



**FAMILY EMPOWERMENT SCHOLARSHIP FOR
STUDENTS WITH UNIQUE ABILITIES
PARENT/GUARDIAN HANDBOOK**



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Contact Us

The Step Up Service Center is available Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m.– 5:00 p.m. ET. Parents/guardians who have questions or need assistance can contact Step Up via chat at StepUpForStudents.org, call (877) 735-7837, or email Info@SUFS.org.

Overview

Step Up For Students is a state-approved, nonprofit, Scholarship Funding Organization (SFO) that empowers families to pursue and engage in the most appropriate learning options for their children.

Step Up For Students administers Florida's school choice programs. These programs include the Family Empowerment Scholarship for Educational Opportunities (FES-EO), the Family Empowerment Scholarship for Students with Unique Abilities (FES-UA), the Florida Tax Credit (FTC) Scholarship Program, the Hope Scholarship for students who are bullied or are victims of violence in a public school, and the New Worlds Scholarship Program for public school students in kindergarten through fifth grades who struggle with math and/or reading.

The FES-UA scholarship provides access to an education savings account (ESA) that functions like a bank account from which a parent/guardian directs funds to pay for tuition and fees for a private school, homeschooling options, therapies, tutoring, and more. In 2014, Florida became the second state in the nation, after Arizona, to create an ESA program for children with special needs. Formerly called the Gardiner Scholarship, in 2021 this program was rolled into the Family Empowerment Scholarship to help grow the program and to streamline the state's scholarships. The Family Empowerment Scholarship has continued to expand, with the integration of the McKay Scholarship program into the Family Empowerment Scholarship in 2022. On July 1, 2023, the state of Florida expanded educational choice programs to all K-12 Florida students with the conversion of the Family Empowerment Scholarship for Educational Options and the Florida Tax Credit Scholarship programs into educational savings accounts (ESAs).

[Click here](#) to learn more about education savings accounts (ESA).

The following sections will help guide parents/guardians through using the Family Empowerment Scholarship for Students with Unique Abilities (FES-UA).

Qualifying and Applying for FES-UA

The Family Empowerment Scholarship for Students with Unique Abilities (FES-UA) is available to students ages 3 to 22 who are residents of the state of Florida and eligible to enroll into a Florida public school with the following diagnoses:

- [Anaphylaxis](#)



- [Autism Spectrum Disorder](#)
- [Cerebral Palsy](#)
- [Down Syndrome](#)
- [Emotional or Behavioral Disability](#)
- [Hearing Impairment, including deafness](#)
- [High-Risk Child](#)
- [Hospital or Homebound](#)
- [Identification as Dual Sensory Impaired](#)
- [Intellectual Disability \(severe cognitive impairment\)](#)
- [Language Impairment](#)
- [Muscular Dystrophy](#)
- [Orthopedic Impairment](#)
- [Other Health Impairment](#)
- [Phelan-McDermid Syndrome](#)
- [Prader-Willi Syndrome](#)
- [Rare Diseases \(defined by NORD\)](#)
- [Specific Learning Disability](#)
- [Speech Impairment](#)
- [Spina Bifida](#)
- [Traumatic Brain Injury](#)
- [Visual Impairment, including blindness](#)
- [Williams Syndrome](#)

For a detailed definition of these diagnoses, click the specific diagnosis listed above or see [Appendix A](#) at the end of this document. The list of qualifying diagnoses may be shared with the student's psychologist, Autonomous Advanced Practice Registered Nurse, or physician prior to application, so they may indicate if the student meets the requirements.

The term "hospital or homebound" includes a student who has a medically diagnosed physical or psychiatric condition or illness, as defined by the state board in rule, and who is confined to the home or hospital for more than six months. A current IEP is required as validation for this diagnosis.

Validation of the student's diagnosis is required and must come from a licensed Florida physician, Autonomous Advanced Practice Registered Nurse, or psychologist; or a physician who holds an active license issued by another state or territory of the United States, the District of Columbia, or the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico. A student may also qualify with an official, district provided IEP written within the past three years in accordance with the rules of the State Board of Education or with the rules of another state.

A current IEP is **required** to demonstrate a dual sensory impaired or a hospital or homebound diagnosis.



Families of students with a diagnosis other than “High-Risk” will need to provide documentation of the diagnosis for the scholarship in their first year only. Families of students who initially qualify under the High-Risk designation must, at the time the student is 6 years old or before September 1 of the school year applied for, provide documentation of eligibility for the student under one of the other diagnoses outlined above.

[Click here](#) for a helpful checklist for both new and renewal applications.

Step Up For Students requires families to submit their complete application to renew their scholarship each year by creating an account or accessing their account through StepUpForStudents.org. Using their login, parents/guardians can complete an online application and submit documentation required to confirm the student’s age, diagnosis, residency in the state of Florida and confirmation of compliance with the rules of the program (also known as the Sworn Compliance Statement).

Once a student is found eligible for the program, parents/guardians will receive notification via email that they have been awarded or waitlisted for an FES-UA scholarship for the application year.

When a student receives an FES-UA scholarship, the family affirms they will enroll the student in a private or parochial school or register the student with their district as a home education student. FES-UA scholarship recipients may not be enrolled in a Florida public school, including the Florida School for the Deaf and the Blind; or the College-Preparatory Boarding Academy, a developmental research school authorized under s. 1002.32; a charter school authorized under s. 1002.33, s. 1002.331, or s. 1002.332; or a virtual education program authorized under s. 1002.45. Neither may students be utilizing a state-funded VPK program, or any other school choice scholarship such as the Family Empowerment Scholarship, Florida Tax Credit Scholarship, Hope Scholarship, or New Worlds Scholarship.

Families awarded more than one scholarship must indicate to Step Up which scholarship they intend to utilize for the school year and decline the scholarship they will not utilize. A student may utilize only one scholarship. To decline the FES-UA scholarship, complete [this survey](#).

Please note: Should a student appear as enrolled and funded in a public school after the student has received funds for FES-UA, funds deposited to the student’s account for that school year will be returned to the State of Florida. If a student is reported as enrolled in public school or another scholarship program, the parent/guardian will be notified via email and should contact Step Up For Students immediately regarding their student’s scholarship status.

If a student wants to leave FES-UA to participate in another scholarship program, VPK, or public school, their parent/guardian **must** contact Step Up for Students at FES-UA@SUFS.org or (877) 735-7837.



Funding for FES-UA

Funding for FES-UA comes from the State of Florida. Students are not required to have an IEP or a matrix level to be eligible for funding in FES-UA.

