

**AGENCY OF EDUCATION
Montpelier, Vermont**

TEAM: School Finance

ITEM: Will the State Board of Education grant an amendment to the general and special education independent school approval for Vermont Permanency Initiative (VPI), d.b.a. New England School for Girls, Bennington, VT, to enable the school to increase the number of female-identifying youth from 30-49 and change the age range served from 13-20 years of age to 11-21 years of age?

SECRETARY'S RECOMMENDED ACTION:

That the State Board of Education grant an amendment to the general and special education independent school approval for Vermont Permanency Initiative (VPI), d.b.a. New England School for Girls, Bennington, VT, to enable the school to increase the number of female-identifying youth from 30-49 and change the age range served from 13-20 years of age to 11-21 years of age, effective through June 30, 2021 to coincide with the school's current approval period.

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., Section 166 (b)
State Board Rule: 2228 et. seq.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

1. Vermont Permanency Initiative, d.b.a. New England School for Girls (NESG) is an independent, non-profit boarding facility providing educational, therapeutic, and reintegration services for female students. The students admitted at NESG are from out of state. Accepted students are in need of specialized services in a self-contained classroom and living environment due to academic and emotional difficulties that interfere with their ability to function in a traditional school environment. The mission of the school is to build a safe, trusting and responsible community in which students

are encouraged to heal from past trauma, find pleasure and joy in their lives, and build inner resources for their future. Vermont Permanency Initiative (VPI) d.b.a. New England School for Girls is owned and operated by Becket Family of Services, Inc. of Plymouth, NH.

2. The New England School for Girls is approved to serve female-identifying youth within the disability categories of Emotional Disturbance, Intellectual Disability, Multiple Disabilities, Other Health Impairment, Specific Learning Disability, Hearing Loss, and Speech or Language Impairment.
3. In August of 2019, the Agency of Human Services' Department for Children and Families (DCF) amended the Residential Treatment Program License for the New England School for Girls to increase the capacity from 35 to 49 and to change the age of the students being served from 13-20 to 11-21. The school is requesting these changes to its SBE approval to reflect the changes made by DCF, which also has regulatory authority over therapeutic residential schools like the New England School for Girls. With these changes, NESG's program will be divided into two tiers: The first tier is a subacute program on Vail Road (formerly Green Meadows now Green Meadows North); the second is on College Road (formerly Frost and now Green Meadows). Both these programs will be standalone, self-contained education programs. As each youth stabilizes (as evidenced by lessened symptom acuity), she may move into the second tier to allow for increased self-direction. This tier is the last step in NESG's continuum of care.
4. The Agency reviewed the register of DCF reports that are shared with AOE prior to making this recommendation, per SBE rule 2222.2.

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS: none

STAFF AVAILABLE:

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