

How to enroll in virtual education

A step-by-step guide



Step 1: Explore the options

Missouri has a wide range of virtual education providers approved by the MOCAP system. These range from Missouri-based providers like Launch to nationally recognized programs providing full-time programs like MOVA and Connections Academy. Some programs are designed to be completed entirely on the student's schedule (called asynchronous) while others use live virtual classrooms to keep students engaged. Some programs are designed to focus on career readiness, some are designed to help students get caught up in a subject, while others offer dual-enrollment or AP classes. Before you move any further you need to explore the options and decide what provider will be best for your child's educational needs.

Step 2: Connect with your school

Once you have decided which virtual education program you want to enroll your child in, the next step is to contact your school and let them know that you want to apply to participate in virtual education programs. Your first contact will likely be your child's counselor or principal. They will tell you what the enrollment process is for your district and should provide you with the required forms.



Step 3: Connect with the provider

While you will need final approval from your school district before your child starts virtual education, you can get the enrollment process started while the district is making its decision. After you have informed your school of your decision, reach out to the provider to find out what enrollment process they have for parents to complete.

Step 4: Wait for a decision

Your school district should give you a decision on enrollment in a timely fashion (within two weeks). If they approve your decision for your child to take virtual education courses then congratulations! Make sure they have everything they need to complete payment to the provider and check-in with the provider to find out what the next steps are to get your child started. If your district DENIES your request to enroll in virtual education, then you can appeal the decision.



How to appeal a denial

According to Missouri state law school districts MUST approve an application to enroll in virtual education unless the district deems that doing so is not in the best interest of the child.

Unfortunately, many districts have denied enrollment requests when it was clearly in the child's best interest. If your district should attempt to do this, the law lays out a clear appeals process to resolve the issue.



Step 1: Appeal the decision to your school board

If your school district denies your request, they are required to provide a written denial specifically detailing why it is not in your student's best educational interests as well as provide you information on how to appeal the denial. By law, you are allowed to present the reason your child should be allowed in the program during an official school board meeting. The presentation by both you and school administrators are required to be recorded in the official minutes of the meeting. The school board has 30-days to issue a final local decision in writing.

Step 2: Appeal your decision to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

If your local school board decides to not approve your application to enroll your child in virtual education then the next step is to appeal their decision to the state Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. You may only submit the documentation provided by the local school board to the MOCAP Appeal website (<https://sdm.sisk12.com/MOCAP/Default.aspx>). Your district will receive notification of the appeal and a copy of the submitted documentation, and DESE has seven days to offer a final enrollment decision.



Step 3: Explore other legal options

If the final decision from DESE is to deny your request but you still feel like your child has a legal right to enroll in the virtual education program then you should reach out to a lawyer to explore your options. A number of families have had to do this in 2020 and have successfully won their cases and helped to expand access to virtual education in Missouri.