

Becoming a Certified Special Education Teacher in Rhode Island: A General Overview

If you want to become a certified special education teacher in the state of Rhode Island, you must meet specific requirements and apply to the Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (**RIDE**). Certification Application Procedures are available on RIDE's website at:

http://www.rido.net/Certification_PD/certification/Default.htm

Currently, RIDE issues the following types of teaching certificates in Special Education:

Special Education:

- a. **Early Childhood**- Birth-K Mild/Moderate to Severe/Profound Disabilities
- b. **Elementary and Middle Level**- Grades K-8 Mild/Moderate Disabilities
- c. **Middle/Secondary Level**- Grades 6-12 Mild/Moderate Disabilities
- d. **Severe Profound Disabilities**- Pre-K-12/Ages:3-21
- e. **Blind/Partially Sighted**- Ages: Birth-21
- f. **Deaf/Hard-of-Hearing** - Ages: Birth-21

First, determine which of the above special education certificate(s) you are interested in. Knowing the age groups and types of disabilities you would like to work with will help to make that determination.

Specific requirements for each of the special education certificates (and all other RI certificates) are available on RIDE's website at:

http://www.rido.net/Certification_PD/certification/Certreqs.htm

These requirements include a bachelor's degree, specific coursework in education/special education, a supervised student teaching experience, and RI state tests. **Note:** In order to be certified as a special education teacher in RI, you must also be certified as an Early Childhood, Elementary, or Secondary teacher. *The only exception to this requirement is the Special Education: Severe/Profound Disabilities Certificate.*

For example:

For the **Special Education: Early Childhood Certificate**- You must also be eligible for a RI Early Childhood Teacher's Certificate to be qualified to seek certification in this area.

For the **Special Education: Elementary and Middle Level Certificate** - You must also be eligible for a RI Early Childhood or Elementary Teacher's Certificate to be qualified to seek certification in this area

For the **Special Education: Middle/Secondary Level Certificate** - You must be also eligible for a RI Elementary or Secondary Teacher's Certificate to be qualified to seek certification in this area.

For the **Special Education: Blind/Partially Sighted Certificate** - You must also be eligible for a RI Early Childhood, Elementary, or Secondary Teacher's Certificate to be qualified to seek certification in this area.

For the **Special Education: Deaf/Hard-of-Hearing Certificate** - You must also be eligible for a RI Early Childhood, Elementary, or Secondary Teacher's Certificate to be qualified to seek certification in this area

After you have determined which RI Special Education Certificate(s) to pursue and you are familiar with the state requirements, look at colleges/universities that offer the programs/coursework that you need to obtain your special education certification. Depending on the college, these programs/courses may be offered at the undergraduate (bachelors) level, at the graduate (master) level, or both. Below are colleges/universities located in RI and the special education programs and courses that they offer:

Rhode Island College:

Special Education: Early Childhood- offers graduate program/courses only.
Special Education: Elementary and Middle Level- offers both undergraduate and graduate programs/courses.
Special Education: Middle/Secondary Level- offers both undergraduate and graduate programs/courses.
Special Education: Severe/Profound Disabilities- offers both undergraduate and graduate programs/courses.

Providence College:

Special Education: Elementary and Middle Level- offers both undergraduate and graduate programs/courses.
Special Education: Middle/Secondary Level- offers graduate program/courses only.

Salve Regina University:

Special Education: Elementary and Middle Level- offers undergraduate program/courses only.

Johnson and Wales University:

Special Education: Elementary and Middle Level - offers graduate program/courses only.

Special Education: Middle/Secondary Level- offers graduate program/courses only.

Community College of RI: offers some general intro-level courses that may transfer into the above colleges/universities.

*Currently there are no colleges/universities *located in RI* that offer programs in Deaf/Hard-of-Hearing. Programs/courses in this area must be obtained out-of-state.

*Currently there are no colleges/universities *located in RI* that offer programs in Blind/Partially Sighted. However, RI is a partnering state with the *North East Regional Center for Vision Education (NERC)* which promotes certification in Blind/Partially Sighted through the **University of Massachusetts: Boston's** graduate programs in this area.

* If you have attended an out-of-state college, you should be aware that special education teacher certification requirements **vary** from state-to-state. While Rhode Island's local colleges and universities have designed special education programs/coursework to prepare you to meet RI's specific requirements, out-of-state colleges may not. When you submit your application for certification to RIDE, your eligibility for a RI teaching certificate will be determined by whether you have met **RI's** certification requirements (i.e. **not** the state requirements *where the college* you attended was located.)

*If you already hold a teaching certificate in education/special education from another state, you may be able to obtain certification in RI through a process known as "Enhanced Reciprocity". For more information on Enhanced Reciprocity, see: http://www.ridoe.net/Certification_PD/certification/Reciprocity.htm

*If you are certified to teach in another country, outside of the United States, you should be aware that special education teacher certification requirements **vary** from country to country. You will need to have your credentials evaluated by an approved professional agency, such as World Education Services <http://www.wes.org/>, before you can submit them to RIDE to be considered for RI certification. Your eligibility for a RI teaching certificate will be determined by whether you have met **RI's** certification requirements.

For more information on becoming a special education teacher in RI, to obtain information on colleges/programs, or for tips on finding employment in special education in RI visit: www.RISpecialEdCareers.net