Award Amounts

- For a student who has a Level I to Level III matrix of services (matrix score 251 – 253) or an eligible diagnosis by a licensed physician, an Autonomous Advanced Practice Registered Nurse or a psychologist, the calculated scholarship amount for a student participating in the program must be based upon the grade level and school district in which the student would have been enrolled. The funds must be allocated based on the school district's average exceptional student education guaranteed allocation funds per exceptional student education full-time equivalent student.
- For a student with a Level IV or Level V matrix of services (matrix score 254 or 255), the calculated scholarship amount must be based upon the school district to which the student would have been assigned as the total funds per full-time equivalent for the Level IV or Level V exceptional student education program.
- For a student who received and used a FES-UA or the McKay Scholarship in the 2020-21 school year, the amount of the award will be the greater of the amount calculated below or the amount the student received for the 2020-21 school year. Please note, the student Award Details in the EMA portal may reflect the students 2023-24 formula award amounts. This does not suggest a student's grandfathered award amount does not apply.

Please note: Requesting a review of a student's matrix level could adjust the corresponding amount of scholarship funding down to a lower level. For more information, see the [Revise Matrix of Services](#) section.

[Click here](#) for 2023-24 funding amounts.

Revise Matrix of Services

A parent/guardian of a student with a disability who does not have an IEP or who would like a reevaluation of an existing IEP may choose to request an IEP meeting and evaluation from the school district to obtain or revise a matrix of services from the school district. After the district completes the matrix, the amount of the scholarship payment will be adjusted *up or down* based on the revised level of services.

Please note: An initial IEP may be requested by a parent/guardian at any time from the school district, and subsequently, an IEP re-evaluation is available every three years.

To seek an evaluation or re-evaluation from the student's school district:



- Contact the local school district to schedule the evaluation and/or matrix review. The school district is required to complete the IEP and matrix of services within 30 days after receiving notice of the parent's/guardian's request.
- The school district will complete the evaluation and matrix review and notify the parent/guardian and the Department of Education (DOE) of the student's updated matrix level within 10 calendar days after its completion.
- The DOE will send a notification to Step Up For Students and the parent/guardian within 10 days after receiving the school district's notification of the matrix level.
- Step Up For Students will update the matrix level on the student's account and the funding amount will be adjusted to reflect the updated matrix level (if applicable).

Please note: The new matrix level reported by the school district could increase *or decrease* a student's scholarship amount.

Funding Prioritization

Funding is prioritized in this order based on the date and time eligibility was determined:

- For the 2023-24 school year, a student who received an FES-UA scholarship or McKay Scholarship in the 2022-23 school year (also known as renewal students)
- Students on the 2022-23 waitlist
- New students

Waitlist

The number of applications received by Step Up For Students may exceed program capacity. Statutory guidelines limit the number of scholarships available each school year, with the annual number of available scholarships determined by statute. When program capacity is met, a waitlist will be instituted.

Step Up For Students strongly encourages parents/guardians to submit an application and any required supporting documents as soon as possible. Applications are reviewed on a first-come, first-served basis. After the annual statutory scholarship cap has been met, all students found eligible after that date will be placed onto a waitlist. There is no guarantee a student will be moved from the waitlist. If program capacity allows additional awards, students may come off the waitlist. If a student is moved off the waitlist, their parent/guardian will receive an email notification regarding the updated application status. Award amounts are based on the date of award, not the date of eligibility.

The following students are excluded from the annual statutory cap:



- *Dependents of a law enforcement officer as defined in s. [943.10\(1\)](#) or active-duty member of the United States Armed Forces.
- *Foster child
- *Adopted child
- Students who received specialized instructional services under the Voluntary Prekindergarten Education Program pursuant to s. [1002.66](#) during the previous school year and the student has a current IEP developed by the district school board in accordance with rules of the State Board of Education.
- Students who spent the prior school year in attendance at a Florida public school or the Florida School for the Deaf and the Blind.
- Students who received a John M. McKay Scholarship for Students with Disabilities in the 2021-22 school year.

Please note: The above designations marked with an (*) must be indicated in the application to ensure correct processing of the application. If one of these categories is indicated in an application, a prompt will appear to provide the appropriate supporting documentation for verification purposes. The following documents are requested for the appropriate cap exclusions:

- Dependents of a law enforcement officer as defined in s. [943.10\(1\)](#) or active-duty member of the United States Armed Forces: A photocopy of the LEO's badge, or the Service Member's Leave & Earnings Statement (LES) for the month the application was submitted.
- Foster child: A copy of the Foster Placement documentation, or other similar legal documentation.
- Adopted child: A copy of an Adoption Decree, or other similar legal documentation.

Students who are excluded from the annual statutory cap may be placed on a waitlist while their cap exclusion is verified. If a cap exclusion is confirmed, the student will be moved to awarded status.

Funding Proration

The amount of funding is prorated based on the date the student is found eligible by the SFO.

- Application must be received by August 1 and be eligible and awarded by September 1 = 100%
- Application must be received by October 1 and be eligible and awarded by November 1 = 75%



- Application must be received by January 1 and be eligible and awarded by February 1 = 50%
- Application must be received by March 1 and be eligible and awarded by April 1 = 25%

Award amounts are based on the date of award, not the date of eligibility.

Funds will be deposited on a quarterly basis in the student's accounts by Step Up For Students. Step Up For Students will receive funding from the DOE by the following dates:

- September 1
- November 1
- February 1
- April 1

Funds will be deposited into the student's accounts within two weeks of Step Up For Students' receipt of funds from the state.

Funding Continuation

Once funds are deposited into the student's account, parents/guardians may use the scholarship funds for a variety of services (described in the sections below). Any unused funds will be rolled over for utilization in subsequent school years, assuming the student remains eligible for FES-UA.

Funding to the account will continue each year, based on the annual application submission, and agreement to comply with the rules (Sworn Compliance Statement). Once the student graduates from high school or reaches 22 years of age on or before July 1 (whichever comes first), no additional funds will be deposited into the student's account, but they may continue to use the funds in their accounts.

If during the school year the Florida DOE finds a student in a Florida public school, or any education program funded by the state, or if the parent/guardian withdraws the student from the scholarship program, funds received for that school year will be returned to the state.

Please note: A student is ineligible for additional scholarship payments if the student's account has been inactive (no spending activity) for two consecutive fiscal years (July 1 - June 30). However, once an eligible expenditure is made, the student is eligible for additional scholarship payments based on available funds.

Account Balances

A student's unspent scholarship funds may be rolled over from one school year into the next school year. However, if the student's scholarship account balance reaches \$50,000, Step Up For Students may not transfer any additional funds into the student's scholarship accounts.



Parents/guardians are encouraged to monitor their student's scholarship balance and spending to ensure they remain eligible for scholarship payments.

