**Section 425.40 Process for Initial Recognition**

A school may choose whether to seek recognition under subsection (a) or subsection (b). An application for initial recognition may be submitted at any time.

a) Direct Recognition

1) The chief school administrator of a registered school must submit an application for recognition, using a format specified by the State Superintendent. The application must include summary information about the school, including but not limited to, various assurances of compliance and information about its educational program.

2) Upon receipt of a complete application, the State Superintendent must schedule a recognition visit and empanel a review team, whose members must, at a minimum, include the following people, unless this requirement is waived by the State Superintendent due to extenuating circumstances. The State Superintendent may authorize the school to select the team members from subsections (a)(2)(B) and (C).

A) a representative of the State Superintendent;

B) an individual who is familiar with the public educational milieu, such as an administrative or instructional employee of a school district or regional office of education or a representative of a department of education at a public college or university; and

C) an individual who is familiar with the nonpublic educational milieu, such as a representative of a nonpublic school, other than the school whose recognition is being considered, or a representative of a department of education at a nonpublic college or university.

3) As part of a school visit, the team must observe the operations of the school, review the required documentation, and, in a format specified by the State Superintendent, prepare a report of its findings for the consideration of the State Superintendent to determine the recognition of the school as either Fully Recognized or Recognized Pending Further Review as described in Section 425.50(c)(1) and (2), respectively. If a school seeking initial recognition exhibits one or more deficiencies under 425.50(c)(3), initial recognition will not be granted; in such a case, the school may reapply pursuant to subsection (a) or (b).

4) If the State Superintendent assigns a status of Recognized Pending Further Review, the State Superintendent must identify to the school the deficiencies leading to that determination and Section 425.50(e) shall apply. The State Superintendent must give a school that is assigned a recognition status of Recognized Pending Further Review an opportunity to resolve those deficiencies preventing Fully Recognized status.

5) The State Superintendent may postpone until the following school year consideration for recognition of a school whose application is received in the offices of the State Board after the resources for that consideration have been exhausted for the current school year.

b) Recognition via External Accrediting Organizations

1) After receipt of a request for recognition from an accrediting organization, the State Superintendent must review the processes used by that organization to identify if that entity's approval, recognition, or accreditation of schools is granted on the basis of compliance with at least the requirements of Sections 425.20 and 425.30 or if the accrediting organization can properly review a registered school for recognition under this Part on behalf of the State Superintendent. The State Superintendent must approve an entity meeting this standard for the entity to be able to review a registered school for recognition purposes under this Part.

2) In keeping with the review cycle and process of the relevant accrediting organization, each registered school recognized under this Part through an accrediting organization approved by the State Superintendent must be visited by that accrediting organization. The school must submit documentation of the recognition visit to the State Superintendent from the accrediting organization by the required deadline, as determined by the State Superintendent. The State Superintendent must evaluate the documentation in the same manner as when evaluating site visit reports generated under subsection (a) and assign the school a status of Fully Recognized or Recognized Pending Further Review as described in Section 425.50(c)(1) and (2), respectively. If a school seeking initial recognition exhibits one or more deficiencies under 425.50(c)(3), initial recognition will not be granted; in such a case, the school may reapply pursuant to subsection (a) or (b).

3) If the State Superintendent assigns a status of Recognized Pending Further Review, the State Superintendent must identify to the school the deficiencies leading to that determination and Section 425.50(e) shall apply. The State Superintendent must give a school that is assigned a recognition status of Recognized Pending Further Review an opportunity to resolve those deficiencies preventing Fully Recognized status.

4) The State Superintendent must periodically review the processes of approved accrediting organizations to confirm the organization's ongoing alignment with the requirements of this Part.

5) The State Superintendent must maintain on the agency's website a list of all accrediting organizations whose determinations are accepted pursuant to this subsection.

c) The State Superintendent must treat each registered school recognized under subsection (b) in the same manner as a registered school recognized under subsection (a).

(Source: Amended at 46 Ill. Reg. 6491, effective April 11, 2022)