

AGENCY OF EDUCATION
Barre, Vermont

TEAM: School Finance

ITEM: Will the State Board of Education grant an amendment to enable Cornerstone School in St. Johnsbury, VT to add the disability categories of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)?

SECRETARY'S RECOMMENDED ACTION:

That the State Board of Education grants an amendment to enable Cornerstone School in St. Johnsbury, VT to add the disability categories of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI). This approval is through June 30, 2021, to coincide with the school's current approval period; and

This approval is conditional on the requirement that the school reports to the Agency of Education within five business days whenever any changes occur in enrollment, programs, policies, facilities, financial capacity, staffing or administration during the approval period.

STATUTORY AUTHORITY: Title 16 V.S.A. §166(b)
State Board Rule: 2228 et.seq.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

1. Cornerstone School is an independent school providing educational, therapeutic, and reintegration services to students in grades K-8, within the disability categories of Intellectual Disability (ID), Specific Learning Disability (SLD), Other Health Impairment (OHI), Emotional Disturbance (ED), and Developmental Delay (DD). These students are in need of specialized services in a self-contained classroom due to academic and emotional difficulties, which interferes with their ability to be successful in a more traditional school environment. Cornerstone School is operated by Northeastern Family Institute of Vermont (NFI), Inc. in conjunction with Northeast Kingdom Human Services.
2. Cornerstone School received renewal of general and special education independent school approval, to serve students in grades K-8 on March 15, 2016 through June 30, 2021. Cornerstone School is requesting an amendment to enable the school to serve

students in the disability categories of Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) and Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI).

3. Cornerstone School provided detailed information about the staff's educational preparation and training in serving students with diagnoses of ASD and TBI. It also provided information about the comprehensive battery of assessments, supports and strategies that will be employed. AOE's special education team reviewed this information, and they deemed that this school has adequate resources to serve students in both these disability categories.
4. Cornerstone School has developed policies for admissions, discipline and significant change in placement. These policies were reviewed and found to be appropriate.
5. The Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) is part of the school's philosophy and each student's placement is based on individual needs for a LRE.
6. Cornerstone School will coordinate with Local Education Agencies through initiating referrals when appropriate, planning and participating in IEP meetings, providing information for evaluations, and planning and developing programs and accommodations.
7. Cornerstone School has a policy on prevention and reporting of harassment, hazing, and bullying that is as stringent as the Agency's model policy.

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS: none

STAFF AVAILABLE:

Cassandra Ryan, Fiscal and Regulatory Compliance Coordinator