

Tiered Licensure Rules FAQs

In 2017, the Minnesota legislature established the Professional Educator Licensing and Standards Board and created a tiered licensure system for the issuance of teaching licenses in Minnesota. On Oct. 8, 2018, PELSb adopted rules to help implement the tiered licensure system. The rules also provide guidance and clarification to the [state laws that created the new licensure structure](#).

Below are frequently asked questions regarding tiered licensure, and questions are organized by broad categories. If you have general licensing questions, please send an email to pelsb@state.mn.us. If you have additional questions about this document or have suggestions for information to add, please send an email to casey.carmody@state.mn.us. All information in this FAQ is subject to change.

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General Tiered Licensure Rule Questions

When did the new rules go into effect?

- The adopted rules went into effect on Oct. 27, 2018. The current version of all of PELSB's rules are available on [The Office of the Revisor of Statutes website](#).

What did the tiered licensure rulemaking change?

- The tiered licensing rulemaking created several new rules and amended several existing rules. Specifically, PELSB adopted new rules for Tier 1, Tier 2, Tier 3, and Tier 4 licenses. The Board also made changes to existing rules related to substitute licenses, licensure via portfolio, district permissions, and related services personnel to reflect changes to state law.
- A full list of the impacted rules is available on the [Tiered Licensure Rulemaking page](#).

Where can I find more information about the tiered licensure rules?

- The tiered licensure rules are available on [The Office of the Revisor of Statutes website](#).
- Drafts of the rules, a list of impacted rules, and other key rulemaking documents are available on the [Tiered Licensure Rulemaking page](#).

Licensure Requirements

Have there been any important changes to the requirements for obtaining a tiered license?

- Minnesota law establishes the basic requirements for a Tier 1, Tier 2, Tier 3, or Tier 4 license. An overview of the statutory requirements is available on the [Tiered Licensure in Minnesota infographic](#) created by Education Minnesota.
- The new tiered licensure rules provide some additional guidance and clarification for the process of obtaining a tiered license. More information is available about those processes in the following questions.

What clarifications did rule make for obtaining a Tier 1 license?

- In order to obtain a Tier 1 license, an individual must first have a job offer from a public school district (including charter schools). In addition to the individual applying for the Tier 1 license, the hiring district must also provide information to PELSB as part of the Tier 1 application process.
- [The tiered licensure rules establish several application procedures specific to a Tier 1 license](#), including:

1. The hiring district must show that the position was posted for at least 15 days on [EdPost](#), the board-approved statewide job board, before an applicant can apply for an initial Tier 1 license.
 2. As part of the application, the hiring district must show that a Tier 1 license for the applicant is warranted by showing:
 - A. No one holding a Tier 2, Tier 3, or Tier 4 license in the specific content area applied for the position; OR
 - B. No one holding a Tier 2, Tier 3, or Tier 4 license in the specific content area applied for the position; OR
 - C. Each individual holding a Tier 2, Tier 3, or Tier 4 license who may have accepted the position was unacceptable for the assignment.
- For Tier 1 license renewals, the hiring district must show that the position was posted for at least 60 days on [EdPost](#), the board-approved statewide job board.
 - If a Tier 2, Tier 3, or Tier 4 license holder is considered unacceptable for a reason that is not included in the checklist below, the hiring district must apply for a discretionary variance as part of the Tier 1 application process. More information is available in the [Discretionary Variance Request document](#) on PELSB's [Tiered Licensure Permissions website page](#).

Who is considered an “unacceptable” individual holding a Tier 2, Tier 3, or Tier 4 license when it comes to districts supporting a Tier 1 application?

- [Under the Tier 1 License rule](#), one way the hiring district can demonstrate a Tier 1 license for an applicant is warranted is when the district provides evidence that an individual holding a Tier 2, Tier 3, or Tier 4 license who may have accepted the teaching assignment was unacceptable.
- Under rule, an individual holding a Tier 2, Tier 3, or Tier 4 license may be deemed unacceptable if the hiring district shows:
 1. The individual was not fluent in the language required for the assignment; OR
 2. The individual was unwilling to abide by or unable to apply the pedagogical model of the district or school; OR
 3. The individual had disciplinary action with PELSB or final disciplinary action in a district; OR
 4. The individual was unwilling to abide by culturally responsive teaching principles; OR
 5. The individual had references who indicated an unwillingness or ineligibility to rehire the individual, including in the hiring district.

