

SPECIAL NEEDS OPPORTUNITY SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM GENERAL OVERVIEW

Prospective applicants may view additional program information on the [Children First Education Fund](#) website.

The Special Needs Opportunity Scholarship Program is an education choice model for Utah residents that provides tuition assistance for eligible students with disabilities not enrolled in public school. It is designed for students who would qualify for special education and related services in public schools, kindergarten and grades 1 through 12 (5–21 years of age), whose parents choose an eligible private school or other eligible expenses.

Together, Local Education Agencies (LEAs) or multidisciplinary teams, Special Needs Opportunity Scholarship Program eligible private schools, and parents determine special education eligibility as defined by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA); the same eligibility requirements for special education services in public schools.

Student Eligibility Requirements

To be eligible for a scholarship, the student must meet all the following requirements:

1. The student's custodial parent or legal guardian must reside within the State of Utah.
2. The student must be eligible to participate in public school, in kindergarten or grades 1 through 12.
3. The student must meet one of these two conditions:
 - (a) Has a current IEP during the school year and has been admitted to an eligible private school; or
 - (b) Is determined by a multidisciplinary evaluation team to be eligible for services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Subchapter II, 20 U.S.C. Secs. 1400 to 1419.
4. A Special Needs Opportunity Scholarship application must be completed and submitted as directed in the instructions on the application.
5. During the school year for which the student is applying for the scholarship, is not:
 - (a) A student who receives a scholarship under the Carson Smith Scholarship Program created in Section [53F-4-302](#); or
 - (b) A public-school student.

(Note: a sibling of an approved/eligible scholarship recipient may qualify for funding as well)

Conditions of Understanding and Issues of Acceptance

When a Special Needs Scholarship is accepted, the following expectations are understood:

1. The student is not enrolled in a public school or public charter school.
2. Private schools become eligible by meeting school eligibility requirements.
3. The parent assumes full financial responsibility for the education of the student.
4. Acceptance of the Special Needs Scholarship has the same effect as a parental refusal to consent to special education services. The "refusal to consent to Special Education and Related Services" is clearly understood and accepted (refer to IDEA or state Special Education Rules for information).
5. The scholarship may or may not pay the full tuition, supplies, and/or fees at the eligible private school.
6. Any remaining tuition and fees after the scholarship has been paid are the responsibility of the parent.
7. A student who receives the Special Needs Scholarship is not participating in a dual enrollment program in a public school including participating in extracurricular activities. A student who receives the Carson Smith Scholarship funding is NOT eligible for this scholarship.
8. The parent agrees to provide information as needed to process payments and to verify continuing student eligibility.
9. An eligible "Scholarship expense" means:
 - (a) Tuition, fees, or textbooks for a qualifying school;
 - (b) Educational therapy, if the educational therapy is provided by a licensed physician or licensed practitioner, including occupational, behavioral, physical, or speech-language therapies;
 - (c) Textbooks, curriculum, or other instructional materials including supplemental materials or associated online instruction required by a curriculum;
 - (d) Tuition and fees for an online learning course or program; or
 - (e) Fees associated with a state-recognized industry certification examination, or any examination related to college or university admission.
10. A scholarship granting organization shall determine a full-year scholarship award to pay for the cost of one or more scholarship expenses in an amount not more than:
 - (a) For an eligible student in grades 1 through 12 who has an IEP, whose family income is:
 - (i) At or below 185% of the federal poverty level, the value of the weighted pupil unit multiplied by 2.5;
 - (ii) Between 185% and 555% of the federal poverty level, the value of the weighted pupil unit multiplied by two;

- (iii) Above 555% of the federal poverty level, the value of the weighted pupil unit multiplied by 1.5;
 - (b) For an eligible student in grades 1 through 12 who does not have an IEP, the value of the weighted pupil unit;
 - (c) For an eligible student in kindergarten who has an IEP, the value of the weighted pupil unit; or
 - (d) For an eligible student in kindergarten who does not have an IEP, half the value of the weighted pupil unit.
11. The special needs scholarship program is funded by tax credit donations. Scholarships are not guaranteed and are subject to the availability of funds.
 12. The scholarship amount may not exceed the tuition and fees charged to parents by a private school.
 13. Scholarship payments may be written to the parent of the student or paid directly to the school on behalf of the parent.
 14. A scholarship remains in force for three years, provided the student continues to meet eligibility requirements.
 15. The scholarship may be extended in three-year increments if an assessment team determines the student continues to meet eligibility requirements. For more information regarding renewal of the scholarship, contact the private school.