



Arizona State Board for Charter Schools Required Fees and Volunteer Hours Guidance

Charter schools may not require parental involvement or a sum of money as a condition of enrollment or continued enrollment. Charter schools cannot charge tuition to pupils that reside in Arizona. Charter schools may charge fees for optional or extracurricular activities and materials.

Tuition

Pupils that reside in Arizona may not be charged tuition by a charter school.

The Arizona Constitution (Article 11) guarantees children that are residents of Arizona a free public education. A charter school shall not charge tuition for pupils that are residents of Arizona. A.R.S. § 15-185(B)(6). Generally, “tuition” is the price or payment for instruction. See Merriam-Webster at <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/tuition> (December 20, 2017). Fees or costs for instruction that a pupil is required to participate in would be considered tuition.

Charter schools must provide pupils with the materials and resources that are required to participate in the school’s required curriculum.

Fees

*Charter schools can charge fees for activities or items that are **not part of the required curriculum**.*

Charter schools may charge fees for optional or extracurricular activities and materials. See A.R.S. § 15-185(B)(6); See Ariz. Att’y. Gen. Op. I98-007 at footnote 9 (“ . . . if a charter school offers a curriculum with an emphasis on fine arts, performing arts, or vocational education, see A.R.S. § 15-183(E)(3), courses in such areas would be part of the required curriculum, rather than optional, and no fees may be charged. See A.R.S. § 15-185(B)[6].”)

When a charter school assesses fees, its governing body must “ensure that all fees contain a provision that allows the fees to be waived in the event of economic hardship to the pupil.” A.R.S. § 15-116(A). Documents describing fees should make clear that the fee may be waived and indicate the steps a parent must follow to have the fee waived.

Unpaid or past due fees cannot impact a pupil’s enrollment status. A charter school cannot prevent a pupil from enrolling in, applying to, or remaining enrolled in the school due to unpaid fees. A.R.S. § 15-116(B).

Parent Donations/Volunteering

A charter school cannot require parental involvement or a sum of money as a condition of enrollment or continued enrollment.

Charter schools may request a donation of time or money from parents of students enrolled or enrolling at a charter school. When requesting a donation from a parent, charter schools should make clear that any donation to the school is voluntary and is not a prerequisite for student enrollment or continued enrollment. A.R.S. § 15-185(B)(6).

The material contained in this document is for informational purposes only. The information is not intended to be and should not be considered legal advice. Charter schools should consult their own legal counsel for further information and advice.