What clarifications did rule make for obtaining a Tier 2 license?

- The adopted rules did not make any substantial clarifications or updates to the processes required to obtain a Tier 2 license.

What clarifications did rule make for obtaining a Tier 3 license?

- One way an individual can meet the coursework requirements for a Tier 3 license is by having at least three years of experience teaching as the teacher of record in a K-12 classroom under a Tier 2 license. The teaching experience under the Tier 2 license must also align with the licensure area that the candidate is seeking for a Tier 3 license.
- Another way an individual can meet the coursework requirements for a Tier 3 license is by holding a [“professional license from another state,”](#) which is in good standing, and two years of teaching experience. Under rule, a professional license from another state means a teaching license issued by the appropriate authorities in another state that allows an individual to teach in a public school. A professional license from another state does not include an emergency, temporary, or substitute teaching license.
- The adopted rule also clarified that a Tier 3 license holder must complete 75 approved clock hours of professional development in order to renew the Tier 3 license.

What clarifications did rule make for obtaining a Tier 4 license?

- In order to satisfy the teaching experience requirement for a Tier 4 license, an individual must have at least three years of experience teaching in Minnesota as the teacher of record in a K-12 classroom.
- The adopted rule also clarified that a Tier 4 license holder must complete 125 approved clock hours of professional development in order to renew the Tier 4 license,

Can a teacher still hold multiple tiered licenses?

- No. As a general policy under the newly adopted rules, teachers cannot hold licenses in multiple tiers.
- Prior to the implementation of rule, teachers holding a Tier 2, Tier 3, Tier 4, or 5-year standard license could work with their district to apply for a Tier 1 or Tier 2 license to teach outside of their licensure area (*i.e.*, obtain a variance). Now, a teacher holding a Tier 3, Tier 4, or 5-year standard license will need to work with their district to obtain an out-of-field permission. More details about the out-of-field permission process is available in the [School District Permissions Requests section](#) of this document.
- When a teacher holding a Tier 2, Tier 3, or Tier 4 license adds a new licensure area, the additional licensure field will be issued at the teacher’s current tier. If a teacher holding a Tier 4 license is seeking to add a licensure field but cannot obtain passing scores on the required

content exam, the teacher will need to get an out-of-field permission in order to teach in the new licensure field.

I received a Tier 1 or a Tier 2 license. Can I use that license to teach in any school district or charter school?

- No. Individuals holding a Tier 1 or Tier 2 license are limited to teaching in the district that supported the Tier 1 or Tier 2 license application. If a Tier 1 or Tier 2 license holder becomes employed by a different district, the individual will need to submit a new Tier 1 or Tier 2 application, which includes submitting another application fee.
- Individuals holding a Tier 3 or Tier 4 license can use their license to teach in any Minnesota district. An individual applying for a Tier 3 or Tier 4 license can do so without the support of a hiring district.

Has anything changed with substitute licenses?

- Yes. [The adopted rule establishes a short-call substitute license](#), which has replaced the two-year and five-year substitute licenses. The short-call substitute license allows the license holder to replace the same teacher of record in a PreK-12 classroom for up to 15 consecutive school days. The short-call substitute license is valid for three years.
- To obtain a short-call substitute license, an applicant must:
 1. Hold a bachelor's degree from a regionally-accredited college or university in the United States; OR
 2. Hold a credential that's equivalent to a bachelor's degree awarded in the United States, as verified by a [National Association of Credential Evaluation Services \(NACES\) member](#), which are the Board-approved credential evaluation services; OR
 3. [Meet specific professional requirements](#), if the applicant is in a career and technical education field or career pathway course of study; OR
 4. Be enrolled in and making meaningful progress, as defined by the provider, in a Board-approved teacher preparation program AND have successfully completed student teaching.
- A short-call substitute license is not a tiered license.
- [Lifetime substitute licenses](#) are still available for retired teachers. Under the adopted rule, lifetime substitute license holders can replace the same teacher of record on an approved leave for more than 15 consecutive days so long as the substitute teacher's previous Tier 3, Tier 4, or 5-year standard license is aligned to the teaching assignment.

