

OFFICE OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES

ADMINISTERING THE CHILDREN'S SERVICES ACT



The Children's Services Act (CSA, §2.2-2648 et seq) was enacted in 1993 to create a collaborative system of services and funding for at-risk youth and families.

The CSA establishes local multidisciplinary teams responsible to work with families to plan services according to each child's unique strengths and needs and to administer the community's CSA activities.

The Office of Children's Services (OCS) is the administrative entity responsible for ensuring effective and efficient implementation of the CSA across the Commonwealth.

Guiding principles for OCS include:

- Child and family directed care,
- Equitable access to quality services,
- Responsible and effective use of public funds,
- Support for effective, evidence-based practices, and
- Collaborative partnerships across state, local, public, and private stakeholders.



PRIVATE SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES UNDER THE CSA

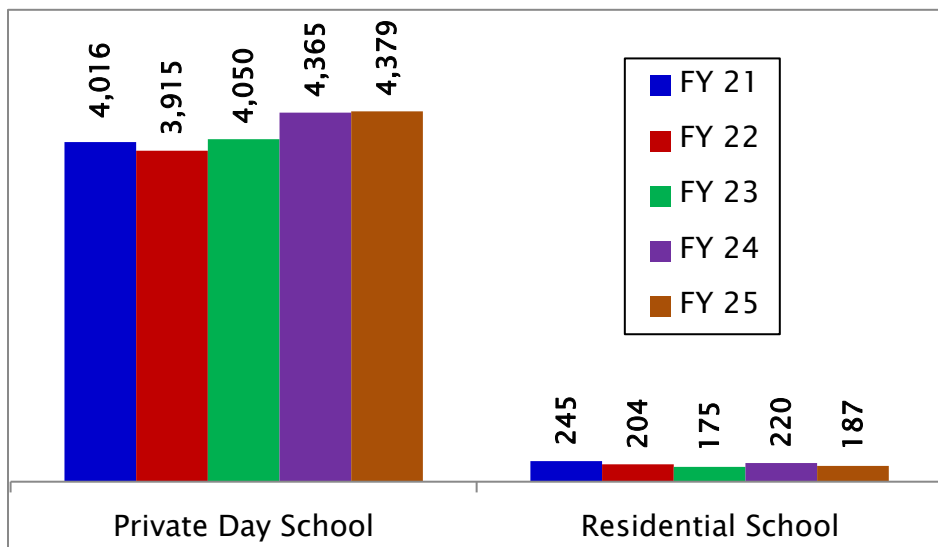
Annual Report to the General Assembly, December 1, 2025

In accordance with the Appropriation Act, Chapter 725, Item 268 (K)(2)

Item 268K.2. The Office of Children's Services shall report on funding for special education day treatment and residential services, including but not limited to the number of children served annually, average cost of care, type of service provided, length of stay, referral source, and ultimate disposition.

Children and youth with educational disabilities enrolled in approved private school special education programs based on their Individualized Education Program (IEP) are a significant component of the Children's Services Act (CSA) population. These children are eligible for CSA-funded services as specified in the *Code of Virginia*, §§ 2.2-5211 and 2.2-5212. Services are provided in a private day school or private residential school, per the student's IEP.

Figure 1: Number of Youth Served
Private Special Education Services (FY2021 – 2025)

