

WDE

EDUCATION SAVINGS ACCOUNT

Families FAQ

What is the Wyoming ESA Program?

The Wyoming Education Savings Account (ESA) program is a state-funded program established in 2024 and revised in 2025 to provide eligible families with state-funded accounts that can be used to customize their child's learning experience by enrolling in a private school or through home-based education. It is a state-funded program designed to give parents greater control over their child's education, providing parents with funds in an ESA account to pay for various educational expenses.

What can ESA funds be used for?

ESA funds offer flexibility to choose the best educational resources, including private school tuition, online classes, tutoring, and other qualified expenses to meet a child's unique needs. These expenses might include private school tuition, educational therapy, curriculum materials, online learning programs, tutoring, and more.

What are the key benefits of the Wyoming ESA Program?

The key benefits include customized learning, allowing parents to choose educational services that best meet their child's needs. There is also increased flexibility, as funds can be used for various expenses like private schools, tutoring, online courses, or materials. The program offers empowerment, allowing parents to take charge and select the best environment, and support for unique needs, providing means to access services like special education or therapies. The program also provides funding for pre-kindergarten programs for kindergarten readiness.

How much funding does an approved ESA student receive annually?

Approved ESA students will receive \$7,000 annually towards qualifying expenses. The Wyoming ESA annual contribution from the state is \$7,000 per student.

What age must a child be to be eligible for the pre-kindergarten ESA program?

The child must be 4 years of age on or before August 1 of the year enrolling in a pre-kindergarten program.

What age must a child be to be eligible for the K-12 ESA program?

The child must be 5 years of age on or before August 1 of the year enrolling in kindergarten.

What are the income requirements for the pre-kindergarten ESA program?

To participate in the pre-kindergarten ESA program, families must be at or below the 250% Federal Poverty Level for income eligibility. Eligibility is based on adjusted gross income (AGI) before any taxes or deductions. Parents of pre-kindergarten students agree to be aware of changes to the poverty guidelines and notify the Agency if their household income exceeds 250% of the Federal Poverty Guideline amount.

What if the ESA funds are not sufficient to cover the full cost of a pre-kindergarten program?

Families that require additional financial assistance in addition to the ESA funds in order to pay the full cost of their pre-kindergarten child's annual education cost should refer to the [WDE Early Childhood Readiness website](#) for assistance.

Are there income requirements for the K-12 ESA program?

There are no income eligibility requirements for the K-12 ESA program.

How is household size determined for pre-kindergarten income eligibility?

Circumstances considered when determining household income and size include foster children or foreign exchange students, children residing 50% or more of the time in cases of divorce or separation, emancipated children living alone, family members living apart temporarily, children away at school (such as college or boarding school), and deployed service personnel.

What documentation is required for pre-kindergarten income verification?

Acceptable forms of income verification include federal income tax returns from the previous year or proof of public assistance benefits, such as SNAP or TANF.

What are the student status requirements for the K-12 ESA program?

The child must be 5 by August 1 for kindergarten. The child must not have graduated from high school or received a GED or equivalent and must be younger than 21 as of August 1 of the year for which the parent is applying. The child may not be enrolled in a public school while participating in the ESA program but may contract with an approved education service provider school district or charter school for individual classes.

What documentation is required to prove student status (age)?

Proof of student status must be uploaded with the application and may include a certified birth certificate, passport, or other state-approved documentation that verifies age.

What are the residency requirements for both Pre-K and K-12 ESA programs?

The student must be a resident of Wyoming.

What documentation is required to prove Wyoming residency?

Proof of residency may include a valid Wyoming vehicle registration card, proof of Wyoming home ownership (mortgage document, warranty deed, or homeowner's insurance), two Wyoming utility bills from two different companies not more than 90 days old (not including termination notices), prior year tax records showing a Wyoming address, proof of public assistance through a Wyoming state agency, proof of military duty assignment in Wyoming or Wyoming state residency as active military personnel, or other documentation as determined by the WDE.

How does participation in the ESA program affect a student's rights under IDEA?

Participation in the ESA program is a parental placement under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). School districts are not obligated to provide that student with a free appropriate public education (FAPE). ESA students may be entitled to some special education services provided by their local school district under Part B of IDEA that do not constitute FAPE. Parents understand that participating in the ESA program constitutes a parental placement and is a refusal of the resident district's offer of FAPE.

