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New Jersey Still Advertises a Dorm It Closed

Heather Grizzle · October 12, 2026

New Jersey's budget says the Katzenbach School's residential program ended in fiscal 2026. The state's pages for families still offer it.

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The Governor's budget says the Katzenbach School for the Deaf stopped housing students in fiscal 2026. The Department of Education's pages for families still offer the program.

IN BRIEF

- New Jersey's FY2027 Governor's Budget records that the Marie H. Katzenbach School for the Deaf's residential program "has been eliminated" as of fiscal 2026.
- On October 13, 2026, the Department's statewide program list still told families that "A residential program (Monday-Thursday) is available for high school students," and the school's high school page still offered a "Day or Residential Program."
- The 2019 Deaf Student's Bill of Rights requires districts to tell parents about every placement option, naming the Katzenbach School. The state's public description of that option is out of date on the one point a family deciding on a residential placement needs most.
- Enrollment at the state's only school for the deaf is budgeted to fall from 94 in FY2025 to 79 in FY2027, with no residential pupils in either of the last two years.

New Jersey has one state school for the deaf, and its own government describes it two ways. The Governor's budget for fiscal 2027 says the Marie H. Katzenbach School for the Deaf in West Trenton no longer runs a residential program. The Department of Education, which operates the school, still tells families on its program list and on the school's own pages that the residential program is open to high school students. Both documents were live on October 12, 2026. They cannot both be current.

Two documents, one school

The National Deaf Education Data Index read every public school unit in New Jersey for its state file, version 2.0: 696 units, from the largest districts to sixteen that operate no school at all. The Katzenbach School sits at the center of that file. Founded in 1883, it is a state agency of the Department of Education with its own rule chapter, N.J.A.C. 6A:21, and it is the one school the 2019 Deaf Student's Bill of Rights names.

The FY2027 Governor's Budget prints the school's evaluation data on page D-117 of the Department of Education detail. Note (a) on that page reads:

> As of fiscal 2026, the Marie H. Katzenbach School for the Deaf's residential program has been eliminated.
>
> State of New Jersey, Fiscal Year 2027 Governor's Budget, Department of Education, page D-117, note (a)

The Department's statewide page of programs for students who are deaf or hard of hearing, read again for this piece on October 12, 2026, says:

> A residential program (Monday-Thursday) is available for high school students.
>
> New Jersey Department of Education, Programs, Services, Consultants and Evaluators for Students who are Deaf/Hard of Hearing, retrieved October 12, 2026

The same list adds that "An important component of the Residential Program is the Educational Resource Center," which provides tutoring and guided study time. The school's high school page, also read on October 12, describes education "through our Day or Residential Program, which fosters independence," and tells families that day students can join after-school activities "through the provision of a late bus or a residential placement."



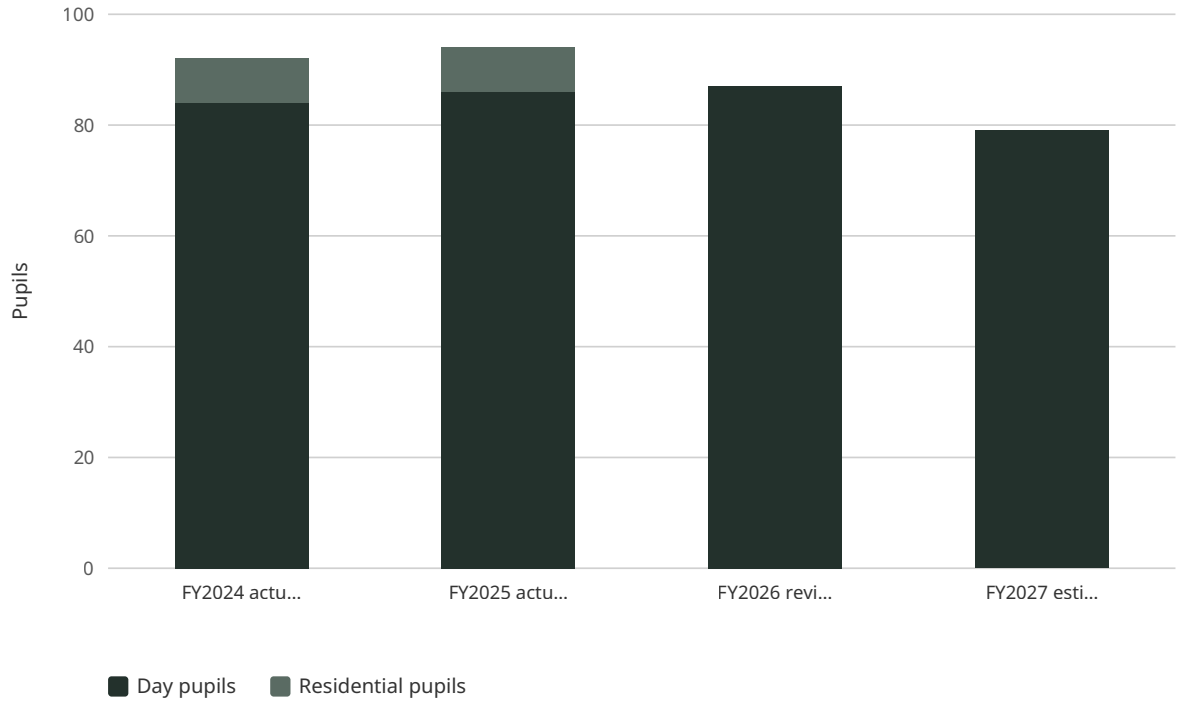
What each public document says about Katzenbach residential placement

