

Hope Scholarship

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the Hope Scholarship Program?

The Hope Scholarship Program is an education savings account (ESA) program that will allow parents and families to utilize the state portion of their education funding to tailor an individualized learning experience that works best for them.

Does my student qualify for the program?

To qualify for the Hope Scholarship, a student must be a West Virginia resident and be either:

- Eligible or required to be enrolled in a kindergarten program;
- Enrolled full-time in a public elementary or secondary school program in this state for the entire instructional term during the academic year immediately preceding the academic year for which the student is applying to participate in the Hope Scholarship Program; or
- Enrolled full-time and attending a public elementary or secondary school program in this state for at least 45 calendar days during an instructional term at the time of application.

Can my child remain enrolled full-time in public school and receive the Hope Scholarship?

Unfortunately, a child cannot remain enrolled full-time in a public elementary or secondary school program and receive the Hope Scholarship at the same time. If a child is accepted into the Hope Scholarship Program, they can no longer be enrolled full-time in public school.

Are current private school students eligible?

If a student is currently enrolled in a private school or was enrolled full time in a private school the previous academic year, the student is not eligible to participate in the Hope Scholarship Program.

However, the student could become eligible by enrolling full time and attending a public elementary or secondary school program in this state for at least 45 calendar days at the time of application. The student must remain enrolled and attending the public school until a decision letter is issued regarding participation in the program, which could take up to an additional 45 calendar days.

Are current home school students eligible?

If a student is currently being home schooled, the student is not eligible to participate in the Hope Scholarship Program.

However, the student could become eligible by enrolling full time and attending a public elementary or secondary school program in this state for at least 45 calendar days at the time of application. The student must remain enrolled and attending the public school until a decision letter is issued regarding participation in the program, which could take up to an additional 45 calendar days.

Does enrollment in a virtual public school elementary or secondary program count towards Hope Scholarship eligibility? Yes, enrollment in a virtual program offered by a West Virginia public school is treated the same as in-person enrollment in a public school program.

My child is an existing private (or homeschool) kindergarten student, but they started kindergarten a year early. Are they eligible for the Hope Scholarship since they could have started kindergarten in the fall of 2022 based on their birth date?

No, unfortunately, your child is not currently eligible for the Hope Scholarship Program. Because your child will have already completed a kindergarten program, they will be entering first grade and no longer eligible for kindergarten.

My child will turn five years old after July 1st and was not found eligible for early entrance to kindergarten by a county board of education. If I start my child in a private or homeschool kindergarten program early, will my child be eligible for the Hope Scholarship the next year when they should be starting kindergarten?

No, if your child completes a private or homeschool kindergarten program, they will be treated as an existing private or homeschool student and will not thereafter be eligible for the Hope Scholarship Program as a kindergartener.

Does enrollment in public school over the summer count towards the 45-day eligibility provision for the Hope Scholarship Program?

No, the 45 consecutive days enrolled and attending public school must take place during the regular 180-day instructional term.

When will current non-public school students be eligible for the program?

If the participation rate of the combined number of students in the Hope Scholarship Program and students eligible who have applied to participate in the Hope Scholarship program in 2024 is less than five percent of net public school enrollment adjusted for state aid purposes for the previous school year, then, effective July 1, 2026, all students will be eligible to participate in the Hope Scholarship Program.

How much money could I receive for my Hope Scholarship student?

The Hope Scholarship amount will vary annually depending on the amount of state aid funding per pupil provided to county boards of education for public school students. The scholarship amount for the 2022-23 year will be \$4,298.60.

What can families spend the money on?

Families will spend their Hope Scholarship funds directly through the Education Market Assistant (EMA) platform with participating education service providers and vendors for qualified educational expenses, including but not limited to the items listed below. Hope Scholarship funds will not be sent to the parents and reimbursements for payments made with non-Hope Scholarship funds will only be considered on a case-by-case basis caused by extenuating circumstances.

- Tuition and fees for private school, non-public online programs, or alternative education programs
- Services provided by a public school (extracurricular, individual courses)
- Tutoring services
- Fees for standardized or advanced placement exams
- Fees for preparation courses
- Educational services and therapies

- Supplemental materials (supplies, textbooks)
- Transportation fees
- Any other qualified expense as approved by the Hope Scholarship Board
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When can I apply for the Hope Scholarship Program?