Who can parents contact to learn about special education services for an ESA student?

Parents or guardians may contact their local school district's special education department for more information on how to request an evaluation and access special education services. Evaluations completed by a private, licensed provider may also be provided to the district.

When is the ESA application available?

We encourage you to monitor the Wyoming Department of Education's ESA [webpage](#) for information about future application periods. You may also sign up to receive email updates, click "Read Latest ESA Update," where you will find an option to enter your email address and subscribe to updates.

How does a parent apply for the Wyoming ESA program?

A parent of eligible students must submit an application [online](#).

Can multiple children from the same household be included in one application?

Yes, families can apply for all eligible Pre-k-12 children in their household using one application.

What documents should parents gather before starting the application?

Before logging in to start an application, parents should gather proof of student status (age), guardianship if other than parent(s) listed on the birth certificate, Wyoming residency, and income verification (if applicable). Specifically, this includes a birth certificate or passport for student status, two Wyoming utility bills, Wyoming vehicle registration, proof of home ownership, or lease agreement for residency, and tax returns or proof of public assistance for income verification (pre-kindergarten only). Parents will also need their social security number as well as their child's social security number to complete the application.

What happens after a student is accepted into the ESA program regarding public school enrollment?

Upon acceptance into the ESA program and prior to distribution of funds, parents must formally withdraw the student from any public school they are currently attending and provide the school with notice of intent to participate in the ESA program beginning on the date that the parent starts using ESA funds. This ensures ESA funds are not provided for students counted for public school funding.

What is the deadline for notifying the public school district about ESA participation?

The parent shall notify the public school district in writing no later than fifteen (15) days after the effective date of a signed and approved ESA Parent Contract. The acceptance email from the Wyoming ESA program may serve as notification.

What documentation serves as proof of withdrawal from public school?

Proof of withdrawal from public school must include a formal withdrawal letter from the public school due to acceptance in the Wyoming ESA program.

What is required for application approval?

Eligibility is determined based on the submission of a completed application, including all required documentation. Parents must submit a completed ESA application form, proof of residency, student status, and income verification as applicable, and a signed parental contract acknowledging the rules and responsibilities. Any additional information requested by the WDE to confirm eligibility may also be required.

Is a parental contract required for ESA participation?

Yes, as part of the application, parents will need to sign a parental contract that outlines their responsibilities under the ESA program. The account holder must sign a parental contract before enrollment. This contract only becomes effective if the application is approved and the student is admitted.

How are applications prioritized for award?

Applications will be reviewed on a first-come, first-served basis from the time that a student is verified as eligible. In subsequent years, funds will be prioritized to students who received ESA funding the previous school year or who are a sibling of an eligible student currently receiving or who has received funds the previous year.

How will parents be notified about their application status?

After submitting the application, the WDE will review it, and parents will receive a notification regarding their application status. Notification will indicate approval, with instructions on account activation and fund access, or denial, with an explanation and steps for rectifying/appealing.

What are possible reasons for application denial?

Possible reasons for denial include but are not limited to ineligibility due to residency, student status, or income (pre-kindergarten only).

If an application is denied, can the parent appeal?

Yes, if an application is denied, the notification will explain the reason for denial and provide steps for rectifying the issue or appealing the decision.

How are ESA funds disbursed to the account?

The \$7,000 annual contribution will be deposited quarterly in equal installments starting July 1.

Can parents deposit personal funds into the ESA account?

No, personal deposits into the ESA student's account are not permitted.

What types of expenses are considered Qualified Expenses for ESA funds?

Qualifying expenses include tuition and fees for qualified private schools (pre-kindergarten, elementary, secondary), educational therapies, tutoring services (non-family), curriculum and educational materials, online learning programs (nongovernmental), college courses (dual enrollment), career or technical school expenses, testing and assessments (nationally norm-referenced, college entrance, prep courses), technology (hardware, software, assistive tech), contracted public school services (individual classes, extracurriculars), summer educational programs, specialized after-school educational programs (excluding childcare), transportation fees (fee-for-service to ESP), and school uniforms.

An [Allowable and Disallowable Expense Guidance](#) document is available on the Wyoming ESA [website](#).

Can expenses not listed as 'Qualifying Expenses' be approved?