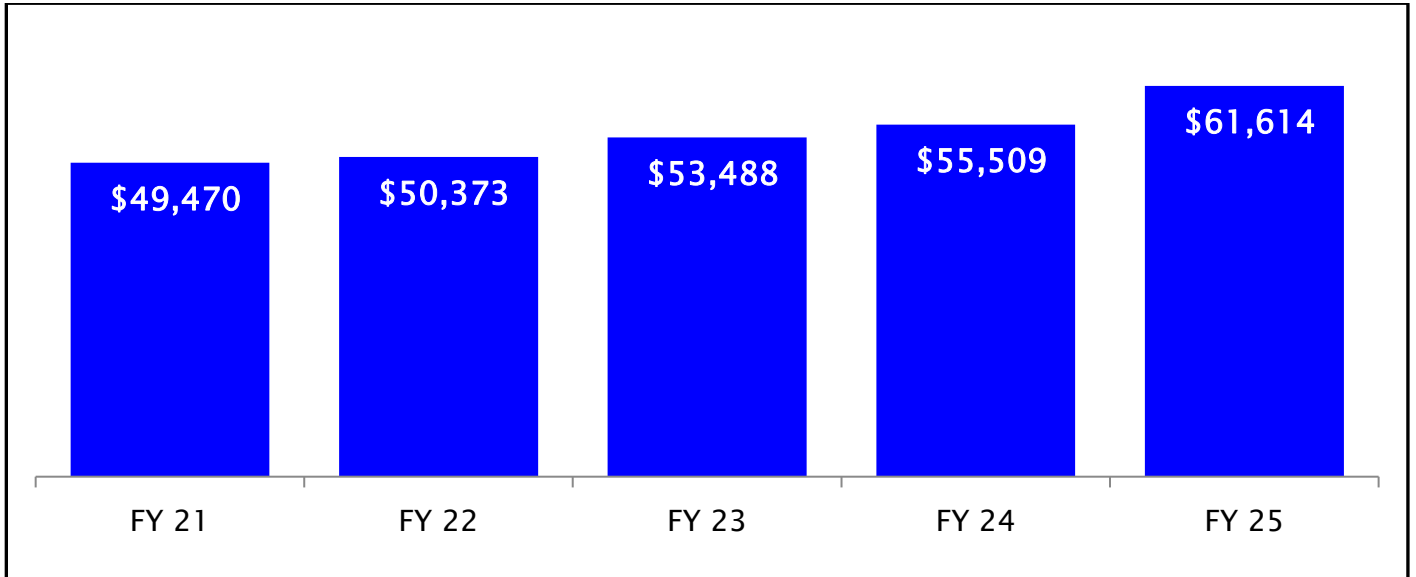


FY2025 unduplicated count of youth who received services resulting from an Individualized Education Program (IEP) requiring a private school placement = 4,502

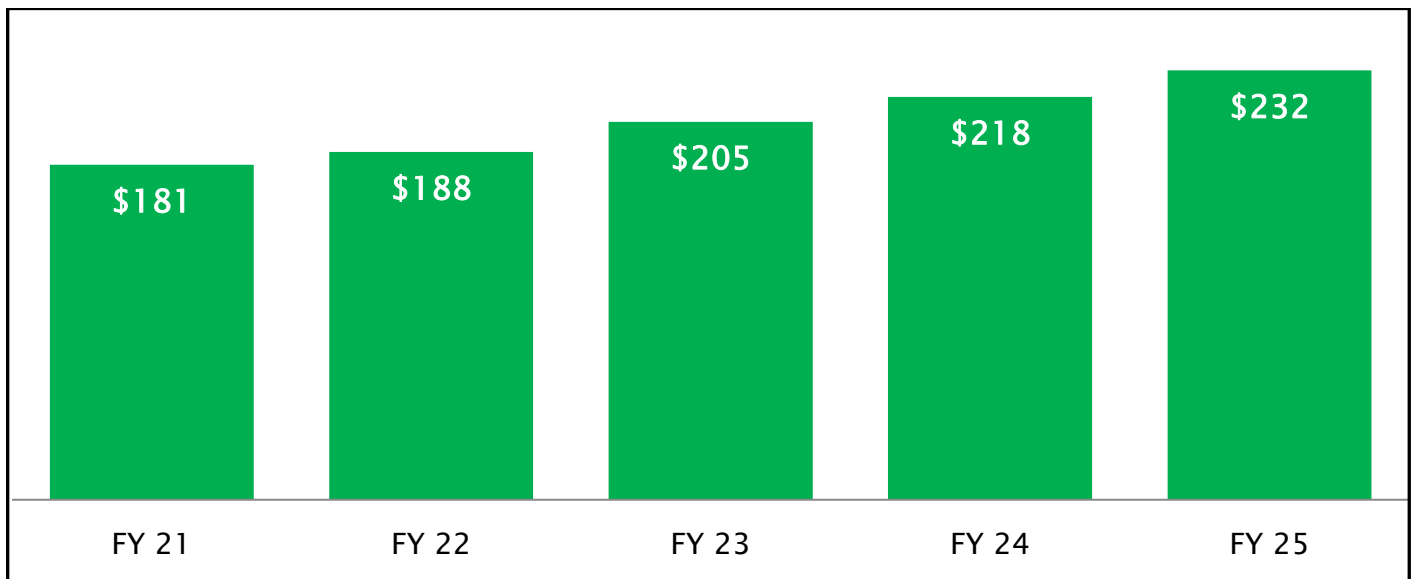
Figure 2: Net CSA Expenditures by Placement Type
Special Education Services