Document	Published by	What it says
FY2027 Governor's Budget, page D-117, note (a)	Office of Management and Budget	Residential program eliminated as of fiscal 2026
Statewide program list for deaf and hard of hearing students	Department of Education, Office of Special Education	Residential program (Monday-Thursday) available for high school students
Katzenbach High School page	Department of Education, for the school	Education offered through a Day or Residential Program
Katzenbach Campus Life page	Department of Education, for the school	Extended Day Program, Monday through Thursday, 3:00 to 5:30 p.m.; no residential life described

Source: Pages as retrieved October 12, 2026; budget detail as held in NDEDI state file 30, version 2.0

What the budget shows

The budget's own figures are consistent with its note. The school had eight residential pupils in each of the two years before the change and none in the two years after it. Total enrollment is also falling.



Residential pupils fall from 8 to 0 between FY2025 and FY2026; total enrollment falls from 94 to 79 by the FY2027 estimate.

Source: FY2027 Governor's Budget, Department of Education detail, page D-117

View data

Fiscal year	Day pupils	Residential pupils
FY2024 actual	84	8
FY2025 actual	86	8
FY2026 revised	87	0
FY2027 estimate	79	0

Marie H. Katzenbach School for the Deaf, enrollment by fiscal year

Fiscal year	Enrolled	Day pupils	Residential pupils
FY2024 (actual)	92	84	8
FY2025 (actual)	94	86	8
FY2026 (revised)	87	87	0
FY2027 (estimate)	79	79	0

Source: State of New Jersey, Fiscal Year 2027 Governor's Budget, Department of Education budget detail, page D-117, as held in NDEDI state file 30, version 2.0

For FY2025, the last year with residential pupils, the budget reports a gross cost of $162,809 per pupil, direct State support of $68,064 per pupil, payments from sending school boards of $60,215 for each day pupil and $76,694 for each residential pupil, four graduates and 105 filled positions. The school's Direct State Services appropriation was $6,935,000 in the FY2025 Appropriations Act and the same amount in the FY2026 and FY2027 Acts. The budget detail does not say what became of the residential program's space, staff or funding, and the Index found no public notice of the change on the Department pages it read.

Why the page matters

A program list is not a brochure in New Jersey. In 2019 the Legislature enacted the New Jersey Deaf Student's Bill of Rights, P.L.2019, c.204. Its operative section, N.J.S.A. 18A:46-2.8, directs school districts to inform parents of all placement considerations, "including the Marie H. Katzenbach School for the Deaf," and of the options available. The Department's program list is where a district, a parent or an advocate goes to learn what those options are.

That makes the residential line more than a stale sentence. A family in Cape May or Sussex County weighing the state school against a local program is weighing, among other things, whether a teenager can live on campus four nights a week. The Department's pages say yes. The Governor's budget says no. A family that relies on the pages could plan around a service that, on the budget's account, ended more than a year

ago. A family that hears the budget's version has no public statement from the Department about what replaced it.