Yes, requests for educational products not currently located in the Marketplace will be considered but not are guaranteed. Approval criteria include whether the expense is statutorily allowable, reasonable and ordinarily used in an educational context, supports or enhances student learning/educational outcomes, and is ordinary or typical in cost compared to similar options.

A [Reimbursement Guidelines](#) document is available on the Wyoming ESA [website](#).

When must expenses be paid relative to when the service/product is received?

All expenses must be paid after the services are provided or the product ships, except for tuition and fees required for enrollment or assessment purposes.

Are direct account expenditures through the Marketplace encouraged?

Yes, direct account expenditures through the Marketplace are highly encouraged. All educational products within the Wyoming ESA Program Marketplace are pre-approved.

How does a parent request reimbursement for qualified expenses made outside the Marketplace?

If an account holder is unable to make a purchase or pay for an educational service directly through the Wyoming ESA Marketplace and the item or service cannot be added, they may be eligible for reimbursement.

A [Reimbursement Guidelines](#) document is available on the Wyoming ESA [website](#).

What is the deadline for submitting reimbursement requests?

All reimbursement requests must be submitted in the Wyoming ESA portal within 30 days of purchase. What documentation is required for a reimbursement request? Required documentation includes a receipt that includes the vendor, date, total charges, an itemized list and full description of products or services, and proof of payment method. Handwritten receipts will not be accepted.

How long does the WDE have to decide on a reimbursement request?

The WDE will decide on a completed reimbursement request within thirty (30) days of receiving the appropriate documentation.

If a reimbursement request is denied, can the parent appeal?

Yes, if the WDE denies a reimbursement request, a parent may request a review of the decision by submitting a request to the WDE within fourteen (14) days of receiving the decision. Upon receiving the request, the WDE shall convene a review panel, and the panel shall decide within thirty (30) days of the parent's request. The panel's decision is the WDE's final decision.

Can unused ESA funds roll over to the next school year?

Yes, any funds remaining in an ESA student's account at the end of the school year will roll over to the next year as long as the student remains enrolled in the Wyoming ESA program. Any unused funds remain the Agency's property; Parent has no right to remaining funds if the account is closed.

Does the student have to reapply every year to continue in the ESA program?

Yes, families will be required to reapply annually to determine continued eligibility. The renewal process includes verifying continued residency, educational status, and income threshold (pre-kindergarten only). A renewal contract must be signed and submitted by the deadline.

What happens if a parent misses the annual renewal deadline?

If the annual renewal contract is not submitted by the deadline, the student may lose access to ESA funds.

Can a secondary account holder be designated for the ESA account?

Yes, if the primary account holder is unable to manage the account, a secondary account holder may be designated. A parent may request that the agency approve a secondary account holder.

What is required to designate a secondary account holder?

A written notarized request from the parent is required, stating the name, relationship, reason the parent is unable to administer, the students involved, a certification that the proposed holder has no criminal history involving fraud/deception, and the expected length of designation. Additional information requested by the Agency may be needed. Agency approval is contingent on the proposed secondary account holder entering into a contract with the Agency.

Can funds be transferred between ESA accounts for multiple students in the same household?

No, if you have more than one child participating, you can manage all accounts through the portal, but each account must remain separate, and funds cannot be transferred between accounts.

How can ESA funds be accessed for payment?

Funds can only be used for qualified educational expenses. All transactions must be made electronically through the approved online portal.

What is considered unauthorized use of the ESA account?

A parent may not assign responsibility for submitting any application or reimbursement documentation to an unauthorized ESA account user by providing a username and password. Parent shall not permit any individual to access the Agency's ESA account electronic system by providing a username or password or by any other means.

What are the consequences of unauthorized use of the ESA account?

Unauthorized use may result in loss of eligibility and funding and/or financial or criminal penalties. The Wyoming ESA program will not be responsible for changes or purchases made by anyone other than the primary account holder if the login information has been shared. If parent violates the access provision, the agency may terminate the contract. Any misuse of ESA funds or misrepresentations may result in Parent being required to repay some or all expended funds and the agency may terminate the contract.

What are the parental responsibilities regarding curriculum for K-12 ESA students?

Parents must ensure that their child is receiving instruction in required subjects, including reading, writing, mathematics, civics (U.S. Constitution and Wyoming Constitution), history, literature, and science. This provision shall not be construed to require parent to ensure instruction conflicting with parent's religious doctrines. Pre-kindergarten students must receive kindergarten readiness instruction.