




STATE OF CONNECTICUT
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



TO: Jill Bourbeau, Chief Administrator
Natchaug Hospital School–Joshua Centers

FROM: Colleen Hayles, Education Consultant 
Bureau of Special Education

DATE: June 15, 2021

SUBJECT: PRELIMINARY EVALUATION REPORT
Approval Review for a Private Special Education Program

Please note: This Approved Private Special Education Program approval review was conducted remotely due to the current public health and safety requirements resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. All required activities and components, as defined in the *Principles, Procedures and Standards for the Approval of Private Special Education Programs*, were conducted remotely and in accordance with the approval process.

On April 8, 2021, an evaluation team conducted a virtual site visit review for re-approval of Natchaug Hospital School–Joshua Centers. The team consisted of:

- Colleen Hayles, Education Consultant, Bureau of Special Education (BSE);
- Katherine Matz, Director of Pupil Personnel, New Fairfield Public Schools; and
- Cathy Danielcuzk, Education Director, Adelbrook-The Learning Center–Manchester.

During a previous virtual site visit on April 1, 2021, Ms. Hayles reviewed select education files of students, as well as personnel files. In addition, Ms. Hayles reviewed the application materials submitted to the BSE by your staff.

At the exit conference on April 8, 2021, the evaluation team shared its impressions and preliminary findings. The following areas of the special education program have been reviewed:

- Governance;
- Administration;
- Fiscal management;
- Admissions;
- Individual student records;
- Program requirements;
- Evaluation of student progress and reporting responsibilities;
- Student management techniques;
- Qualifications and requirements for instructional, administrative, and support personnel;
- Health and safety; and
- Termination of enrollment.

1. Commendations:

- The program provides four sites based primarily on geographic location of the students enrolled, to provide clinical day treatment options for students in eastern Connecticut.

- While each site operates under the Natchaug Hospital School umbrella and each follows identical policies and procedures, each site has a unique culture and climate reflective of the facilities available, the building administrator, and their implementation of positive behavior supports within their respective sites. School principals/directors appreciate the opportunities afforded to them to collaborate and share ideas and resources.
- Leadership’s commitment to engage in continual efforts to enhance a true community of staff and students is evident in each site. Also evident in each site is the effort to integrate student voice and build on collaboration and the development of relationships and positive rapport. This approach has created a high degree of “buy in” on the part of both students and staff.
- The staff exemplifies a high level of caring, compassion, and passion in their work with students attending the program. Each site possesses student-centered teams that focus on engaging and inspiring students to achieve their individual potential. Students appear to have trusting relationships with staff, which encourages appropriate risk taking.
- Staff is characterized as being responsive versus reactive—always looking to evolve and motivated to find creative opportunities to meet the individual needs of students.
- Each site prioritizes provision of rigorous academic instruction while implementing a trauma-informed cognitive/behavioral approach within a positive behavioral interventions and supports model implemented with fidelity.
- The education directors housed at each site participate in an administrator’s “huddle” three to five times a week and the staff at each site begin their day with a morning “huddle.” In the “huddle,” all staff benefit from a structure for building and maintaining ongoing collaboration, communication, and an exchange of ideas to best address the social, emotional, and academic interests of students through the development of a daily “playbook.”
- The educational staff demonstrates the implementation of evidence-based strategies, a strong skill set, a high level of flexibility, and a keen knowledge of their students. The positive impact of staff understanding each students needs is recognized through the level of differentiation, instructional scaffolding, and effective implementation of appropriate instructional and behavioral strategies.
- Each team member interviewed revealed a well-developed understanding of the individualized education program (IEP) and appropriate planning and placement team (PPT) processes and procedures.
- Staff indicated that there are numerous professional development opportunities offered through Hartford Hospital and cover a wide array of topics. However, the PD provided through the educational program is appropriately targeted on the population of students served and promotes the development of positive mental health.
- The site located in Danielson is a certified Green School providing effective environmental and sustainable education and improving the overall health and wellness of students and staff.

