



FLORIDA

**Family Empowerment Scholarship for
Students with Unique Abilities (FES-UA)**

Parent / School Handbook

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Florida FES-UA Program Handbook

AAA Scholarship Foundation (AAA), a private non-profit organization, is an approved Florida Scholarship Funding Organization (SFO). AAA administers the Florida Family Empowerment Scholarship for Students with Unique Abilities (FES-UA) program which is an annual scholarship that provides parents/guardians of children with specific disabilities the opportunity to better meet the individual needs of their eligible children.

Parents/guardians of eligible Florida children may use the accounts to purchase approved educational goods or services, as well as provide for prepaid college plans, for their eligible children. An AAA FES-UA student may NOT accept more than one state-approved scholarship for the same time period.

Parent/Guardian Sworn Compliance Statement

Please remember that in applying for, and accepting, a FES-UA Program you are swearing as follows in conformity with section 1002.394(10)(b)3., Florida Statutes:

1. The student is enrolled in a program that meets regular school attendance requirements as provided in s. 1003.01 (16)(b), (c) or (d).
2. The program scholarship funds will be used only for authorized purposes serving the student's educational needs, as described in s. 1002.394 (4)(b); that any prepaid college plan or college savings plan funds contributed pursuant to subparagraph (4)(b)6. will not be transferred to another beneficiary while the plan contains funds contributed pursuant to this section; and that they will not receive a payment, refund, or rebate of any funds provided under this section.
3. I am responsible for all eligible expenses in excess of the amount of a scholarship and for the education of my student by, as applicable:
 - a. Requiring the student to take an assessment in accordance with s. 1002.394(9)(c);
 - b. Providing an annual evaluation in accordance with s. 1002.41(1)(f); or
 - c. Requiring the child to take any pre- and post-assessments selected by a private provider if the child is 4 years of age and is enrolled in a program provided by an eligible Voluntary Prekindergarten Education Program provider. A student with disabilities for whom a pre- and post-assessment is not appropriate is exempt from this requirement. A participating provider shall report a student's scores to the parent.
4. The student remains in good standing with the private provider or private school if those options are selected by me.
5. Comply with the scholarship application and renewal processes and requirements established by the organization. A student whose participation in the program is not renewed may continue to spend scholarship funds that are in his or her account from prior years unless the account must be closed pursuant to subparagraph (5)(b)3. Notwithstanding any changes to the student's IEP, a student who was previously eligible for participation in the program shall remain eligible to apply for renewal. However, for a high-risk child to continue to participate in the program in the school year after he or she reaches 6 years of age, the child's application for renewal of program participation must contain documentation that the child has a disability defined in paragraph (2)(e) other than high-risk status.
6. Procuring the services necessary to educate the student. If such services include enrollment in an eligible private school, I must meet with the private school's principal or the principal's designee to review the school's academic programs and policies, specialized services, code of student conduct, and attendance policies before his or her student is enrolled. I must also approve each payment to the eligible private school before the scholarship funds may be deposited by funds transfer pursuant to 2subparagraph (12)(a)4. I may not designate any entity or individual associated with the eligible private school as my attorney in fact to approve a funds transfer. When the student receives a scholarship, the district school board is not obligated to provide the student with a free appropriate public education. For purposes of s. 1003.57 and the Individuals with Disabilities in Education Act, a participating student has only those rights that apply to all other unilaterally parentally placed students, except that, when requested by my, school district personnel must develop an IEP or matrix level of services.
7. All the information provided in the application for scholarship funds and all supporting documentation is true, correct and complete. I understand that intentional misrepresentation could result in the scholarship being denied or revoked.

In addition, I agree to and understand that:

- a) I must file an application for initial program participation with an organization by the deadline set forth herein.
- b) I must notify the school district that the student is participating in the FES-UA if I choose to enroll the student in a home education program as provided in s. 1002.41. This notification is not in lieu of the required notification I must submit to the district when establishing a home education program pursuant to s. 1002.41(1)(a).
- c) I must enroll my child in a program from a Voluntary Prekindergarten Education Program provider authorized

