



Early Childhood Iowa State Board Policy for Waiver to Merge

If an Early Childhood Iowa area board determines that they have an exceptional circumstance that meets one of the criteria in Iowa law, they may submit a request to waive the requirement to merge to the Early Childhood Iowa State Board.

Legislation:

SF 2088, Section 283 –

3. The designation of an early childhood Iowa area boundaries and the creation of an area board are both subject to the approval of the state board. The state board shall determine if a proposed area board can efficiently and effectively administer the responsibilities and authority of the area to be served. The state board may apply additional criteria for designating areas and approving area boards, but shall apply all of the following minimum criteria:

1. An area cannot encompass more than four counties.
2. The counties encompassing a multicounty area must have contiguous borders.
3. A single county area shall have a minimum population of children zero through age five in excess of five thousand, based on the most recent population estimates issued by the United States bureau of the census.

4. If the state board determines exceptional circumstances exist, the state board may waive any of the criteria otherwise specified in subsection 3.

Proposed Rules:

249-1.6(2) The state board may waive any of the minimum criteria referenced in 2010 Iowa Acts, Senate File 2088, section 283, if it is determined that exceptional circumstances exist. The state board further defines exceptional circumstances to include the following:

- a) The proposed change of boundaries creates hardship that reduces performance or quality of services within the area. The area board must provide compelling documentation of the hardship and clearly document the impact to performance or quality of services or both.
- b) The area board is granted model level of performance within the levels of excellence rating system by the state board.

Process:

- At its January meeting, the Early Childhood Iowa State Board will select a committee of its members and the Technical Assistance Team to review requests submitted from area boards. The committee will make recommendations to the ECI Board at their March Board meeting. The Technical Assistance Team will provide feedback from past annual report and redesignation reviews.
- An Early Childhood Iowa area board that does not meet the criteria in law regarding the designation of an area board and requests a waiver to merge for the minimum criteria or exceptional circumstance shall submit a request for the waiver. The request must be received on or before February 15th by the Early Childhood Iowa State Board, Attention Shanell Wagler, Department of Management, Office of Early Childhood Iowa, State Capitol, Room G13, Des Moines, IA 50319.

- At its March meeting, the ECI State Board will approve or deny the request based on recommendations. The Board will inform the area board in writing of their decision within two weeks after a decision is made.
- If the area board requested a waiver based on Model status and is allowed to go through the Levels of Excellence process, the area board will follow the process to go through the Levels of Excellence and a decision will not be made until the close of that process (January of the following year).
- The Early Childhood Iowa Board's decision is final.

To be included in the request for a waiver:

- Maximum of four, single-sided pages of 12 point font. The Request will be automatically rejected if not received in the Office of Early Childhood Iowa by February 15th.
- Identification of the criteria or exceptional circumstance for which the area board is requesting the waiver.
- Documentation and rationale to support the request.
 - Including a description of how this will benefit the children and families in their early childhood Iowa area if the request to waive the merger is granted.
 - Area board's identification of strengths for both board and area as a whole.
 - Area board's identification of opportunities for improvement for both board and area as a whole.
- The amount and percentage of carry forward funding from both school ready and early childhood funds for the past five years.
- Any previous conditional designation for the area as assigned by the Iowa Empowerment Board
- If applying for model status, include a request to be a part of the Levels of Excellence rating system review.
- The signature of the ECI Area Board Chairperson and the signature of the fiscal agent.

For more information regarding the process for an area board to change its boundaries: area board merging:

Link to Merger guide:

http://www.state.ia.us/earlychildhood/files/resource_links/merger_guide.pdf

Link to Tool U: http://www.state.ia.us/earlychildhood/files/toolkit_tools/Tool_U.pdf