2. **Standard Deficiencies:**

The following standard deficiencies must be rectified:

Standard F: Program Requirements

Each private facility shall have a written description of the education program for each student and shall have a written curriculum and sufficient instructional materials, supplies and equipment, in accordance with state requirements for educational programs to fully implementation the IEP.

Issue: A review of IEPs indicated inaccuracies or incomplete aspects that can impact the ability of Natchaug Hospital School to fully implement the IEP as it is written. The following incomplete fields or inaccuracies were identified:

- In four (4) of five (5) IEPs reviewed, the description of service delivery of the related service of “counseling” to be provided by the program clinician was not appropriately specified. Rather, service is written to be delivered within both a 1:1 session **and/or** a small group session (inclusive) for a total period of time or identified as “flexible, dependent on student need.” Each student’s need for 1:1 counseling versus small group counseling and the appropriate number of hours per week must be clearly articulated separately on page 11 of the IEP.
- In two (2) of five (5) IEPs reviewed, Special Factors related to a student’s social, emotional, or behavioral status (which need to be addressed in the IEP and have resulted in placement within a more restrictive educational setting) were not identified.

Corrective Action Required: For the next three (3) PPTs held, include a discussion of the identified social, emotional, or behavioral concerns (Special Factors) that require additional therapeutic or behavioral interventions and identify the supports required and available through the program, to address those considerations (beyond goals and objectives). In the event that the local education agency (LEA) does not accurately identify such supports on page 10 of the IEP, document the program’s request for inclusion in the IEP. As appropriate, utilize program-wide language to characterize the additional supports determined appropriate and accessible through the program.

Additionally, consistently execute a process across sites to review each IEP developed by the district for implementation by the program following a PPT, to ensure that instruction, support, and related services, as well as the interventions to support special factors, can be implemented as written. If changes are required in an IEP developed by the district to accurately reflect PPT decisions, the program must document the need for the changes, forward a written request to the LEA and maintain a copy of the communication with the IEP in the student file. Submit to the BSE copies of the next three (3) IEPs that have been reviewed by the program and require revision by the district and include a copy of the communication developed by the program, which outlines the area requiring revision.

3. **Recommendations:**

It is recommended that your program consider taking the following action:

- Continue to expand the development of vocational opportunities offered to students within the program and in the community. Consider re-establishing the transition/vocational services position to increase community access at all sites.

- Increase the number of staff appropriately licensed to transport students to and from school activities.
- Examine the facilities' space availability and limitations within each site to maximize the potential of each learning environment and to provide equity in access at each site.
- Expand documentation of professional development activities in staff files to include those activities provided that are specific to the educational program, including both site-oriented and unified activities.
- Explore opportunities to increase access to life skills facilities and recreational areas across all sites.
- Explore opportunities to improve information technology support and connectivity availability through Hartford Hospital or the implementation of an independent carrier to support internet accessibility within the school program.

Within 15 working days from the date of this preliminary evaluation report, please indicate in writing to the BSE whether your program agrees with the report and accepts the delineated corrective action plan. Upon receipt of your written agreement and acceptance of the entire report, a recommendation for program approval through June 30, 2026, will be submitted to the Acting Commissioner of Education.

Upon such approval, the following will be applicable to the Natchaug Hospital School–Joshua Centers:

Approved Ages to Serve (All Joshua Centers): 5–21 years old (Grades K–12)

Approved Student Capacity (site specific as follows):

Joshua Center NE:	27 students
Joshua Center Enfield:	27 students
Joshua Center Shoreline:	18 students
Joshua Center Thames Valley:	40 students

Approval Expiration Date (All Joshua Centers): June 30, 2026

cc: Shawn Cyr, Education Director
Lamirra Simeon, Education Director
David Heg, Education Director
Kayne Gregory, Education Director
Katelyn Gomes, Education Director