

# 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 Act of 2015 (SB 2695). 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) at some point from Jan. 1, 2014 – June 30, 2015. 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 appropriate, to provide an education in the areas of reading, grammar, mathematics, social studies, & science;
  - Document their participating student’s disability every three years while enrolled in the program;
  - Not enroll their participating student in a public school;
  - Not file a certificate of enrollment indicating participation in a home instruction (homeschool) program; 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.

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

### How much is the scholarship?

\$6,500 for 2015-2016 School Year

### When is the best time to apply?

July 1, 2015 - July 10, 2015 to ensure that notification is received prior to the start of the 2015-2016 school year.



## 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;
- Fees for transportation to and from an educational service provider paid to a fee-for-service transportation provider;
- Tuition and fees for online learning programs/courses;
- Fees for certain standardized tests;
- Educational services or therapies from licensed or certified practitioners;
- Services provided by a public school, including individual classes and extracurricular programs;
- Tuition and fees at a postsecondary institution and related textbooks;
- Up to \$50 in annual consumable school supplies;
- Computer hardware, software, and other technological devices deemed necessary by an eligible school or service provider.

## How will I receive the funds?

Funds will be paid to the parent on a reimbursement basis quarterly (subject to availability of funds) after submission of 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 2015-2016:

Reimbursement Request Deadline	Payment Disbursed By
8/31/15	9/30/15
11/30/15	12/30/15
2/29/16	3/31/16
5/31/16	6/30/16



## How do I apply?

Applications will be made available through your local public school and the Mississippi Department of Education website:

[www.mde.k12.ms.us/ose/ESA](http://www.mde.k12.ms.us/ose/ESA)

Applications must be completed and all necessary documents included upon submission. **Applications will only be accepted via United States Postal Service (USPS). Any incomplete submissions will not be processed.** Applications will be accepted anytime after July 1, 2015. Once enrollment reaches 50%, the MDE will announce a deadline for the random selection of the remaining scholarships. **Early submissions prior to July 1, 2015, will not be accepted.**

## What if I have more questions?

Complete information on this program can be found at

[www.mde.k12.ms.us/ose/ESA](http://www.mde.k12.ms.us/ose/ESA)

