

Article - Education

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§7-1002.

(a) The Department shall provide Maryland virtual learning opportunities that include:

(1) Offering a distance-learning program to provide Maryland public school students with equal opportunities to develop a strong academic foundation;

(2) Offering expanded educational choices not otherwise available to students through online courses and services; and

(3) Expanding the professional development opportunities available to educational staff in Maryland public schools through online courses and services.

(b) (1) (i) A county board may request that the Department develop or review and approve online courses and services under paragraph (2) of this subsection.

(ii) Within 15 days after the receipt of a request under subparagraph (i) of this paragraph, the Department shall determine whether the development or review and approval of the online courses and services shall be delegated to a county board under paragraph (2)(ii) of this subsection.

(iii) If the Department does not delegate the development or review and approval of the online courses and services to a county board, the Department shall develop or review and approve online courses and services under paragraph (2) of this subsection within 120 days after the receipt of a request made by a county board under subparagraph (i) of this paragraph.

(2) (i) Subject to subparagraph (ii) of this paragraph, the Department shall:

1. A. Develop online courses and services; or
- B. Review and approve online courses and services;
2. Develop standards for teachers and other school system employees for the offering of courses or services on the Internet or through other developing technologies; and
3. Review courses and courseware to assure quality and alignment with the Maryland content standards and other appropriate standards.

(ii) Subject to subparagraph (v) of this paragraph, the Department may delegate the authority to develop or review and approve online courses and services to a county board.

(iii) If the Department delegates the authority to develop or review and approve online courses and services to a county board, the county board may impose reasonable fees to be paid by the vendor to cover the cost of reviewing and approving online courses and services.

(iv) A county board shall remit 15% of the fees collected under subparagraph (iii) of this paragraph to the Department.

(v) 1. A county board shall request approval of the online course from the Department when the county board has completed the development or review and approval of online courses and services.

2. Within 45 days after a request under subparagraph 1 of this subparagraph, the Department shall approve or disapprove the online course based on criteria and guidelines developed by the Department.

(3) (i) The development, review, and approval of an online course or service conducted under this subsection shall include an assessment regarding the accessibility of the online course or service to individuals with disabilities, including the blind.

(ii) The Department may contract with a third party to:

1. Develop an assessment regarding accessibility required under subparagraph (i) of this paragraph; or

2. Conduct an assessment of course accessibility required under subparagraph (i) of this paragraph that will determine the approval or denial status of the course and provide feedback to the course provider.

(c) (1) There is a Maryland Virtual Learning Opportunities Fund.

(2) The State Board may set reasonable fees for:

(i) Developing or reviewing online courses and services;

(ii) Processing approvals for online courses and services;

(iii) Developing an assessment regarding the accessibility of an online course or service to individuals with disabilities, including the blind; and

(iv) Assessing an online course for its accessibility to individuals with disabilities, including the blind.

(3) The fees charged shall be set so as to produce funds to support maintenance of Maryland virtual learning opportunities.

(4) The State Board shall pay all funds collected under this subtitle to the

Comptroller of the State.

(5) The Comptroller shall distribute the fees to the Maryland Virtual Learning Opportunities Fund.

(6) The Fund is a continuing, nonlapsing fund not subject to § 7–302 of the State Finance and Procurement Article.

(7) Any unspent portions of the Fund may not be transferred or revert to the General Fund of the State, but shall remain in the Fund to be used for the purposes specified in this subtitle.

(8) The Legislative Auditor shall audit the accounts and transactions of the Fund as provided in § 2–1220 of the State Government Article.

(d) The State Board may adopt regulations to implement the provisions of this section.

(e) The Department shall submit to the Governor and, subject to § 2–1246 of the State Government Article, the General Assembly, on or before September 1, 2004, a report on the progress of the Maryland Virtual Learning Opportunities Program, including a description of the available online courses and services.

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