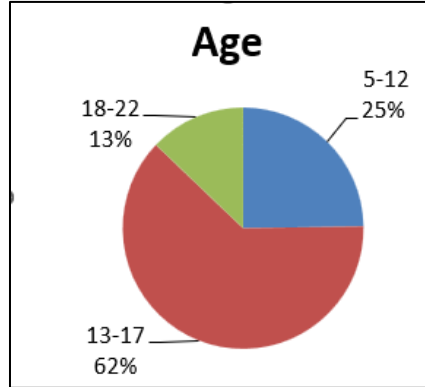
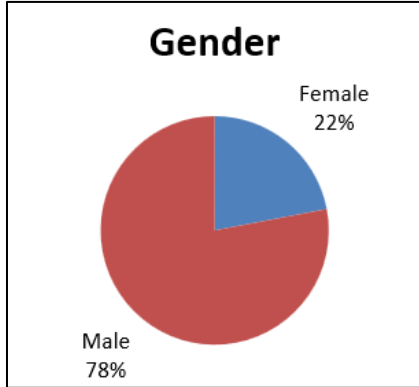
## Unique Alternative Student Population

The following chart and graphs summarize demographic information for the students served by the ICT during FY 2023. This includes students approved for day or residential placement but not admitted to the private programs during the 2022-2023 school year. It is notable that most youth supported by the ICT are within the 13 to 17 and 18 to 22 years of age ranges. It is rare that an LEA would apply to the ICT for support of a young child under 8 years. Typically, LEAs spend multiple years exploring service options before referring a young child.



## Demographic Information

FY 2021	Gender			Age		
	Male	Female	Total	5-12	13-17	18-22
Totals	112	32	133	36	90	18
Percentages	78%	22%		25%	63%	13%



## Interagency Collaboration

Interagency collaboration is essential to the support of the children and youth supported through Unique Alternatives services to ensure comprehensive and coordinated service delivery. Students’ complex needs related to their disability and/or behavioral health may contribute to challenges beyond the school setting, such as in the home and community. Many students receive support and services from multiple agencies. Additionally, ICT partner agencies may share funding to meet the needs of the students served in residential programs through the ICT.

Beyond the school day, partner agencies may provide a variety of supportive services, such as mobile outpatient and family-based services, behavioral consultants, and/or respite services. As previously mentioned, a number of students received ICT support for their education program while a partnering agency funded their residential services due to the students’ intense behavioral health needs, family circumstances, or changes in foster care status. When this occurs, the responsible LEA participates in education funding through the ICT if an appropriate program is not available in the public schools.

## **Service Needs and Trends**

It continues to be difficult for LEAs and families to identify appropriate services and programs, close to home and in the least restrictive environment, for youth with complex disabilities and behavioral health needs. It is often necessary to seek services in private programs located beyond Delaware. This presents complications to families for visits with their youth, participation in counseling, family reunification plans, and transition to the local community. Further, obtaining enough staff in facilities have limited availability of program options, necessitating a number of students to remain on admission wait lists while the LEAs combine resources to provide FAPE to the youth, which is due to this reduction in capacity for admission. With all of the residential programs utilized for ICT supported youth out of state, Delaware LEAs competed with other states' agencies for limited spaces. Additionally, some private programs declined the request to complete Delaware Department of Education's private school approval process. Therefore, placement in those programs was not an option to Delaware LEAs.

The ICT members and their respective agencies continue to focus on the transition services necessary to facilitate students' return to their families and local communities. This requires establishment of additional transitional resources within the State, which could extend beyond the ICT funding allocation.

While agencies expand the range of services available to families and youth in their homes, local schools, and the community, gaps in services continue. A percentage of youth continues to require admission to residential settings, which may occur unilaterally through multiple agencies. At times, these students can receive an appropriate education within the local schools but their behavioral health or intense behaviors prevent their ability to remain in their homes with existing resources. Discussions continue across agencies to address these concerns and identify cost-effective solutions. The ICT Chair and Coordinator continue to participate in these discussions to address the systems issues, as well as problem-solve around individual student's needs when cases arise without clear solutions and for whom interagency collaboration is crucial.

