

BERKS COUNTY GUEST TEACHER PROGRAM FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

(As of May 24, 2023)

What is the role of the BCIU in the Berks County Guest Teacher Program?

The BCIU works on behalf of the participating Berks County public school entities to recruit, train, and assist eligible Guest Teacher participants in securing a day-to-day substitute emergency permit through the PA Department of Education (PDE). This permit enables participants to qualify to work as substitute teachers in short-term sub assignments in any of the participating Berks County public school entities as well as in BCIU classrooms.

Which Berks County school districts participate in the Guest Teacher Program?

Sixteen school entities participate in the Guest Teacher Program: *Antietam SD, Boyertown Area SD, Brandywine Heights Area SD, Conrad Weiser Area SD, Daniel Boone Area SD, Exeter Township SD, Fleetwood Area SD, Governor Mifflin SD, Kutztown Area SD, Muhlenberg SD, Oley Valley SD, Schuylkill Valley SD, Twin Valley SD, Wilson SD, Berks Career & Technology Center (BCTC), and Berks County Intermediate Unit (BCIU).*

What if I want to substitute at a school district that doesn't participate in the Guest Teacher Program?

You'll need to apply directly to that district. The emergency permit obtained through the Guest Teacher Program cannot be used to work at a non-participating Berks County school entity or outside of Berks County.

Can I use this type of emergency permit to work as a full-time teacher or long-term substitute?

No. Your Type 06 emergency permit is only valid for work as a day-to-day substitute. You may not serve as a substitute for the same educator in the same subject area for more than 20 consecutive days under this type of permit. If a school district wishes to place you in a long-term assignment, they must apply directly to PDE for a different type of emergency permit.

How much can I earn as a substitute teacher? How will I be paid?

The pay rate for day-to-day subbing varies by school district. You will either be directly employed by the school district in which you sub or will become an employee of the third-party agency the school contracts its substitute services to. Contact the district directly for more information on rates of pay and other payroll matters.

In what subject areas and grade levels can I substitute?

You may substitute in any subject area and at any grade level with your emergency permit.

How often will I be contacted to substitute?

This will depend upon your availability, subject area and grade-level preferences, and on-the-job performance.

How will a school district contact me about substitute opportunities?

Methods of contact vary by school district; some use "live callers" while others use automated phone- or web-based systems such as Frontline Absence Management (formerly known as AESOP). Once a district approves you as a substitute, they'll inform you of their process.

If I'm unavailable on a day that I'm contacted to substitute, will the school district hold that against me?

If a district contacts you on multiple occasions and you are not available, they may move you to a low-priority list or stop contacting you altogether. To avoid this, it's best to notify the district of any changes to your availability.

I've been accepted into the Guest Teacher Program. What happens after I complete the two-day training?

Your application materials will be made available electronically to the participating school entities you select on the Guest Teacher Preference Form. (This selection form is provided to you at the training.) Once your permit is approved, you should reach out to those school entities to begin the employment process. They will review your information and coordinate with you to complete additional paperwork, such as the Act 168 Employment History Review process, payroll forms, staff ID, etc.

Note that some districts no longer directly employ substitute teachers and instead contract to third-party staffing agencies like Substitute Teacher Service (STS) or Source4Teachers. In this instance the district will instruct you to begin the employment process directly with the agency after they've been notified that your permit has been approved.

Please remember that each school district has its own onboarding process for Guest Teachers. Districts require that all new substitutes be approved by their school board, and all Pennsylvania public school entities are required to complete the Act 168 Employment History Review process for new school employees. These requirements may delay your start date.

How long will it take for my emergency permit to be approved?

Once you have submitted all required paperwork, initiated your permit request through PDE's Teacher Information Management System (TIMS) web portal, and successfully completed the two-day training, the permit approval process will take approx. two (2) weeks. Be aware that PDE randomly audits emergency permit applications for quality-control and other purposes. This may result in the delay of the issuance of your permit.

How will I know when my emergency permit has been approved? How do I obtain a copy of it?

You may check your permit approval status on TIMS. You will also be notified by email when your permit has been issued. Please note that emergency permits are only accessible to school entities; PDE does not issue copies of permits to individual educators.

How long is an emergency permit valid?

Emergency permits are valid for one (1) school year regardless of the date of issuance. The standard school year for permit issuance purposes is August 1 through July 31. Your permit must be renewed year to year to continue serving as a substitute in the Guest Teacher Program.

How long are my background check clearances valid?

Clearances are valid for five (5) years from the date of issuance in accordance with the PA Public School Code and commonwealth law. School employees are required to update their clearances every 60 months. If you do not work at least one day during the school year at one of your selected districts, you will have what is called a break in service. This break in service may necessitate you providing the district with updated clearances and other documentation such as updated physical and TB test to regain work eligibility.

Please note that though the law states that clearances are valid for five years, a school entity may have a more conservative policy in place, such as requiring that clearances for new employees be dated within one (1) year. In this instance a school entity's requirement overrides the law.

How do I provide my updated clearances to all the districts I'm working in?

You should provide your updated clearances to the BCIU's Guest Teacher Program Coordinator, Charlene Brown. They will then be made available electronically to the participating school entities in which you work.

I'd like to start subbing at a new school district. How do I add a district to my list of preferences?

If you're interested in adding a district to increase subbing opportunities, contact the district's Guest Teacher contact directly and inform them of your interest. Do not contact the BCIU; we do not keep track of where you're working after you complete the two-day training program.

I no longer wish to sub at one of my selected districts. How do I delete them from my list of preferences?

If you've worked within a school district in the last year, you should inform the district's Guest Teacher contact directly that you no longer wish to serve as a substitute there.

How do I renew my emergency permit from year to year?

Please check the BCIU website at www.berksiu.org/guestteacher beginning in May for updated information on the new school year's permit renewal process. The process generally includes the annual submission of an updated PDE-338G form, a \$5.00 money order payable to the BCIU, and the annual completion of the Act 71 Youth Suicide Awareness & Prevention training through SafeSchools. Your clearances must also be current and you must have completed the Act 126 Child Abuse Recognition & Reporting training within the last five (5) years.

Who should I notify if any of my contact information changes?

You should contact Charlene Brown in addition to any districts where you currently work.

What if I have additional questions about the Guest Teacher Program?

You may reach Charlene Brown, coordinator of the Guest Teacher Program, in the BCIU Office of Human Resources at 610-987-8433 or chabro@berksiu.org.