Closure of Accounts

A student's scholarship account must be closed and any remaining funds, including any contributions made to the Stanley G. Tate Florida Prepaid College Savings Program or to the Florida College Savings Program (529) will be returned to the state after:

- Denial or revocation of program eligibility by the commissioner for fraud or abuse,
- Any period of three consecutive years after high school completion or graduation during which the student has not been enrolled in an eligible postsecondary educational institution or a program offered by the institution, or
- Any period of two consecutive fiscal years with no spending activity.

Actions That May Lead to a Loss of the Scholarship

Actions that may lead to a loss of the scholarship include, but are not limited to:

- Misrepresenting or withholding information on the scholarship application or reimbursement documentation.
- Failure to enroll the student in a private school or as a Home Education Student with their Florida public school district.
- Failure to satisfy state compulsory attendance requirements.
- FES-UA scholarship recipients are expected to satisfy attendance requirements outlined by their eligible private school.
- Failure of the student to take a required nationally norm-referenced test or the statewide assessment, if applicable (students exempt from norm-referenced testing are not subject to this requirement).
- Moving or residing outside of the state of Florida.
- Returning to a public school, charter school, or FEFP-funded program (including full-time FLVS or VPK-SIS services)
- Utilizing another state scholarship.
- Fraudulent activity, including taking possession of any FES-UA funds by refund, rebate, or credit from a provider or purchase.
- Allowing another party, including a provider or school representative, to access or manage a student's scholarship account.



Please note: The above actions, or any violation of the FES-UA scholarship statutes, rules, policies, or procedures may result in the loss of the scholarship, future scholarship ineligibility, or financial or criminal penalties.

Approved Usage for FES-UA Funding

Program funds must be used for eligible expenses that meet the individual educational needs of the eligible student. A parent/guardian, student, or provider of any services may not bill an insurance company, Medicaid, or any other agency for the same services that are paid for using FES-UA funds.

The following categories of items and services are approved uses for the scholarship funds. Eligible expenses are detailed in the [FES-UA Purchasing Guide](#).

- Instructional materials
- Curriculum
- Specialized services
- Tuition and fees for a:
 - Eligible private school
 - Home Education Program
 - Eligible post-secondary institution
 - Approved pre-apprenticeship program
 - Full-time private tutoring program
 - Part-time tutoring or services from a Choice Navigator
 - Approved online or virtual provider
 - Florida Virtual School (FLVS) as a private pay student
 - Contracted services provider by a public school or school district
 - Standardized testing fees
 - Contributions to a Stanley G. Tate Florida Prepaid College Program
 - Contributions to a Florida 529 College Savings Program
 - Contracted services provided by a public school or school district
- Fees for part-time tutoring or Choice Navigator Services
- Fees associated with specialized summer education programs
- Fees associated with specialized after-school education programs
- Transition services provided by job coaches
- Annual educational evaluation fees
- Tuition and fees offered by approved voluntary Prekindergarten Education (VPK) Program providers
- Tuition and fees offered by approved school readiness program providers
- Horse therapy
- Music and art therapy



Please note: Reimbursement requests submitted for an item or service not listed as an eligible expense may result in delayed processing or denial of the reimbursement if submitted without an approved pre-authorization. [Click here](#) for information on pre-authorizations.

Families may not sell an item purchased using scholarship funds and keep the proceeds. If an item purchased with scholarship funds is sold, the proceeds of the sale must be returned to the student's scholarship account. A check, made payable to Step Up For Students, indicating the scholarship student's name and ID number, should be sent to Step Up For Students at the following address:

Step Up For Students
Attention: Accounts Receivable
4655 Salisbury Road, Suite 400
Jacksonville, Florida 32256

Pre-Authorization

Many items and services have been pre-approved as authorized uses of scholarship funds. These items or services fall into different categories, such as instructional material, curriculum, and services. A parent's/guardian's first step in using scholarship funds is familiarizing themselves with the types of items and services listed as eligible expenses in the program Purchasing Guide. Items on MyScholarShop are pre-approved by program.

If the item or service is not available on MyScholarShop, listed in the [FES-UA Purchasing Guide](#), or is indicated to require a pre-authorization, the pre-authorization must be submitted **before** purchasing the item or service. The pre-authorization is for the item or service only and is based on the rules at the time of approval. The pre-authorization is not confirmation of the provider's eligibility or funding availability for the reimbursement. A pre-authorization will require supporting documentation and explanation of how the item is in an eligible expense category and will meet the individual educational needs of the student and/or allow the student to access instruction or instructional content. In other words, parents/guardians will need to demonstrate how the item or service is an eligible expense that helps their student learn.

The pre-authorization should be specific to the student and contain as much detail about the specific item or service being requested, including the approximate cost of the item or service. If approved, the items or services submitted on the reimbursement must match those on the pre-authorization. If they do not, Step Up For Students reserves the right to deny the reimbursement request.

Approval of pre-authorization requests are made on a case-by-case basis relevant to the circumstances of the individual student. An approved pre-authorization is valid for purchases in the school year in which it was approved.



Please note: Pre-authorizations for pre-approved items or services will be denied. Pre-approved expenses are detailed in the [FES-UA Purchasing Guide](#).

Submitting Pre-Authorization Requests

Pre-authorizations may be submitted through the EMA portal once a student's account has been funded. The pre-authorization request will be reviewed in the order it was received, and a notification of the outcome will be sent via email. **If the pre-authorization is approved, once the item is purchased, a reimbursement request can be submitted in the parent/guardian portal.**

Please note: 2022-23 FES-UA renewal students may continue to use the pre-authorization process through the legacy system through August 30, 2024.

Pre-authorizations may be submitted until April 30, 2024. This will ensure pre-authorizations have time to be approved and parents have time to make the purchase and submit a reimbursement request prior to the end of the school year on June 30, 2024.

Submitting Reimbursement Requests

Families and providers may elect to participate in direct payment, or the parent/guardian may also pay for tuition and fees, credentialed services, and/or goods out of pocket, and submit a reimbursement request.

Reimbursements will require parents/guardians to provide certain information to Step Up For Students so funds can be disbursed from the student's scholarship account for eligible expenses paid out of pocket.

The information available behind the parent/guardian login is confidential and personal. A parent/guardian may not assign the responsibility for submission of any reimbursement documentation to another user. **DO NOT provide anyone, especially service providers or personnel at a private school, access to a student's scholarship account by providing a username and password. Doing so may result in loss of scholarship eligibility and funding, or financial or criminal penalties.**

Reimbursement requests are year-specific. Unused funds from a prior year will roll forward into the current school year's balance. Requests for reimbursements for items or services purchased between July 1, 2023, and June 30, 2024, must be submitted by July 31, 2024, to be approved.

FES-UA scholarship students funded at any point during the 2023-24 school year can submit reimbursements dated between July 1, 2023, and June 30, 2024.