NEW JERSEY, 2024-25: WHO RELIES ON THE DEPARTMENT'S MAP

1,311	19	22 of 696	583
Students aged 5 to 21 classified Auditory Impairment	Students who are deafblind	Public school units that publish a deaf education program or named staff	Units that publish nothing on the subject

Source: NDEDI state file 30, version 2.0; IDEA Section 618 count, school year 2024-25

The population this touches is small at the school and large around it. In the 2024-25 school year the state counted 1,311 students aged five to twenty-one with an Auditory Impairment classification and 19 who are deafblind. The Katzenbach School has no row of its own in that count, because every pupil it serves is counted in the district that sends them. The Index found that 22 of the 696 units it read publish a deaf education program or named staff, and 583 publish nothing on the subject. For most families, the Department's statewide list is the only map of the options the statute promises them.

What the file can and cannot say

The Index records the conflict and does not resolve it. Two readings fit the public record. The budget note may be correct and the Department's pages simply not updated. Or the residential program may continue in some changed form that the budget describes as eliminated. The school's campus page describes an Extended Day Program that runs Monday through Thursday from 3:00 to 5:30 p.m. That is the same Monday-to-Thursday week the residential program was listed for, but the page does not say that one replaced the other, and the Index does not infer it.

The same 2019 legislation carries a second open item. P.L.2019, c.205, codified at N.J.S.A. 18A:46-2.10 to 2.14, created the Working Group on Deaf Education and directs the Department and the Department of Health's Early Intervention Program to "annually collect and publicly report data on the language acquisition and developmental progress of children from birth to age five who are deaf or hard of hearing." The Department publishes a Language Acquisition Rating Scale and end-of-year rating reports for preschool children. The Index found no annual statewide report under that section on the pages it read.

Both items went to the Department, to the Katzenbach School and to the state's Division of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing in the notice for the New Jersey file, sent October 9, 2026. The correction window closes on October 26, 2026. A dated statement from the Department on the residential program, or a citation to the annual report, would change the finding in the next version.

What closes the gap

The fix here is smaller than in most states the Index has read. New Jersey does not need a new law or a new program to resolve it. It needs one sentence on the Department's program list and on the school's high school page saying whether residential placement is available, and from what date, and one line in the next budget detail saying what the residential appropriation now pays for. If the Extended Day Program is the successor, the Department can say so in those same places.

The 2019 Bill of Rights put the Katzenbach School into every district's conversation with every family of a deaf child. That promise only works if what districts and families can read about the school is true on the day they read it. On October 12, 2026, on the residential program, the state's budget and its program pages disagreed, and the Department had not said which one was right. NDEDI's state release schedule is at ndedi.org.

Sources

- National Deaf Education Data Index, New Jersey state file version 2.0, SY 2025 (School Year 2024-2025), Novara Consulting Group LLC, DOI 10.5281/zenodo.23254321. Frame, coverage codes, Katzenbach profile, flagged contradiction and open items.

- State of New Jersey, Fiscal Year 2027 Governor's Budget, Department of Education budget detail, Marie H. Katzenbach School for the Deaf, evaluation data and note (a), page D-117, as read and hashed in the Index file, source 17.
- State of New Jersey, Fiscal Year 2026 Governor's Budget, Department Recommendations, page D-115, as read in the Index file, source 57.
- Fiscal Year 2025 Appropriations Act, P.L.2024, c.22, and the FY2026 and FY2027 Appropriations Acts, Direct State Services line 12-5011, as read in the Index file, sources 18, 19 and 55.
- New Jersey Department of Education, Programs, Services, Consultants and Evaluators for Students who are Deaf/Hard of Hearing, retrieved October 12, 2026.
- New Jersey Department of Education, Marie H. Katzenbach School for the Deaf, High School and Campus Life pages, retrieved October 12, 2026.
- N.J.S.A. 18A:46-2.8 (P.L.2019, c.204, the New Jersey Deaf Student's Bill of Rights), and N.J.S.A. 18A:46-2.10 to 2.14 (P.L.2019, c.205), as read from the Legislature's full-text statute compilation in the Index file, source 52.
- New Jersey Department of Education, Special Education Public Reporting (IDEA Section 618), 2025 reporting workbook, school year 2024-25, as read in the Index file, source 4.

TIPS

Know something about a sign language AI system that the public should know? Send it to tips@novaracg.com. Every tip is read by me and kept confidential. If you work in the UK, writing to us is not by itself a protected disclosure under the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998, so before you share employer information, check your options with Protect (protect-advice.org.uk), the free whistleblowing advice line.

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