



APPROVED PRIVATE AGENCIES

January 2026

Welcome to Our Triannual Newsletter

Our goal in presenting this newsletter is to provide approved private agencies (APAs) with useful information and friendly reminders. We will provide newsletters in January, April, and October. We hope you find them helpful and informative.

Valuable Resources

Helpful Links

[Important forms](#) (including the Revised Parents' Bill of Rights)

[State Plan for Special Education](#). This plan governs special education activities in Missouri, including [Regulation XIV: Approved Private Agencies](#).

The [Approved Private Agency page](#) has helpful links and forms specific to APAs.

The [Special Education Directors' Resource Page](#) provides links to Compliance Virtual Support Meetings, including archived meetings, which contain information on a wide range of special education topics. You can look under the 2025-26 Compliance Meeting Dates dropdown to join a meeting in real-time or search archived topics in the Topic Resources dropdown. Here are some upcoming events.

- January 8, 2026: Writing a Quality Present Level
- February 5, 2026: Writing Smart Goals
- March 12, 2026: ESY and Field Trip Inclusion
- April 9, 2026: Postsecondary Transition Starting in 8th Grade
- May 7, 2026: Wrap Up

Please be sure to update us immediately with any of the following changes:

- Certificated staff changes
- Contact information changes
- Moving to a new location
- Adding on to a facility
- Changes in services for age or disability



We want to hear from you!

Spotlight on APAs

Behavioral Health Allies (BHA): Where Growth Begins

Empowering Every Learner

At Behavioral Health Allies, we believe that every individual deserves a chance to thrive, no matter their starting point. Our mission is simple yet powerful: to equip individuals with developmental disabilities and behavioral health challenges with the tools, confidence, and skills to learn, grow, and live fulfilling lives. Every day, we create a space where challenges become opportunities—and where progress, big or small, is celebrated.

Rooted in the science of Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA), our work is guided by evidence-based strategies that promote meaningful change and lifelong learning.

Education with Heart and Purpose

BHA provides in-person, year-round educational services for individuals in grades K–12 who are navigating behavioral health challenges due to developmental disabilities.

Each education space blends special education and therapeutic supports—including ABA principles—to ensure that instruction is both individualized and adaptive. Through personalized adaptations, accommodations, and modifications, our individuals work toward academic and behavioral goals tailored to their unique strengths.

Our collaborative approach brings together teachers, behavioral specialists, speech and occupational therapists, and paraprofessionals who work closely with school districts and families to ensure consistent progress and shared success. Transportation is also provided by trained employees—because accessibility matters every step of the way.

Grow. Learn. Live. The BHA Way.

Step into BHA Academy, and you'll see learning that feels alive. Each day is structured to balance academics, social growth, and behavioral development. Individuals engage in lessons that promote communication, self-regulation, and independence, supported by a team that believes in their potential.

Through instruction, data-driven interventions, and positive reinforcement, we cultivate skills that support success inside and outside the academy. As individuals gain confidence and independence, we prepare them to transition into less restrictive educational settings, reinforcing our core belief: growth is not just possible—it's expected.

Learn. Connect. Flourish.

At BHA, connection is everything. We know that progress starts with trust, so we build relationships grounded in empathy, patience, and respect. Our educational environments foster a sense of safety, belonging, and support where every individual feels seen and valued.

Our approach ensures that every interaction—whether academic, social, or behavioral—is intentional, consistent, and empowering. Just as importantly, our employees form a community of care—sharing successes, learning together, and lifting one another up. The result? A warm, welcoming environment where learning flourishes, and every person—individual or employee—knows they belong.

Learning That Grows with You

We want to connect with our APAs so we can have more effective communication. We want to gather your input on the information you need from us.

How can we best serve you?

What questions do you have about serving students through Individualized Education Programs?

Feel free to contact us:

steven.adair@dese.mo.gov or
madison.bockover@dese.mo.gov or call
573-751-0699.

Missouri Youth Leadership Forum

The Governor's Council on Disability is pleased to announce [that applications are now open for the 2026 Missouri Youth Leadership Forum \(MO-YLF\)](#).

This is a highly regarded, week-long program designed for Missouri high school students with disabilities, ages 16-21. MO-YLF provides delegates with a structured, immersive experience focused on developing critical leadership skills and ensuring a successful transition to post-secondary education, employment, and independent living.

Delegates will spend the week on the University of Missouri campus in Columbia, engaging with successful adult mentors and leaders from the disability community. **The entire program is offered at no cost to selected delegates**, thanks to support from our generous sponsors and donors.

Please share this opportunity with your colleagues, family members, or constituents who may know a student who would benefit from participation.

Watch the Experience Come to Life! To truly capture the **energy and scope** of the Forum, we encourage you to view the following promotional videos.

Produced by the Office of Administration (OA) communications team, these resources feature highlights from the 2024 Forum, including legislative role-playing, collaborative projects, adaptive sports, social events, and personal testimonials from parents and staff:

- [Missouri Youth Leadership Forum Video for Parents and Teachers](#)
- [Missouri Youth Leadership Forum Video for Potential Delegates](#)

Mark your calendar!