Please note: Allow up to 60 days for a reimbursement request with required supporting documentation to be fully reviewed.



Submitting a Reimbursement Request – Required Supporting Documentation

When submitting reimbursement requests, the parent/guardian will be required to submit documentation supporting the purchase of the item or service and proof of the method of payment. Reimbursement requests must include an original, unaltered receipt or invoice from the vendor or provider. The type of information required may differ from one category of reimbursement to another. An invoice or statement marked “PAID” or showing a zero balance will not be accepted as proof of payment. Reimbursement requests placed ON HOLD for additional documents longer than 30 days will be denied and will require resubmission.

Proof of Payment

Proof of payment will be required for any reimbursement request where the payee is the parent/guardian. Proof of payment can be any of the below:

- Credit card receipt with the full transaction date (mm/dd/yy), payee name, and amount.
- Credit card/bank statement with the full transaction date (mm/dd/yy), payee name, and amount.
- PayPal receipt with the full purchase date (mm/dd/yy), payee name, amount, and funding source.
- Copy of the front and back of the cleared check with the full payment date (mm/dd/yy), payee name, and amount.
- FACTS statement with the school’s name, student’s first and last name, description of each payment to be reimbursed (i.e., tuition, registration, etc.), full payment dates (mm/dd/yy), and amounts.
 - This information can be found on the FACTS mobile website under Payment Plan & Billing - Transactions.
 - Include the individual payment details specific to the student and current reimbursement request.
- Cash payments to a provider require a signed, dated letter from **the provider** on their letterhead including the provider’s name, student’s first and last name, description service (i.e., tuition, registration, etc.), full payment dates (mm/dd/yy), amounts, and payment method (i.e., cash)
- Requests for reimbursement of cash purchases from private sellers, not affiliated with a company, (i.e., garage sale, Craigslist, private tutors, private therapists, etc.) will be denied.
- When making purchases from private sellers, payment in the form of a personal or cashier’s check, money order, PayPal, Venmo or other electronic payment method is



REQUIRED. This form of payment provides verification of the purchase, which is required for reimbursement.

Please note: Purchases made using reward/loyalty points or credits are not eligible for reimbursement. For purchases discounted by use of reward/loyalty points or credits, only the actual paid portion is eligible for reimbursement.

If the payee's name on the proof of payment does not match the provider listed on the invoice or receipt, supporting documentation will be required to explain the difference by the provider (this can be in the form of a letter).

Step Up For Students staff may request additional documentation or clarification when the reimbursement request is reviewed. The parent/guardian will be notified via email to the email address associated with their account.

Instructional Materials and Curriculum

Invoice or receipt that includes the following:

- Item purchased
- Full date of purchase, including year
- Place of purchase
- Amount of the purchase, including item price, subtotal, taxes, fees, discounts, and grand total
- Method of payment (see [Proof of Payment](#) section)

If there are several items in the receipt, underline or highlight the item(s) the reimbursement request is for. If possible, purchase the item(s) in a different transaction.

For Instructional Materials – Elective/Enrichment

Requests for reimbursement for elective or enrichment classes or lessons from providers who do not meet the criteria of part-time tutors, must include documentation demonstrating the provider has the following:

- A valid or expired Florida educator's certificate
- At least three years experience in the relevant subject area as demonstrated by employment records
- Currently enrolled in a post-secondary educational institution as a student of the relevant subject area
- A degree from a post-secondary educational institution in the relevant subject area
- A certification or national accreditation in the relevant subject area

Additionally, the invoice or receipt must include the following:

- Scholarship student's first and last name



- Provider's first and last name
- Company name, if applicable
- Type of service rendered
- Dates and hours of instruction, including year
- Service rate

Proof of payment if the payee is the parent/guardian (see [Proof of Payment](#) section).

Specialized Services

Invoice or receipt on business letterhead that includes the following:

- Scholarship student's first and last name
- Date the service was rendered, including year
- Type of service rendered
- Amount due for the service
- First and last name of the therapist who rendered the service
- Proof of payment if the payee is the parent/guardian (see [Proof of Payment](#) section)

Please note: If the invoice includes medical billing codes rather than the type of service rendered, it may result in processing delays.

Approved Pre-Apprenticeship Program

Invoice or receipt on craftsperson/company letterhead that includes the following:

- Scholarship student's first and last name
- Name of the FLDOE-approved pre-apprenticeship course
- Craftsperson name and company name, if applicable
- Dates and hours of instruction, including year
- Program rate
- Total amount due for the service
- Proof of payment if the payee is the parent/guardian (see [Proof of Payment](#) section)

Full-Time Tutoring

Invoice or receipt on business letterhead that includes the following:

- Scholarship student's first and last name
- Tutor's first and last name
- Tutor's DOE certification number
- Company name, if applicable
- Type of service rendered
- Dates and hours of instruction, including year
- Tutor's hourly rate
- Total amount due for the service



- Proof of payment if the payee is the parent/guardian (see [Proof of Payment](#) section)

Providers who have not previously received payment via scholarship funds will be required to provide a Step Up For Student [Full-Time Tutor Participation Agreement](#) and W-9 is required.

Part-Time Tutoring or Choice Navigator Services

Tuition and fee schedules must be published and made publicly available.

Invoice or receipt on business letterhead that includes the following:

- Scholarship student's first and last name
- Tutor's/service provider's first and last name
- Company name, if applicable
- Type of service rendered
- Dates and hours of services rendered, including year
- Part-time tutor's hourly rate (not required for Choice Navigator services)
- Total amount due for the service
- Proof of payment if the payee is the parent/guardian (see [Proof of Payment](#) section)

Documentation of certification: (The documentation below must be included with the first reimbursement request with the provider.)

- The DOE certification number if the tutor is certified, or
- The school district issuing the adjunct teaching certificate, or
- A bachelor's or graduate degree in the subject area.
- This may be a copy of the bachelor's or graduate degree diploma or official college transcript stating the degree conferred.
- If the diploma does not show the tutor's major, submit the transcripts instead.

Documentation of mastery of subject area knowledge (if no documentation of certification):

- An official FTCE score report indicating a passing score on a Florida subject area exam, not more than 10 years old, or
- A passing score report that is not more than 10 years old, above the intermediate level, on both the oral and written exams for a foreign language subject area (excluding French, German or Spanish) administered by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Language (ACTFL), or
- A form provided by a Florida school district and signed by the school district, indicating there is no standardized exam in the subject area, but the person has attained the essential subject matter competencies and subject area specialization requirements, or



- A valid certificate issued by the national Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS), or
- A valid certificate issued by the American Board for Certification of Teacher Excellence (ABCTE), or
- A valid Statement of Status of s (SOE) issued by Educator Certification that indicates the educator is ELIGIBLE for a Professional Certificate, or
- For a subject requiring a master's or higher degree (i.e., Educational Leadership, Guidance Counseling, Reading, or School Psychologist) a score report indicating a passing score on a Florida subject area exam (not more than 10 years old) AND a valid Statement of Status of Eligibility (SOE) issued by Educator Certification that indicates the educator is ELIGIBLE for a Temporary or Professional Certificate, or
- A valid Statement of Status of Eligibility (SOE) issued by Educator Certification that indicates the educator is ELIGIBLE for a Temporary Certificate but does not list a passing score on the subject area exam under the Professional Certificate requirements.