The application window for the Hope Scholarship Program will be open from March 1st to May 15th annually. An eligible student who misses the application window must be considered on a case-by-case basis by the Hope Scholarship Board. Students who are ineligible for the program during the regular application window but who become eligible may submit an application to the Board at any time during the academic year.

How will Hope Scholarship money be distributed and spent?

The Treasurer’s Office has contracted with a third party to administer Hope Scholarship accounts electronically through the Education Market Assistant (EMA). Each family will have access to an EMA account for each eligible student in their household. All purchases will be made via an ACH transaction and will be pre-approved by the Treasurer’s Office. The annual Hope Scholarship amount will be split into two distributions, with the first half being placed into the student accounts by August 15th and the second half being placed into the student accounts by January 15th.

How can interested Education Service Providers sign up to participate in the Hope Scholarship Program?

The online registration process for Education Service Providers to sign up for participation in the Hope Scholarship Program is still under development in the Education Market Assistant (EMA) platform. We anticipate that the online registration process for providers will be finalized towards the end of April 2022. Education Service Providers who have signed up for more information will be notified by email when the online registration process is available.

How will Education Service Providers receive payment if they participate in the Hope Scholarship Program?

Hope Scholarship students will direct their funds electronically to participating Education Service Providers through the EMA platform. The funds will then be sent directly from the EMA platform to the Education Service Providers. Hope Scholarship funds will be available to students in the EMA accounts twice a year – half of the funds will be available by August 15th and half of the funds will be available by January 15th. Any refunds of Hope Scholarship funds by an Education Service Provider must be electronically deposited back to the student’s EMA account – the funds cannot be refunded, rebated, or shared with a parent or student in any other manner.

If I wish to educate my child at home under the Hope Scholarship Program, what Notice of Intent form do I utilize for submission to my local county superintendent? Do I need to send a Notice of Intent to Participate in Hope Scholarship, a Notice of Intent to Homeschool, or both?

If you wish to participate in the Hope Scholarship Program, you will only need to submit a Notice of Intent to Participate in Hope Scholarship to your local county superintendent. On that form, you should indicate that you are selecting an Individualized Instructional Program for your child so that the county superintendent is aware of which Hope Scholarship pathway you are choosing for your child. This notifies them that you will annually be submitting your child's test results or determination that your child is making academic progress commensurate with his or her age and ability by June 8th in order to remain eligible for the Hope Scholarship Program. Although students with Individualized Instructional Programs under Hope Scholarship may share many common traits with traditional homeschool students, there is a distinction between the two under West Virginia Code.

When should I send my Notice of Intent to Participate in Hope Scholarship to the county superintendent?

Parents of incoming kindergarten students without a WVEIS ID# need to send their Notice of Intent to Participate in Hope Scholarship to the county superintendent in order to be assigned a WVEIS ID#. Parents of existing public school students in other grades should wait until they have received their eligibility letter from the Hope Scholarship Board before submitting their Notice of Intent to Participate in Hope Scholarship to their local county board of education.

I am not sure if my child will attend a participating school or utilize the Individualized Instructional Plan option under Hope Scholarship. What do I put on the Notice of Intent?

Please put the most likely option for your child on the Notice of Intent form. If you end up ultimately selecting a different option for your child, please send a revised Notice of Intent form to the county superintendent so that they can update the WVEIS system to reflect the appropriate type of records to expect for your child annually.

Can I use my student's Hope Scholarship funds to pay tuition at a private school in a surrounding state?

Yes, Hope Scholarship funds can be used to pay tuition at private schools in surrounding states if those private schools have signed up to participate in the Hope Scholarship Program.

My child will be graduating from high school in June 2022. Am I permitted to apply for the Hope Scholarship Program and use the funds to pay for my child's college tuition next fall?

No, once a student graduates from a high school program, he or she is not eligible for the Hope Scholarship. The program is intended for students in grades K-12 only.

For More Information: www.hopescholarshipwv.com