Renewing my Teaching License

Have there been any important changes to the requirements for renewing a license?

- Minnesota law establishes several basic renewal requirements for each license tier. The renewal requirements slightly vary for each tiered license, and the new tiered licensure rules provide additional guidance and clarification for the process of renewing a tiered license. More information is available about those processes in the following questions.

Do you have any information about the specific renewal requirements for each tier?

- Yes, PELSB staff developed a [License Renewal Requirements Memo](#), available on the [PELSB website](#), to provide more information to teachers, relicensure committees, and district staff about licensure renewal requirements. The memo also contains the specific renewal requirements for each license tier. PELSB staff will regularly update the memo with new information when renewal requirements are updated.

What is “cultural competency training,” and what needs to be included in the training in order for me to renew my license?

- Under Minnesota law, a teacher must complete cultural competency training to renew their teaching license. [The new tiered licensure rules establish a definition](#) of cultural competency training to provide guidance about the information that should be included in cultural competency training. More information about when this requirement goes into effect is below.
- According to rule, cultural competency training means a training program that promotes self-reflection and discussion including, but not limited to, all of the following topics:
 1. Racial, cultural, and socioeconomic groups;
 2. American Indian and Alaskan native students;
 3. Religion;
 4. Systemic racism;
 5. Gender identity, including transgender students;
 6. Sexual orientation;
 7. Language diversity; AND
 8. Individuals with disabilities and mental health concerns.
- A cultural competency training program must be designed to deepen teachers’ understanding of their own frames of reference, the potential bias in these frames, and their impact on expectations for and relationships with students, students’ families, and the school communities.

- PELSB is in the process of working with stakeholders and other professionals to provide support to districts and to develop cultural competency training opportunities to ensure that Tier 1 teachers can meet their renewal requirements.

When must I complete cultural competency training?

- For the 2018-2019 academic year, cultural competency training is required only for Tier 1 license renewals. All other licenses expiring in 2019 are not required to complete cultural competency training in order to renew their license.
- Cultural competency training will be required for all individuals whose licenses expire in 2020 and after.

What is a “mentorship program” that Tier 1 teachers must complete in order to renew their license?

- Under rule, one of the renewal requirements for Tier 1 teachers is that they participate in a mentorship program.
- [According to rule](#), a mentorship program must include:
 1. A yearlong collaborative relationship with an experienced Tier 3 or Tier 4 mentor teacher who is not currently on an improvement plan and voluntarily agrees to mentor the mentee teacher;
 2. The mentor has access to resources or training, develops common expectations for the mentorship experience, and encourages the mentee to select areas for growth over the course of the year;
 3. Sessions held no less than once per month that focus on building a collaborative relationship with a focus on the exchange of knowledge, skills, and experiences, including the needs and questions of the mentee; AND
 4. Sessions including discussions of:
 - A. Effective strategies to engage students;
 - B. Classroom management strategies that reflect an understanding of the stages of child development;
 - C. The educational rights of students and their diverse needs and experiences;
 - D. School policies and practices, including appropriate boundaries and data privacy; AND
 - E. How student learning data can be used to improve classroom planning and instruction.

How many clock hours do I need to complete to renew my Tier 3 or Tier 4 license?

- Tier 3 license holders must complete 75 approved clock hours of professional development for renewal.
- Tier 4 license holders must complete 125 approved clock hours of professional development for renewal.

I still have questions about renewal requirements. Who should I contact?

- PELSB recommends that teachers contact their local relicensure committees to get more information about renewal requirements.
- Individuals can also contact PELSB Renewal Specialist Keile LaMotte at keile.lamotte@state.mn.us if they have other questions.

School District Permission Requests

What are the differences among an OFP, an IPP, and an IP?

- [An out-of-field permission \(OFP\)](#) allows a Tier 2, Tier 3, Tier 4, 5-year standard or 1-year standard teacher to teach in a field that is not aligned with their licensure area. An OFP is similar to a permission formerly known as a variance.
- [An innovative program permission \(IPP\)](#) allows a Tier 3, Tier 4, 5-year standard or 1-year standard teacher to teach in multiple fields within an established innovative program. An IPP is similar to a permission formerly known as an experimental waiver.
- [An interim permission \(IP\)](#) allows an individual who is eligible for Tier 1 license to fill a position only in situations where a district has an emergency need. The IP is a new permission type under the adopted rules.