Florida Prepaid College Program Plans

The reimbursement request must include a Florida Prepaid College Program Plan account statement with the following:

- Scholarship student's first and last name
- Scholarship student's Florida Prepaid College Program Plan account number
- Account type (for example, one year Florida University Plan)
- A copy of the Florida Prepaid account statement showing proof of payment Including:
 - Full payment date
 - Payment amount

Parents/guardians may submit requests for reimbursement on Florida Prepaid College Program Plans selecting "Pay To" option "Myself" using provider name "Florida Prepaid College Board." Florida Prepaid Program Plan reimbursement requests submitted for payment directly to Florida Prepaid College Board will be denied.

Reimbursement requests or direct contribution requests must be submitted by the 14th day of each month and will be sent to Florida Prepaid for verification **monthly before each reimbursement or payment is made**. The student's name listed on the scholarship account must match the name of the beneficiary of the Florida Prepaid account.

Any requests received after the 14th day of each month will not be sent to Florida Prepaid for verification until the next month.



Florida 529 College Savings Plans

The request must include a Florida 529 College Savings Plan account statement with the following:

- Scholarship student's first and last name
- Scholarship student's Florida 529 College Savings Plan account number
- Account type (this must be an UTMA or UGMA account)

The Florida 529 College Savings Plan requests must be submitted under the "Pay To" option "Provider" using provider name "FL 529 Savings Plan". Florida 529 College Savings Plan reimbursement requests submitted for payment to the parent/guardian will be denied.

Direct contribution requests must be submitted by the 14th day of each month and will be sent to Florida Prepaid for verification **monthly before each payment is made**. The student's name listed on the scholarship account must match the name of the beneficiary of the Florida 529 College Savings account.

Any requests received after the 14th day of each month will not be sent to Florida Prepaid for **verification until the next month**.

FES-UA scholarship funds must be used to pay for postsecondary expenditures and may not be used for K-12 expenditures, including at any private school, regardless of FES-UA program participation.

Contracted Public-School Services

The parent/guardian may pay for services and request reimbursement, or the school district may choose to be paid directly as a provider.

The reimbursement request must include the following:

- Scholarship student's first and last name
- Name and address of the school
- Services provided
- Date the services were provided, including year
- A statement showing the amount paid (or billed)
- Proof of payment if the payee is the parent/guardian (see [Proof of Payment](#) section)

Tuition and Fees for an Eligible, Participating Private School

Requests for reimbursement of tuition and fees at an eligible, participating private school submitted by the parent/guardian must include a complete invoice and proof of payment containing the following information:

- Tuition and Fees
 - Annual tuition rate for the scholarship student



- Invoice
- Name, address, and contact of the eligible, private school
- Scholarship student's full name. The name must match Step Up For Student's records
- Invoice dates and school year
- Itemized charges for each category

Eligible Fees:

- Application fees (payable in the Fiscal Year preceding the academic year)
- Registration fees (payable in the Fiscal Year preceding the academic year)
- Uniform fees (basic uniform pieces purchased from a school-required vendor; shoes and accessories are not eligible)
- Book fees
- Technology fees
- Test fees
- Athletics and club fees
- Graduation fees

The fee will need a description and show it is required for enrollment. If it does not show the fee is required, a letter from the school is necessary to show the fee is mandatory for enrollment.

- Proof of Payment (see [Proof of Payment](#) section)

Please refer to the [FES-UA Purchasing Guide](#) to review prohibited fees. Additionally, school lunch, before and after care are not covered by FES-UA.

If the private school uses a third party for billing (like FACTS) only the annual fee will be approved for payment. Any fees charged for use of a credit card will NOT be reimbursed.

Please note: If a student withdraws or transfers, refunds (if any) will be based on the school's policy and must be paid back to Step Up For Students for credit to the student's scholarship account. The parent/guardian may not accept refunds of scholarship dollars from the school.

Fees for Florida Virtual School

The parent/guardian may pay for services and request reimbursement, or the parent may choose to bill directly for FLVS courses through the Service Provider Marketplace.

The reimbursement request must include the following:

- Scholarship student's first and last name
- Student courses paid for
- Dates/terms for the courses
- A statement showing the amount paid (or billed)
- Proof of payment if the payee is the parent/guardian (see [Proof of Payment](#) section)



If the student withdraws from the course within 14 days, a refund will be issued to the entity/individual from which payment was received.

Fees for an Eligible Post-Secondary Institution, a Home Education Program, a DOE-Approved Online Provider, and a DOE-Approved Online Course

Reimbursement requests submitted by the parent/guardian must include the following:

- Scholarship student's first and last name
- Name of the institution or course provider
- Course description
- Dates of course/service, including year
- Amount of tuition and fees
- Proof of payment, on institution letterhead, if applicable (see [Proof of Payment](#) section)

Tuition and Fees for an Approved VPK Program Provider or an Approved School Readiness Provider

Reimbursement requests must include the following:

- Scholarship student's first and last name
- Name and address of the approved provider
- Invoice date, including school year
- Description of the services provided
- Amount of tuition and fees
- Proof of payment (see [Proof of Payment](#) section)

Tuition and fees must be for the educational needs of the student and may cover a full-day program. **Fees for nursery or daycare will not be covered.** Please be sure the description in the invoice is accurate.

School lunch and other fees that are not mandatory or are not educational are not covered by the scholarship.

Please note: If a student withdraws or transfers, refunds (if any) will be based on the provider's policy and must be paid back to Step Up For Students for credit to the student's scholarship account. The parent/guardian may not accept refunds of scholarship dollars from providers.

