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## COMMUNICATING WITH FAMILIES ABOUT PENNSYLVANIA RELIGIOUS OPT OUT PROCEDURES

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### RELIGIOUS OPT-OUT PROCEDURES IN PENNSYLVANIA

Participation in statewide assessments is a federal and state requirement for all students. Chapter 4 of Title 22 of the Pa. Code (22 Pa. code 4.4) provides for the right of any parent/guardian to excuse his/her child from the state assessment if, upon inspection of the testing materials, they find the assessment to conflict with their religious beliefs. The process must be initiated by the parent, not the school. This is the only regulatory allowance for a parent/guardian to excuse their child from the statewide assessments. A religious exemption cannot be denied; however, it can only be granted if all of the following steps are completed.

1. The student must be enrolled for testing so there is an official record of eligibility for the PA DLM. The enrollment record is also needed so the district (assessment coordinator) can document officially that the student was not assessed due to religious beliefs. A religious exemption cannot be granted until after the parent/guardian(s) have reviewed the vendor released examples of testlets.
2. The DLM vendor produces publicly released ‘testlets’, which serve as a tool for parents to view the type of content assessed on the PA DLM. The testlet examples can be accessed as follows:
  - [English Language Arts testlets](#)
  - [Mathematics testlets](#)
  - [Science testlets](#)

The parent/guardian must view the publicly released test materials on school grounds with the PA DLM Assessment Coordinator or designee. It is strongly recommended that a school administrator/PA DLM Assessment Coordinator discuss the PA DLM design with the parent/guardian, outlining key features of the assessment that allow students with the most significant cognitive disabilities to show what they know and can do (e.g., one-on-one administration procedure, adaptive design, online and teacher delivered accommodations, instructionally aligned, etc.). The DLM Parent Information Brochure can be accessed in [English \(dynamiclearningmaps.org\)](#) or [Spanish \(dynamiclearningmaps.org\)](#).

3. If after reviewing the assessment the parent/guardian(s) do not want their student to participate, they must write a letter to the Chief School Administrator requesting a religious exemption. If a service provider receives written notification from a parent requesting a religious exemption, the letter must be shared with the sending Local Education Agency when applicable.
4. Prior to the close of the testing window, the Assessment Coordinator must enter a Special Circumstance Code to indicate the reason for non-participation. Students who do not participate due to a religious opt-out count negatively against the school's participation rate in school accountability reporting.

#### **PARENT OPT-OUT (NOT BASED ON RELIGIOUS BELIEFS)**

There is no allowance for this type of exclusion in Pennsylvania regulation. Even though Pennsylvania does not recognize parental refusal as an allowable exclusion, if a parent/guardian refuses to have their child participate in the assessment and does not provide a reason in accordance with Chapter 4 rules, the IEP team must continue to complete section IV of the IEP and enroll the student in the KITE portal. Prior to the end of the testing window, the PA DLM Assessment Coordinator must follow the procedure for non-assessed students by entering the appropriate special circumstance code. Students who are non-assessed because of “**parent refusal**” count negatively against the school's participation rate in school accountability reporting.