What are the requirements to submit a request for an out-of-field permission (OFP)?

- [There are several requirements to obtain an OFP](#), including:
 1. The applicant holds a valid Tier 2, Tier 3, Tier 4, 5-year standard or 1-year standard teaching license (*i.e.* not a related services professional license);
 2. The position was posted for at least 15 days on [EdPost](#), the board-approved statewide job board;
 3. The applicant holds a bachelor's degree. Alternatively, an applicant holding a Tier 2, Tier 3, or Tier 4 license in a career and technical education or career pathways field without a bachelor's degree is eligible for an OFP in another career and technical education or career pathways field; AND

4. The district must show one of the following:
 - A. The applicant is an internal hire with one or more years of employment within the district; OR
 - B. The applicant has additional qualifications that align with the requirements of the position. The school district can provide reasons and justifications for why the applicant is the best candidate to fill the position; OR
 - C. [The district can demonstrate that the OFP is warranted because a different teacher with a Tier 2, Tier 3, or Tier 4 license was not available to fill the position.](#)
- The [Out-of-Field Permission Request form](#) is available on the [PELSB website](#).

How long will an OFP last?

- An OFP is valid for up to one school year and expires on June 30 of the expiration year unless the district's regular school year extends beyond June 30 or the OFP is needed to teach through the end of summer school.

Can I renew an OFP?

- Yes, an OFP can be renewed up to four times. [The renewal requirements](#) are similar to the application for an initial OFP except that a hiring district must show that the position was posted for 60 days on [EdPost](#).

What types of programs are considered innovative programs?

- [The adopted rules](#) define an innovative program as a school within a district that is either (1) a state-approved area learning center or an alternative learning program or (2) a school that has been designated by a school board resolution as an innovative program.

What are the requirements for an innovative program permission (IPP)?

- [The requirements for an IPP](#) include:
 1. The applicant holds a valid Tier 3, Tier 4, or 5-year standard teaching license (*i.e.* not a related services professional license). Applicants with 1-year standard licenses may seek an IPP so long as they have completed all outstanding requirements to obtain a Tier 3 license; AND
 2. The hiring district must show the teaching assignment is within an innovative program.
- If the IPP is for a non-state-approved innovated program, the hiring school district must also provide supporting documentation about the innovative program and the applying teacher's qualifications as part of the application process. This supporting documentation will be reviewed by the full Board when considering the IPP request.

- The [Innovative Program Permission Request form](#) is available on the [PELSB website](#).

How long will an IPP last?

- An IPP is valid for up to one school year and expires on June 30 of the expiration year unless the district's regular school year extends beyond June 30 or the IPP is needed to teach through the end of summer school.

Can I renew an IPP?

- Yes. An IPP can be renewed an unlimited number of times.

How does an interim permission (IP) request work?

- Districts can submit an IP when they need to have a non-licensed individual fill a position in an emergency situation, such as an unexpected resignation, leave of absence, death of the person previously holding the position, or similar emergency. The non-licensed individual who fill the position must be able to qualify for a Tier 1 license.
- Upon receipt of the request, PELSB has three days to issue the IP to the district. The interim permission will be valid until one of the following happens:
 1. The district hires a Tier 2, Tier 3, or Tier 4 licensed teacher;
 2. The applicant on the IP is issued a short-call substitute license;
 3. The district submits a completed Tier 1 application for the IP holder that is denied or accepted by the board; OR
 4. 30 days after the IP is issued.
- An IP is only for emergency situations, and districts should not submit an IP request in an attempt to expedite a Tier 1 application.
- Districts seeking to fill position in an emergency situation with an individual who qualifies for a Tier 2, Tier 3, or Tier 4 license should contact PELSB's licensing division for further guidance.

How do districts submit an IP request?