Fees Associated with Specialized After-School Education Programs or Specialized Summer Education Programs

Reimbursements must include the following:

- Scholarship student's first and last name
- Date of the program, including year
- Description of the services provided



- Amount of fees
- Proof of payment if the payee is the parent/guardian (see [Proof of Payment](#) section)

Fees for Annual Evaluation for a Home Education Student or Standardized Testing

Reimbursement requests must include the following:

- Scholarship student's first and last name
- Date of the evaluation/test, including year
- Description of the services provided
- Amount of fees for the evaluation/test
- Documentation of the teacher's FLDOE certification number; and
- Proof of payment (see [Proof of Payment](#) section)

Transition Services Provided by Job Coaches

- Transition services provided by job coaches at eligible private schools may be included in the school's fees (see [Tuition and Fees](#) for required documents)
- Transition services provided by a job coach outside an eligible private school – the reimbursement request must include the following:
 - Scholarship student's first and last name
 - Date of the service, including year
 - Description of the services provided
 - Total amount due for the service
 - Proof of payment (see [Proof of Payment](#) section)
 - Documentation the job coach meets one of the criteria listed in the [Approved Usage for FES-UA Funding](#) section.

Reimbursement Mechanism

Once approved, reimbursements can be paid to a parent from one of three ways to the student's scholarship account: via direct deposit (ACH), check, or PayPal. If direct deposit (ACH) is selected, families will be asked to submit personal banking information.

Please note: To help keep information secure, banking information is not stored in EMA. Reimbursements for multiple scholarship students on multiple scholarship programs will be paid separately.

[Click here](#) to learn more about how reimbursement payments are made and how to receive payment.

Direct Payment

To provide an additional level of service to the families served by the FES-UA, Step Up For Students has developed a method of direct payment to approved providers. Providers wishing



to participate in direct payment from families must set up a provider account in the EMA system and submit a service catalogue.

Students who received and utilized FES-UA funding during the 2022-23 school year will begin the 2023-24 school year in the legacy system for all reimbursement requests, and direct provider billing (with the exception of eligible private school enrollment).

New FES-UA students will be direct pay in EMA.

Direct Billing for Eligible Private School Enrollment

Beginning with the 2023-24 school year, schools may enroll an FES-UA scholarship student in the EMA platform, which will allow the school to invoice students quarterly. This is optional for the FES-UA student's parent/guardian, who may choose to direct pay their school via the enrollment function.

At the time of enrollment, the school and parent/guardian must both certify the agreed-upon tuition and fee rate for the student. The agreed-upon tuition and fee rate for the student may include discounts or other considerations and may be less than the school's published tuition and fee rate for the student's grade level. However, the agreed-upon tuition and fee rate may not exceed the school's published tuition and fee rate for the student's grade level. The agreed upon amount of tuition and fees posted in EMA for each student should not exceed any contractual agreement between the parent/guardian and the eligible private school.

Step Up will commit the total amount of tuition and fees for the student and bill them quarterly before a parent/guardian can access any remaining funds for other eligible expenses.

Once a student is enrolled and attending a school for 10 or more days during a quarterly payment period, the school will receive the full quarter's distribution. If a student transfers to a different participating school in the same quarter, the first school the student attended for 10 days or more in the quarterly payment period will receive the full quarter's payment. It is acceptable for the parent/guardian and the two schools to negotiate any amount owed to the new school from the quarterly payment made to the first school by Step Up For Students. This is not required, but, in the spirit of partnership for the good of the student, is highly recommended.

MyScholarShop

Step Up For Students has developed an e-purchasing platform to assist in purchasing items *without* any upfront cost to parents/guardians.

Items available through MyScholarShop are approved for purchase using FES-UA funds. If an item is not in MyScholarShop, it does not mean the item is not approved; however, it is strongly suggested to submit a pre-authorization if unsure if the item is eligible for reimbursement.

Please read these instructions very carefully.



1. Make sure to have available funds in the scholarship account to cover the entire purchase.
2. This partnership is ONLY for goods purchased through MyScholarShop and does NOT apply to in-store purchases or purchases from the vendor's website.
3. If an item requires pre-authorization, the pre-authorization process must be completed and there must be an approval *prior* to placing the order.
4. If an item has an associated purchasing rule, such as size limitation, multiple items or frequency, those rules will apply when using the MyScholarShop platform.
5. MyScholarShop orders cannot be shipped out-of-state or to a post office box.
6. When purchasing multiple items, include ALL items in one order.
7. Be aware Step Up For Students reserves the right to deny requests.
8. Access to MyScholarShop will be activated once the student's account has funding.

Step Up For Students reserves the right to limit or deny access to MyScholarShop.

Purchasing

MyScholarShop is accessible once funds have been deposited into a student's account. Once funds have been deposited, log in to the parent/guardian portal to access MyScholarShop.

Status Definitions

- **Composing:** Request is pending; the cart has not been submitted for purchase.
- **Submitted:** Request was submitted and is pending review.
- **Approved:** Items requiring review have been approved and sent to the vendor(s) for fulfillment.
- **Denied:** Items requiring review have been denied. One appeal is allowed.
- **Ordering:** A fully approved order is in the process of being generated.
- **Ordered:** All items associated with an order or requisition have been sent to the vendor to fulfil.
- **Cancelling:** Order was canceled after it was placed.
- **Cancelled:** Order was cancelled after being submitted and approved.
- **Receiving:** Ordered items have been shipped and are in the process of being delivered.
- **Received:** Ordered items have been fully received.



Returns

Returns are completed through the vendor they were purchased from and not through Step Up For Students. Items may not be returned to a store.

1. To return an item purchased via MyScholarShop, [click here](#).
2. Find the correct vendor and follow the instructions.

Once the vendor has received the item, it may take up to 14 days for the funds to be credited to the student's scholarship account.

[Click here](#) for more in-depth information on MyScholarShop.

Parent/Guardian Responsibilities

Parents/Guardians of students receiving scholarship funds through FES-UA may not take possession of funds at any time and are prohibited from providing services to their own scholarship student. Parents/guardians are subject to all FES-UA responsibilities as outlined in the annual Sworn Compliance Statement, the EMA Terms & Conditions, and FES-UA statute. If a parent/guardian receives a refund for any services or goods purchased with scholarship funds, those funds must be returned to Step Up For Students for deposit into the student's scholarship account.

Parents/guardians may not assign the application or management of their scholarship application or any spending or reimbursement submission to any other user. Parents/guardians must not provide login information to ANYONE. Providing login information will allow them to access this critical information, make changes, and approve expenditures from the student's account. Step Up For Students will not be responsible for changes and/or charges made by anyone other than the account owner if the login information has been shared.

Please note: Any violation of the FES-UA scholarship statutes, rules, policies, or procedures may result in the loss of the scholarship, future scholarship ineligibility, or financial or criminal penalties.

Important Items to Note

About Reimbursements

- Reimbursement requests for goods or services purchased between July 1, 2023, and June 30, 2024, must be received by Step Up For Students by July 31, 2024.
- If an ACH payment is rejected by the banking institution, the funds will revert to the student's account after 30 days.
- Cash payments to private sellers will not be eligible for reimbursement. The parent/guardian must use a money order, personal or cashier's check, PayPal or other



electronic payment method for reimbursement to be considered. When submitting a copy of a cleared check, black out the routing and account numbers and submit a copy of the front and back of the cleared check. When submitting a cashier's check, a copy of the cashier's check or a bank receipt confirming the purchase is required.