	FY2023	FY2024	FY2025
Private Day School	\$214,034,041	\$240,291,578	\$268,592,858
Private Residential School	\$8,744,410	\$9,777,794	\$8,794,111
Total	\$222,778,451	\$250,069,372	\$277,386,969

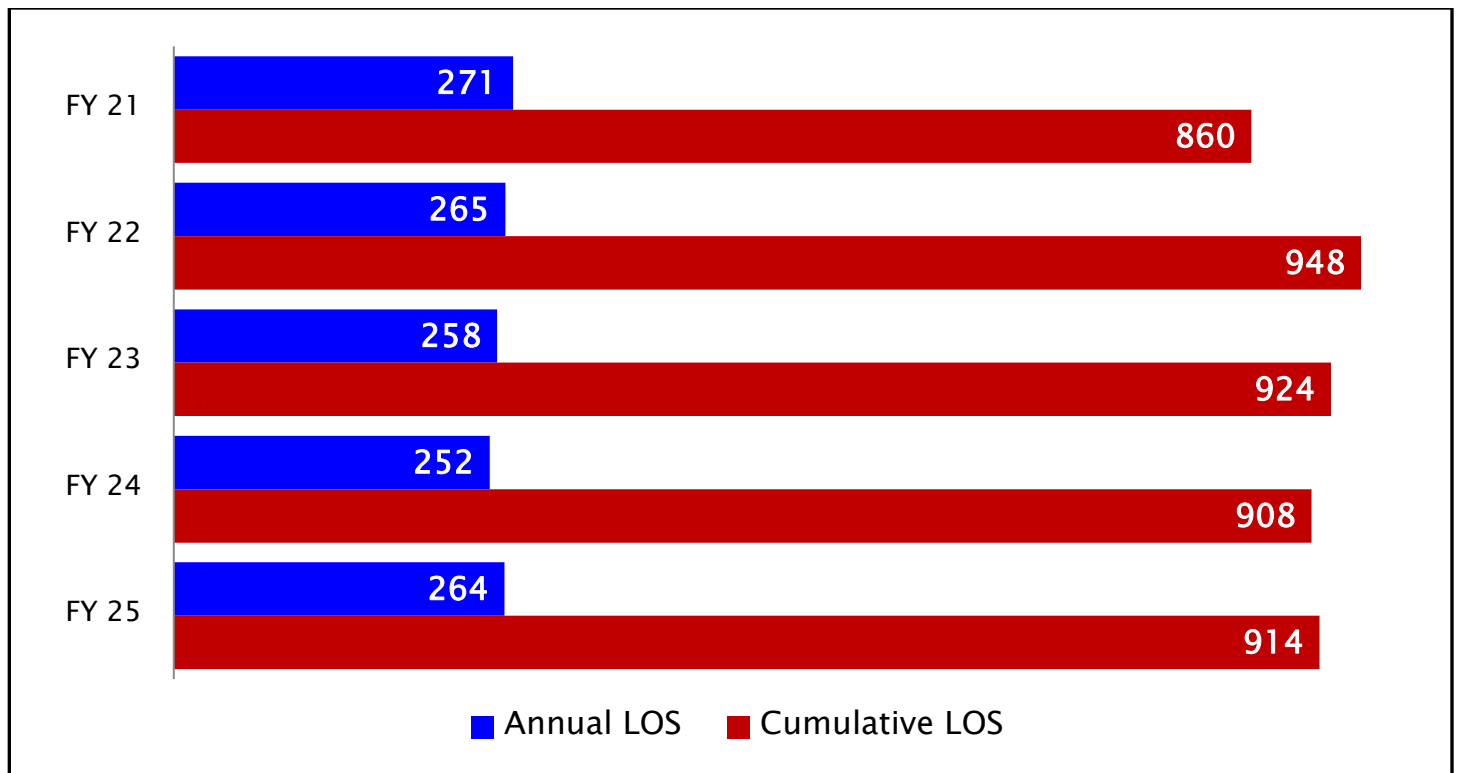
**Figure 3: Average Annual CSA Expenditure per Child
All Private Special Education Placements (FY2021 – 2025)**



**Figure 4: Average Daily Cost per Child
Private Day Special Education Placements (FY2021 – 2025)**



**Figure 5: Average Annual and Cumulative Length of Stay (Number of Days per Year)
Private Day Placements (FY2021 – 2025)**