Despite these concerns, the provisions of Delaware Code are specific in their requirements. That is, Unique Alternative funding can be sought when an IEP team and the Department of Education find that an eligible child with a disability has needs that cannot be addressed through the existing resources and programs of the State. While partner agencies continue to increase efforts to provide community-based supports to youth and their families, the need to provide services and financial support for residential placements for some students continues. However, if a free, appropriate program is available in a Delaware public school, the need for residential services would not be supported by the ICT.

## Major Activities of the Interagency Collaborative Team

This section highlights the major activities relevant to the ICT during FY 2023:

1. The ICT Chair and Coordinator continued collaboration with administrators at High Road School sites in New Castle, Kent, and Sussex Counties to monitor program enhancements. The ICT Coordinator conducted monthly check-ins with the administrators of the private High Road School sites, as well as the In District Classrooms (IDC). Areas of focus continued to include academic instruction, individualized behavior and counseling supports, instruction of replacement skills, progress monitoring, and post-secondary transition services. The availability of the three High Road School sites provides service options across all Delaware counties.
2. The ICT Coordinator continued to serve as a liaison to school districts, charter schools, partner agencies, and private school programs to identify appropriate services for students and collaborate to resolve funding and service issues. The ICT Coordinator engaged in problem-solving consultations regarding specific cases prior to and following ICT approvals to assist LEAs with their placement options.
3. The ICT Coordinator's goal is to approve two additional programs annually to expand service options to LEAs and families, with a focus on identifying additional programs that provide behavioral health services to meet the increased demand. During the FY 2023, the following new private programs were approved:
  - Coastal Harbor Treatment Center (Georgia)
  - Devereux Day Academy (Pennsylvania)
  - The King's Daughters' School (Tennessee)
  - Newport News Behavioral Health Center (Virginia)

Site visits, completed for triennial program reapproval at the following programs:

- Centreville Layton School (Delaware)
  - Davidson School at Elwyn (Pennsylvania)
  - Devereux Advanced Behavioral Health – Brandywine/Mapleton (Pennsylvania)
  - Devereux CARES (Pennsylvania)
  - Devereux School for Integrated Learning (formerly CIDDS) (Pennsylvania)
  - KidsPeace (Pennsylvania)
  - Pathway School (Pennsylvania)
  - Shorehaven School (Maryland)
  - Woods Services (Pennsylvania)
4. The ICT Coordinator continued to explore options for expanded behavioral health services and consulted with Universal Health Services' KidLink Coordinator to identify potential programs.

5. The ICT Coordinator worked with the National Director of Student Services for Devereux Advanced Behavioral Health to create additional Devereux partnerships and expand the enrollment of Delaware students in Devereux programs.
6. The ICT Coordinator collaborated with private program governing body corporations in the hopes of bringing additional private program options to Delaware. These collaborations included Bancroft, Devereux, and Elwyn. These discussions are ongoing in the hopes of establishing these programs in Delaware in the future.
7. The ICT Chair and ICT Coordinator continued to collaborate across DOE workgroups to ensure procedural compliance with the Limitations on the Use of Seclusion and Restraint in public schools. The ICT Coordinator monitored private program student records to ensure timely and accurate reporting of physical restraints of students supported by the ICT. These efforts are ongoing.
8. The ICT Coordinator worked with the administration from High Road School of Delaware, Maryland, and Connecticut in regard to expanding High Road School programming in Delaware. The B.E.S.T. model was observed in Maryland and Connecticut. High Road School of Delaware will be working to expand their services for students with autism and/or intellectual disabilities.
9. The ICT Chair and ICT Coordinator collaborated with DOE Counsel and a consultant to review and revise an Interagency Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between DOE, DSCYF, and LEAs. Efforts are ongoing and have included informal input from LEAs and DSCYF review and input on the proposed MOU changes. Once DSCYF and DOE agree on elements related to State agencies, focus will shift to LEA activities and input.

For more information on the Interagency Collaborative Team and its activities, please contact:

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