- If money is not spent from the account for two consecutive fiscal years (July 1 – June 30), the account will be closed, and all remaining funds, current and those rolled over from a prior year, will be returned to the State of Florida.
- FES-UA fund purchases may be subject to frequency of purchase rules (refer to the [FES-UA Purchasing Guide](#) for more information). Frequency rules are by calendar rule. For example, a laptop may have a two-year purchasing frequency, meaning a student who purchased a laptop on November 10, 2023, will be eligible to purchase another laptop using scholarship funds on or after November 11, 2025.
- If, at any time during the waiting period outlined above, the student's device, purchased with scholarship funds, is damaged or broken beyond repair it may be replaced ONE time with a similar item of equal or lesser value. A pre-authorization request and documentation validating the device is beyond repair is required for review.
 - If a replacement device is authorized, the two calendar-year period will reset, and no additional device of that type may be purchased using FES-UA funds until two calendar years after the purchase date of the replacement device. For example, a student who purchased a laptop on July 10, 2022, but then is authorized to purchase and purchases a replacement device on October 10, 2023, will not be eligible to purchase another laptop using scholarship funds until on or after October 11, 2025.
- Stolen items may be eligible for replacement, please submit a police report via the submission of a pre-authorization request.
- Step Up For Students staff may request additional documentation or clarification when they review the reimbursement request. These requests will arrive via email to the primary email address associated with the account.
- Step Up For Students reserves the right to close any reimbursement request submitted for payment.
- If a reimbursement is received from scholarship funds for an item that is returned OR for a lesson or therapy session in advance of the scheduled lesson or session and the student does not attend the session, any refund for which cash is received, the funds should be returned to the student's scholarship account. A check, made payable to Step Up For Students, indicating the scholarship student's name and ID number, should be sent to Step Up For Students at the following address:



Step Up For Students
Attention: Accounts Receivable
4655 Salisbury Road, Suite 400
Jacksonville, Florida 32256

- If a reimbursement request is denied, the parent/guardian may appeal the decision ONE TIME by submitting a new reimbursement request, notating in the description box it is an appeal or reconsideration request and providing documentation to supports the reconsideration request. The decision made by the Step Up For Students appeal team is final. After the appeal decision is made, any additional appeals for the same item will not be reviewed.

Please note: Appeals will only be reviewed through the established process; Step Up For Students is unable to review appeals or resubmission requests that come via email or any other customer service channel.

- Always check the balance of the student's account prior to making purchases and when submitting reimbursement requests. The parent/guardian may view the balance on the online statement provided within their login. As a reminder, the amount reimbursed cannot exceed the available balance in the student's account.
- Step Up For Students approves reimbursement of items within the guidance of Florida statutes related to the scholarship program, as well as DOE rules and Step Up For Students policies and procedures. In addition to demonstrating educational benefit, Step Up For Students considers the manufacturer's recommended minimum age when processing reimbursement requests. Prior approval of items or services due to error does not constitute policy.
- Reimbursement requests to be paid directly to the parent/guardian may be approved for service dates up to three months in advance from the date of reimbursement submission. Requests submitted for services beyond the three-month window may be approved through the remainder of the school year (up to one year) if there is attestation from the provider that the services paid in advance are non-refundable. This may be in the form of a signed and dated letter from the provider stating the payment is non-refundable or provider published financial policies evidencing these requirements. Requests for payment directly to a provider may only be approved after the service has been rendered.

Continuing Program Eligibility

- Scholarship renewal
 - Student must complete a renewal application each school year to receive additional funding and remain active in the FES-UA program. Students do not have to requalify



- each year, with the exception of students who have aged out of a High-Risk diagnosis, or some hospital/homebound students.
- Students must complete a renewal application to access any rollover funds from a previous school year.
 - Student who does not renew and receive FES-UA funding and “sit out” a year will lose renewal status and priority.
 - Student who leaves the FES-UA program and who choose to later reapply for an FES-UA scholarship will be considered a new student.
- If the student turns 22 or graduates high school, but still has funds remaining, the parent/guardian MUST complete an intent-to-continue and provide the required documentation to use the remaining funds.
 - Step Up For Students MUST be notified immediately if the scholarship student enrolls in one of the options listed below, or if the student moves out of state. Failure to do so could result in a loss of funding, loss of future eligibility, or financial or criminal penalties.
 - Public school or any public-school classes
 - Charter school
 - Services funded through the Florida Education Finance Program
 - Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK)
 - Florida Virtual School – as a public-school student, not as a scholarship, private-pay, student
 - Florida Tax Credit Scholarship Program, including PEP (FTC/FTC-PEP)
 - Hope Scholarship Program
 - Family Empowerment Scholarship for Educational Options (FES-EO)
 - New Worlds Scholarship Accounts
 - If a scholarship student is placed in any residential program, it is important for the parent/guardian to ask about the mandatory school attendance requirement while the student is in the program. If the program uses any Florida public school option (district school, charter school, Florida Virtual School), the student’s scholarship will be in jeopardy. If the program uses a private school option, and if the private school is an eligible, participating private school, the student’s scholarship funds may be available to cover the cost of tuition and fees while the student is attending.

Other Notes

- Parents/guardians should keep contact information current, especially the primary email address. This is the primary way Step Up For Students will communicate important information related to a student’s scholarship.
- Parents/guardians should update email filters to accept messages from Step Up For Students so emails are not sent to the spam or junk folders.



- Periodic surveys intended to validate a scholarship student's continued participation may be sent to the parent/guardian during the school year. Participation in these surveys is required.
- Students in grades 3-10 attending an eligible private school using scholarship funds are required to take an approved, nationally standardized, norm-referenced assessment. Students with disabilities for whom standardized testing is not appropriate are exempt from this requirement. [Click here](#) for more information about this requirement.
- Scholarship students who choose to attend a private school will not be entitled to services under IDEA Part B *unless* they have been evaluated by the public-school district.
- The terms outlined in this handbook are subject to change.
- DO NOT provide parent/guardian login information to ANYONE. Providing login information will allow them to access this critical information, make changes, and approve expenditures from a student's account. Step Up For Students will not be responsible for changes and/or charges made by anyone other than the account owner if the login information has been shared. . .

Contact Information

Step Up For Students wishes all scholarship students a productive and fun-filled 2023-24 school year.

There are 3 ways to reach Step Up For Students:

 Chat with a live agent at StepUpForStudents.org

 Email FES-UA@SUFS.org

 Call (877) 735-7837

The Service Center is generally open from 8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. Eastern. During peak periods, hours may be extended. For Service Center hours, please visit the [Contact Us](#) page on the Step Up For Students website.