Discussion

The growth in private special education placements, especially private day schools, has received extensive attention in recent years. CSA expenditures for private day special education placements account for the largest share of overall CSA growth since 2015. In FY2025, private day special education placements accounted for 45% of net CSA expenditures, including state general and local matching funds. The number of students served in such placements as required by their IEP rose 24% (3,416 to 4,251 between FY2015 and FY2020) and, after a temporary decline over the years of the COVID-19 pandemic, has in FY2025, risen to its highest level ever (4,379 students), albeit an essentially unchanged number from FY2024 (<1% increase, see Figure 1). This accounted for 27% of the children served through the CSA. As the number of students served has increased, per-student daily tuition expenditures also evidence significant growth (6% from FY2024 to FY2025) (see Figure 4). The length of stay (number of days served in the current fiscal year) has remained generally stable, averaging 262 days across the last five years. The cumulative length of stay across multiple years has also remained stable (see Figure 5), averaging around 2.5 years per student.

The 2021 Session of the General Assembly added specific CSA eligibility for students with disabilities to receive up to 12 months of transitional services to assist with their successful return from private day to public school settings. Funding for these services was made available to localities on July 1, 2021. In FY2025, 21 localities (vs. 24 in FY2024) accessed this transitional funding, supporting 64 students (vs. 57 students in FY2024) with net expenditures of \$1.4 million (a slight increase from FY2024). To determine the outcomes of

these transitional services, specifically how many students remained in public school and did not return to the private day setting, OCS determined that of the 102 unique students who completed transitional services in FY2024 or FY2025, 26 remained in or returned to a private day setting after the conclusion of the transitional services. This represents a 75.5% “success” rate. It should be noted that some of these students completed their transitional services at the “tail-end” of FY2025, and their “final” outcomes may not be known until some time after the beginning of FY2026 (2025 – 2026 school year).

The 2025 session of the General Assembly directed that the Office of Children's Services (OCS) limit the rate at which the state reimburses localities for private day special education programs to no more than 5 percent over the rates provided the previous year (Chapter 725, Item 268.L.). This directive will take effect on July 1, 2025, for the 2025 – 2026 school year and was linked to a \$5 million reduction in the state allocation to support CSA reimbursement to localities.

The Virginia Department of Education submits to the General Assembly an “Annual Report on the Outcome Data Measuring Student Progress for Students with Disabilities Enrolled in Special Education Private Day Schools.” The most recent iteration of that report is RD209 (2025) and can be found at:

<https://rga.lis.virginia.gov/Published/2025/RD209>. The next report is due in January 2026.

Additionally, the Appropriation Act (Chapter 725, Items 269.B.1. and B.2.) states:

B.1. Out of this appropriation, \$100,000 the first year and \$100,000 the second year from the general fund shall be provided to the Office of Children's Services (OCS) to contract with the Virginia Department of Education's Office of Special Education to conduct a review of private day placement decisions in those localities with a higher than average number of placements and make recommendations to the local education agency. OCS shall, on its website by October 1 of each year, (i) show the number of students in private day placements by locality; (ii) calculate the ratio of children in private day placements to the number of students in the local education agency (LEA); and (iii) identify the LEAs that exceed the statewide average of private day placements compared to the LEA's enrollment.

2. The Office of Comprehensive Services, in coordination with the Virginia Department of Education's Office of Special Education, shall report to the General Assembly by October 1 of each year: (i) recommendations made to each LEA and progress made in improving the LEA's ability to serve students; (ii) an assessment of barriers to students returning to a LEA from a private day placement including instances when the LEA refuses or is unable to provide a less restrictive environment due to a lack of available transition services and recommendations for returning students to public school who are deemed eligible; and (iii) trends in behavioral and emotional diagnoses including students on home-based instruction that may require private day placements.

The data required by this Item can be found on the Office of Children's Services website as follows:

The 2024–2025 school year data on utilization of private day placements by school division can be found at:

https://www.csa.virginia.gov/content/doc/Utilization_of_Private_Day_Special_Education_Placements_2024–2025_School_Year.pdf

The report on the DOE analysis of barriers to youth returning to public schools and recommendations can be found at: https://www.csa.virginia.gov/content/doc/Private_Day_Placements_VDOE_Review_2024–2025.pdf