

ESA

Education Scholarship Account

The ESA program provides an opportunity for parents of children with disabilities who wish to withdraw their child from the public school system to use scholarship money to help defray the cost of private school tuition or other specific allowable activities to educate their child. The ESA program was created by the Equal Opportunity for Students with Special Needs Miss. Code Ann. §§ 37-181-1 *et. seq.* The program is being administered by the Mississippi Department of Education, Office of Special Education.

Who is eligible?

In order to qualify for an ESA, these requirements must be met:

- Applicant must be a resident of Mississippi;
- Student must have had an active Individualized Education Program (IEP) within five (5) years from the date of application. An “active IEP” is an IEP developed by a public school district where the student was enrolled and received services; and
- Parent must sign an agreement promising:
 - To provide an organized, appropriate educational program with measurable annual goals to their participating student and, to the extent reasonably deemed appropriate by the parent, to provide an education for the qualified student in at least the subjects of reading, grammar, mathematics, social studies and science;
 - To document their participating student’s disability at intervals as required... Every three (3) years after initial enrollment in the program...;
 - Not to enroll their participating student in a public school;
 - Not file for their participating student a certificate of enrollment indicating participation in a home instruction program under Section 37-13-19, Mississippi Code of 1972; and
 - Not participate in the Mississippi Dyslexia Therapy Scholarship for Students with Dyslexia Program or the Mississippi Speech-Language Therapy Scholarship for Students with Speech-Language Impairments Program while participating in the ESA program.

How are students chosen for the program?

Once an application is submitted, it will be reviewed for eligibility within 21 business days. **(Any incomplete applications will not be processed.)** Applications will be reviewed on a first-come, first-served basis until 50% of the annual enrollment limits are reached. A random selection process will then be used to choose the recipients of the remaining ESAs. A mid-year lottery may be held in the event scholarships become available.

Once students are selected for an ESA, an award packet will be mailed to the recipient. The student will then remain in the program as long as they are eligible and are not subject to the random selection process in subsequent years.

How much is the scholarship?

The amount is calculated annually each spring. The 2017-2018 scholarship amount was \$6,494.00.

When is the best time to apply?

To ensure the award notification is received prior to the start of the 2018-2019 school year, the application window is from **February 8th to July 3rd.**

All applications must be in office. No post marked applications are accepted.



What can the funds be spent on?

- Tuition and/or fees at an eligible school;
- Textbooks;
- Payment to a tutor;
- Payment for purchase of curriculum; including any supplemental materials required by the curriculum;
- Fees for transportation to and from an educational service provider paid to a fee-for-service transportation provider;
- Tuition and/or fees for online learning programs or courses;
- Fees for nationally standardized norm-referenced achievement tests, including alternate assessments; and fees for Advanced Placement examinations or similar courses and any examinations related to college or university admission;
- Educational services or therapies from a licensed or certified practitioner or provider, including licensed or certified paraprofessionals or educational aides;
- Services provided by a public school, including individual classes and extracurricular programs;
- Tuition and fees at a postsecondary institution;
- Textbooks related to coursework at a postsecondary institution;
- Surety bond payments if required by the department;
- No more than Fifty Dollars (\$50.00) in annual consumable school supplies necessary for educational services and therapies, daily classroom activities, and tutoring;
- Computer hardware and software and other technological devices if an eligible school, licensed or certified tutor, licensed or certified educational service practitioner or provider, or licensed medical professional verifies in writing that these items are essential for the student to meet annual, measurable goals.

How will I receive the funds?

Funds will be paid quarterly to the parent on a reimbursement basis. Subject to availability of funds, the parent must submit a reimbursement request with proper documentation of expenses incurred. Funds can also be paid quarterly directly to an educational service provider if approved by the parent.

Below is a list of the tentative reimbursement dates for school year 2018-2019:

Reimbursement Request Deadline	Payment Disbursed By
08/31/18	09/28/18
11/30/18	12/28/18
02/28/19	03/29/19
05/31/19	06/28/19



How do I apply?

Applications are available through your local public school and the Mississippi Department of Education website:

www.mde.k12.ms.us/ose/ESA

Applications will only be accepted via United States Postal Service (USPS). Applications must be complete on submission with all necessary documents. **Any incomplete submissions will not be processed.** Applications will be accepted on a rolling basis. Once enrollment reaches 50%, the MDE will announce a deadline for the random selection of the remaining scholarships.

What if I have more questions?

Complete information on this program can be found at

www.mde.k12.ms.us/ose/ESA