- A district seeking an IP will need to complete the [Interim Permission Request form](#) available on the [PELSB website](#).
- On the form, hiring districts must affirm:
 1. Exigent circumstances led to the open or new position. The district will be required to describe the exigent circumstances;
 2. The district has no reasonable alternative to fill the position;

3. The position starts within 5 days;
 4. The applicant meets the Tier 1 qualifications of a bachelor's degree or, for career and technical education or career pathway fields, holds appropriate credentials or work experience; AND
 5. The district has completed its background check on the applicant.
- The form also requires districts to describe how it plans to fill the position long term.

Can I renew an IP?

- No, an IP is not renewable. An IP is intended only for emergency situations and should not be used as a way to expedite license applications.

What should a district do if it wants a related service professional to teach a class (e.g. the district wants a school nurse to teach a health course)?

- Districts that want to have a related service professional (school nurse, school social worker, school psychologist, school counselor, speech language pathologist) teach a class should request a discretionary variance.
- More information is available in the [Discretionary Variance Request document](#) on PELSB's [Tiered Licensure Permissions website page](#).

Obtaining a License via Portfolio

What is "licensure via portfolio?"

- Licensure via portfolio is a non-traditional option for obtaining a teaching license. The portfolio provides an alternative process to assess the knowledge, skills and competencies of individuals seeking a license who may not have completed an approved teacher program in the licensure field being sought.

Have there been any significant changes to the licensure via portfolio process?

- Yes. The [adopted rules](#) have created new procedures for licensure via portfolio to make the process more transparent.
- All pedagogy portfolios will be reviewed by a panel of educators within 90 days of receipt of a completed portfolio and required fees. Applicants may choose to present the contents of the portfolio to the panel in person on a specified review. However, a presentation is not required for approval.
- If the panel does not recommend an applicant for licensure via the pedagogy portfolio, the panel must provide specific information to the applicant on how to successfully meet any standard the panel determined was not met.

- All content portfolios will be reviewed by two reviewers within 90 days of receipt of a completed portfolio and required fees.
- If the reviewers do not recommend the applicant for licensure via the content portfolio, the reviewers must provide specific information to the applicant on how to successfully demonstrate meeting any standard the reviewers determined was not met.

Are there any other licensure via portfolio requirements I should know?

- Applicants who are seeking their initial Tier 3 license via the portfolio process must demonstrate knowledge of effective teaching dispositions under the Minnesota Code of Ethics for Teachers. In order to demonstrate this knowledge, the applicant must submit a completed evaluation from a supervisor or mentor indicating evidence that the applicant has completed:
 1. A yearlong mentorship program aligned to board-adopted criteria; OR
 2. Two years of experience teaching as the teacher of record in the licensure area sought.
- Applicants must submit a letter of intent to PELSB at least 30 days prior to submission of a portfolio application, and portfolios must be submitted between 30 days and one year after PELSB receives the letter of intent.
- After obtaining passing scores on all required testing, applicants who are recommend for licensure via portfolio can submit [an application for a license according to the adopted rules](#).

Do you have a page on the PELSB website that describe the specific steps for completing the licensure via portfolio process?

- Yes, more information and required submission documents are available on the [Licensure via Portfolio page](#) on the [PELSB website](#).

Related Services and Administrators

Do related services professionals fall under the tiered licensure system?

- There is a separate licensure structure for related services professionals:
 1. Tier 1 licenses are not available for any related services professionals.
 2. Tier 2, Tier 3, and Tier 4 licenses are available for [speech language pathologists](#), [school psychologists](#), and [school counselors](#). The requirements for each tier varies among the different related services.
 3. Tier 3 and Tier 4 licenses are available for [school nurses](#) and [school social workers](#). The requirements for each tier varies between the related services.

Do administrators fall under the tiered licensure system?

- No. There have not been changes to the structure of the administrator licensure system.

Miscellaneous Questions

Do you plan to make any additional changes to the tiered licensure rules soon?

- At this point, PELSB plans to only make minor and technical changes to the tiered licensure rules. These changes will not have a major impact on any processes and procedures.
- PELSB has opened rulemaking regarding other issues. Please visit the [Rulemaking page](#) on the [PELSB website](#) for more information about other rulemaking efforts. You can also subscribe to [PELSB's rulemaking email](#) list to receive notices about rulemaking efforts, including upcoming stakeholder events.