If at any point there is a change of address, telephone, cell phone or e-mail address, the information can be updated by logging into the student's account.



Appendix A

Disability definitions

Anaphylaxis

The medical term for the life-threatening allergic reactions that may occur when allergic individuals are exposed to specific allergens. Anaphylaxis is a collection of symptoms affecting multiple systems in the body.

Autism Spectrum Disorder

As defined in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition, published by the American Psychiatric Association.

Cerebral Palsy

A group of disabling symptoms of extended duration which results from damage to the developing brain that may occur before, during, or after birth and results in the loss or impairment of control over voluntary muscles. For the purposes of this definition, cerebral palsy does not include those symptoms or impairments resulting solely from a stroke.

Down Syndrome

A disorder caused by the presence of an extra chromosome 21.

Dual Sensory Impaired

A student who has dual-sensory impairments affecting both vision and hearing, the combination of which causes a serious impairment in the abilities to acquire information, communicate, or function within the environment, or who has a degenerative condition which will lead to such an impairment. Current IEP required.

Emotional or Behavioral Disability

A student with an emotional/behavioral disability who has persistent (is not sufficiently responsive to implemented evidence-based interventions) and consistent emotional or behavioral responses that adversely affect performance in the educational environment that cannot be attributed to age, culture, gender, or ethnicity.

Hearing Impairment

A student who is deaf or hard-of-hearing and has hearing loss aided or unaided, that impacts the processing of linguistic information, and which adversely affects performance in the educational environment. The degree of loss may range from mild to profound.



High-Risk Child

A 3-5-year-old*, being a high-risk child with a developmental delay in cognition, language, or physical development. (*On or before September 1 of the school year.)

Hospital or Homebound

A student who has a medically diagnosed physical or psychiatric condition which is acute or catastrophic in nature, or a chronic illness, or a repeated intermittent illness due to a persisting medical problem that confines the student to home or hospital and restricts activities for more than six months. FLDOE definition/current IEP required.

Intellectual Disability

Significantly sub average general intellectual functioning existing concurrently with deficits in adaptive behavior which manifests before the age of 18 and can reasonably be expected to continue indefinitely.

“Adaptive behavior” means the effectiveness or degree with which an individual meets the standards of personal independence and social responsibility expected of his or her age, cultural group, and community.

“Significantly subaverage general intellectual functioning” means performance that is two or more standard deviations from the mean score on a standardized intelligence test specified in the rules of the agency.

Language Impairment

Language impairments are disorders of language that interfere with communication, adversely affect performance and/or functioning in the student’s typical learning environment, and result in the need for exceptional student education. A language impairment is defined as a disorder in one or more of the basic learning processes involved in understanding or in using spoken or written language. These include: phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, pragmatics.

The language impairment may manifest in significant difficulties affecting listening comprehension, oral expression, social interaction, reading, writing, or spelling. A language impairment is not primarily the result of factors related to chronological age, gender, culture, ethnicity, or limited English proficiency.

Muscular Dystrophy

Muscular dystrophies are a group of muscle diseases caused by mutations in a person’s genes. Over time, muscle weakness decreases mobility, making everyday tasks difficult. There are many kinds of muscular dystrophy, each affecting specific muscle groups, with signs and symptoms appearing at different ages, and varying in severity.



Orthopedic Impairment

Orthopedic impairment means a severe skeletal, muscular, or neuromuscular impairment. The term includes impairments resulting from congenital anomalies (e.g., including but not limited to skeletal deformity or spina bifida), and impairments resulting from other causes (e.g., including but not limited to cerebral palsy or amputations).

Other Health Impairment

Other health impairment means having limited strength, vitality or alertness, including a heightened alertness to environmental stimuli, that results in limited alertness with respect to the educational environment, that is due to chronic or acute health problems. This includes, but is not limited to, asthma, attention deficit disorder or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, Tourette syndrome, diabetes, epilepsy, a heart condition, hemophilia, lead poisoning, leukemia, nephritis, rheumatic fever, sickle cell anemia, and acquired brain injury.

Phelan-McDermid Syndrome

A disorder caused by the loss of the terminal segment of the long arm of chromosome 22, which occurs near the end of the chromosome at a location designated q13.3, typically leading to developmental delay, intellectual disability, dolichocephaly, hypotonic, or absent or delayed speech.

Prader-Willi Syndrome

An inherited condition typified by; neonatal hypotonia with failure to thrive, hyperphagia or an excessive drive to eat which leads to obesity usually at 18 to 36 months of age, mild to moderate mental retardation, hypogonadism, short stature, mild facial dysmorphism, characteristic neurobehavior.

Rare Diseases

Rare diseases which affect patient populations of fewer than 200,000 individuals in the United States, as defined by the National Organization for Rare Disorders.

Specific Learning Disability

A specific learning disability is defined as a disorder in one or more of the basic learning processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written, that may manifest in significant difficulties affecting the ability to listen, speak, read, write, spell, or do mathematics. Associated conditions may include, but are not limited to, dyslexia, dyscalculia, dysgraphia, or developmental aphasia. A specific learning disability does not include learning problems that are primarily the result of a visual, hearing, motor, intellectual, or emotional/behavioral disability, limited English proficiency, or environmental, cultural, or economic factors.

**Speech Impairment**

Speech impairments are disorders of speech sounds, fluency, or voice that interfere with communication, adversely affect performance and/or functioning in the educational environment, and result in the need for exceptional student education.

Spina Bifida

A person with a medical diagnosis of spina bifida cystica or myelomeningocele.

Traumatic Brain Injury

A traumatic brain injury means an acquired injury to the brain caused by an external physical force resulting in total or partial functional disability or psychosocial impairment, or both, that adversely affects educational performance. The term applies to mild, moderate, or severe, open or closed head injuries resulting in impairments in one or more areas such as cognition, language, memory, attention, reasoning, abstract thinking, judgment, problem-solving, sensory, perceptual and motor abilities, psychosocial behavior, physical functions, information processing, or speech. The term includes anoxia due to trauma. The term does not include brain injuries that are congenital, degenerative, or induced by birth trauma.

Visually Impaired

Students who are blind, have no vision, or have little potential for using vision or students who have low vision. The term visual impairment does not include students who have learning problems that are primarily the result of visual perceptual and/or visual motor difficulties. (FLDOE definition)

Williams Syndrome

A rare genetic disorder characterized by growth delays before and after birth (prenatal and postnatal growth retardation), short stature, a varying degree of mental deficiency, and distinctive facial features that typically become more pronounced with age as defined by the National Organization for Rare Disorders.