When: July 14-18, 2026

Where: University of Missouri – Columbia

Application Deadline: [March 16, 2026](#)

MO-YLF is more than just a leadership camp. It's an immersive program that delivers critical leadership and transition skills through five core pillars:

If you know a student who would benefit, encourage them to apply or learn more by visiting:

disability.mo.gov/gcd/yf

Applications close on **March 16, 2026**—don't let them miss this chance!

Together, let's support the next generation of leaders in Missouri's disability community.

Sincerely,

The Governor's Council on Disability

Our employees receive ongoing professional development in behavior support, language development, and individualized learning strategies—grounded in ABA methodology—ensuring every educator and therapist has the tools to help individuals succeed.

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Looking Ahead

As Behavioral Health Allies continues to support individuals, we remain focused on our guiding purpose: creating opportunities for lifelong learning and meaningful growth. With a steadfast commitment to compassion, innovation, and collaboration, we're proud to be a place where individuals—and their families—discover what's possible.

Connect With Us

If you'd like to connect with Behavioral Health Allies, please email us at info@behavioralhealth.org or visit our website at behavioralhealth.org.

Grow. Learn. Live. — at Behavioral Health Allies.

Disclaimer:

The Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education provides information related to approved private agencies. This feature does not imply endorsement, and the views expressed are those of the featured approved private agency

Spotlight On APAs Continued

Menta Academy Missouri:

Menta Academy Missouri (MAM) opened its doors to students from across Southwest Missouri on September 2, 2025, in Reeds Spring, Missouri. As a therapeutic day school, Menta Academy Missouri partners with local education agencies (LEAs) to provide special education services to students ages 3–21. In mid-August, The Menta Education Group leadership team joined the Reeds Spring staff to support a rapid turnaround and relocation into the former Gibson Technical Center.

Our Mission:

Menta Academy Missouri's mission is to provide innovative solutions to critical problems in education and human services. We foster a learning environment that empowers every student to believe in themselves and their future. At Menta Academy Missouri, we aim to guide each child toward the pinnacle of 3-C Readiness: College, Career, and Citizenship. We stand by every child with an unwavering commitment, providing the support and resources they need to overcome challenges, achieve academic success, and make a lasting impact on their communities. At MAM, staff partner with students on their learning journey to help them develop the skills needed to become productive members of their communities. Our students' experience at MAM is our top priority, and our student-centered approach ensures each learner receives the personalized support they need.

Personalized Services:

The implementation of Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) at MAM are aligned with our core values of Respect, Responsibility, Safety, and Kindness. At MAM, we are committed to these principles daily, ensuring a positive school culture that is tailored to individual student needs. The classrooms reflect each student's Individual Education Plan (IEP) through personalized planning and instruction. The team of trained professionals in each classroom work together to deliver a comfortable, safe, and effective experience. The training and curriculum incorporate Social Emotional Learning (SEL), Trauma-Informed Practices, Restorative Practices, and Blended Learning to ensure students are supported with the best evidence-based practices.

Community & Relationships:

Furthermore, we understand the importance of building healthy and trusting relationships with our students, which allows our students to be comfortable, confident, and capable. We remain mindful of our students' abilities, while focusing on progress and basing our decisions on student data. We strive for students to be accountable and learn valuable life lessons. Our students are provided monthly opportunities to attend field trips where they can practice our core values and have positive interactions with the community. Overall, we believe in our students and the strategies that we implement to create the best possible situation for success.

Jordan Leachman

Internal Auditor

The Menta Education Group

www.mentaeducation.org

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Accreditation and DESE Logo Usage

DESE staff members have found APAs including information on their websites stating they have DESE accreditation. Please note DESE does **not** accredit private agencies. We provide an annual approval to contract with public schools. We encourage APAs to check posted literature, websites, etc. to ensure that **no** claim to be "accredited" by DESE has been made.

We also understand it may be tempting to add the DESE logo to websites once approved, but use of the DESE logo is **prohibited**. Approval to operate as a DESE APA does not include permission to use the DESE logo on websites, flyers, or other media.

We ask that, instead of using the DESE logo, APAs take the opportunity to describe their relationships with DESE on school websites using the following DESE model description of the relationship that exists between DESE and all APAs, as shown in the example below.

"Approved Private Agencies with the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) are described in the Missouri State Plan for Special Education, Regulation XIV. DESE approval to function as an approved private agency allows IEP teams in local school districts to consider placing a student in our program when the student's educational needs can no longer be met in a less restrictive educational placement at the local school district."

In addition to this description, it may be helpful to post the age range and categorical disabilities for which APAs are approved to serve. We value our relationship with APA schools and appreciate your respect for our policy. Please call 573-751-0699 or email steven.adair@dese.mo.gov if you have any questions.



The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, national origin, age, veteran status, mental or physical disability, or any other basis prohibited by statute in its programs and activities. Inquiries related to department programs and to the location of services, activities, and facilities that are accessible by persons with disabilities may be directed to the Jefferson State Office Building, Director of Civil Rights Compliance and MOA Coordinator (Title VI/Title VII/Title IX/504/ADA/ADAAA/Age Act/GINA/USDA Title VI), 7th Floor, 205 Jefferson Street, P.O. Box 480, Jefferson City, MO 65102-0480; telephone number 573-522-1775 or TTY 800-735-2966; fax number 573-522-4883; email civilrights@dese.mo.gov.

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