
Nonpublic Agencies (NPAs)

Definition, state context, and service model

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What is an NPA?

- An NPA is an OSPI-authorized entity that can contract with a school district to provide a student program of special education services.
- Placement is decided through the IEP process when a district cannot currently meet the student's needs within the district.
- Even when a student is served by an NPA, the resident school district remains responsible for ensuring the student receives FAPE.

Think of an NPA as a specialized placement used when a student needs supports beyond what the district can currently provide.

Why districts contract NPAs?

- Public schools are required to provide a free appropriate public education (FAPE) to students with disabilities ages 3–21 who are eligible for special education services.
- Some students need a more intensive setting, specially trained staffs, or behavior support model than the district can provide in-house.
- NPA placements are still educational placements: students receive special education and related services aligned to the IEP.
- For many students, the long-term goal is movement toward a less restrictive setting, including possible return to district-based programming.

Academic routines are often the setting in which behavioral, communication, and regulation skills are taught and practiced.

Washington State NPA Snapshot

553

students with IEPs
placed at NPAs
(November 2023)

482 / 71

in-state / out-of-state
placements

89

authorized NPA locations
for 2024–25

Most common disability categories

- Autism (207)
- Health Impairment (109)
- Emotional/Behavioral Disability (101)

Student Pathways

27% of students placed at NPAs in 2022–23 returned to a Washington public school district the following school year.

85.7% regular attendance rate reported for students placed at NPAs in 2022–23.

Table 7: Graduation Rates of Students Placed at NPAs During 2022–23 School Year

Graduation Cohort	Graduates	Continuing	Dropout
Four Year	31%	58%	10%
Four, Five Year	28%	60%	13%
Four, Five, Six Year	24%	66%	13%
Four, Five, Six, Seven Year	25%	59%	16%

Source: Education Data System (EDS) Special Education Reporting Application in combination with Comprehensive Education Data and Research System (CEDARS) data.

An Example of a Service Model

- Trauma-informed approach
- Majority 1:1 to 2:1 staffing
- Direct staff supported and supervised by behavior analysts
- Practical Functional Assessment (PFA) and Skill-Based Treatment
- Safety Care
- Interdisciplinary collaboration

Goal

Provide intensive educational and behavioral support so students can access instruction and, when appropriate, move toward return to their home district and community.

My experience in NPA settings

My Role

- I am a LABA (Licensed Assistant Behavior Analyst)
- I work about 20 hours per week and currently support 5 students ages 14-19.
- My role includes supporting students' behavioral, academic, and communication needs, as well as their daily participation in the school setting.
- IEP goals are a main focus, but the work often goes beyond that to include safety, regulation, relationship-building, and helping students access learning throughout the day.
- I collaborate with teachers, families, and related service providers to ensure coordinated and consistent support.

What is Unique

- full-time on-site BCBAs
- Classrooms differ by student needs, group readiness, and class size.
- A balance of academic instruction and intensive behavioral support
- Strong crisis systems while still building academics, communication, and independence

Systems We Use

- Walkie codes for safety and urgency
- Data collection and individualized behavior plans
- Structured routines, visuals, and reinforcement
- Strong collaboration across the whole team

What I've Learned

- Prevention, consistency, and teamwork are often more powerful than reaction.
- Strong clinical expertise is needed to design individualized, ethical, and effective support.
- Progress often begins with trust, regulation, and repeated opportunities to succeed.