- under s. 1002.55, a school readiness provider authorized under s. 1002.88, or an eligible private school.
- d) I must annually renew participation in the program. Notwithstanding any changes to the student's IEP, a student who was previously eligible for participation in the program shall remain eligible to apply for renewal. However, for a high-risk child to continue to participate in the program in the school year after he or she reaches 6 years of age, the child's application for renewal of program participation must contain documentation that the child has a disability defined in s. 1002.394 (2)(d) other than high-risk status.
 - e) I am responsible for procuring the services necessary to educate the student. If I do not procure the necessary educational services for the student and the student's account has been inactive for 2 consecutive fiscal years, the student is ineligible for additional scholarship payments until the scholarship-funding organization verifies that expenditures from the account have occurred. When the student receives a FES-UA scholarship, the district school board is not obligated to provide the student with a free appropriate public education. For purposes of s. 1003.57 and the Individuals with Disabilities in Education Act, a participating student has only those rights that apply to all other unilaterally parentally placed students, except that, when requested by the parent, school district personnel must develop an individual education plan or matrix level of services.
 - f) I am responsible for the payment of all eligible expenses in excess of the amount of the FES-UA scholarship in accordance with the terms agreed to between me and the private provider and/or private school.
 - g) I may not transfer any prepaid college plan or college savings plan funds contributed pursuant to s. 1002.394(4)(b)6. to another beneficiary while the plan contains funds contributed pursuant to s. 1002.394.
 - h) I may not receive a payment, refund, or rebate of any funds provided under s. 1002.394.
 - i) I may not bill an insurance company, Medicaid, or any other agency for the same services that are paid through the FES-UA.
 - j) I agree to follow the rules and responsibilities for parents as they apply to the program, as set forth in [this Handbook](#).
 - k) I may not sell for personal gain any products purchased with FES-UA scholarship funds.
 - l) I understand that funding is not guaranteed.
- If I fail to comply with the above, I will forfeit the FES-UA Program scholarship.

Scholarship Eligibility

A student is eligible for a FES-UA from AAA, if the student:

1. is a resident of Florida;
2. is 3 or 4 years old on or before December 31st of the year in which the student applies for program participation, or is eligible to enroll in kindergarten through grade twelve in a public school in Florida;
3. has at least one of the disabilities listed below as defined by s. 1002.394 (2)(e), Florida Statutes (an AAA Diagnosis of Disability form completed and signed by a U.S. licensed physician or Florida licensed psychologist that matches the definitions listed below is required during the application process); and,
4. is the subject of an IEP written in accordance with rules of the State Board of Education, or with the applicable rules of another state or has received a diagnosis of an eligible disability from a physician licensed in the US, District of Columbia or Commonwealth of Puerto Rico or a Florida licensed psychologist.

What types of disabilities qualify?

1. Autism spectrum disorder, as defined in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition, published by the American Psychiatric Association
2. Down syndrome, as defined in s. [393.063](#)(13), "Down syndrome" means a disorder caused by the presence of an extra chromosome 21.
3. Cerebral palsy, as defined in s. [393.063](#)(4), "Cerebral palsy" means 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 that 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.
4. Intellectual disability, as defined in s. [393.063](#)(21), "Intellectual disability" means 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. For the purposes of this definition, the term: (a) "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; (b) "Significantly sub-average 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.
5. Phelan-McDermid syndrome, as defined in s. [393.063](#)(28). "Phelan-McDermid syndrome" means 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, dolicocephaly, hypotonia, or absent or delayed speech.

6. Prader-Willi syndrome, as defined in s. [393.063](#)(25), "Prader-Willi syndrome" means 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 intellectual disability, hypogonadism, short stature, mild facial dysmorphism, and a characteristic neurobehavior.
7. Spina bifida, as defined in s. [393.063](#)(36) "Spina bifida" means, for purposes of this chapter, a person with a medical diagnosis of spina bifida cystica or myelomeningocele.
8. For a 3-5 year old, being a high-risk child, as defined in s. [393.063](#)(20)(a), "High-risk child" means, for the purposes of this chapter, a child from 3 to 5 years of age with one or more of the following characteristics: (a) A developmental delay in cognition, language, or physical development.
9. Muscular dystrophy
10. Williams syndrome
11. Dual sensory impaired, as defined by rules of the State Board of Education and evidenced by reports from the local school district.
12. Anaphylaxis
13. A hearing impairment, including deafness
14. A visual impairment, including blindness
15. Traumatic brain injured
16. 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. – Name of Rare diseases is required
17. Hospital or homebound, as defined by rules of the State Board of Education and evidenced by reports from local school districts. 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 6 months.
18. Speech Impairment
19. Language Impairment
20. Orthopedic Impairment
21. Other health impairment, defined in Rule 6A-6.030152 as "...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."
22. Emotional or behavioral disability
23. Dyslexia
24. Dyscalculia
25. Developmental aphasia
26. Other specific learning disabilities not listed above, defined in Rule 6A-6.03018 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. ... 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."

How Much is the Scholarship Worth?

The scholarship amount will vary according to grade, county of residence and disability, and is equal to 100 percent of the funding a school district would receive for educating the student. The average annual award for most students is around \$10,000.

Scholarship Awarding Procedure

Interested households must annually complete an AAA application and submit it along with the Notarized Sworn Compliance Statement (page 3 of the application).

In addition, new students and students transferring from other SFOs must submit copies of the following documents:

1. Licensed Physician/Florida-Psychologist Diagnosis of Disability Form (page 5 of application);
2. Parent/Guardian's Florida Driver's License OR Current Florida Utility Bill in the name of the parent or Guardian;
3. Student's Birth Certificate;

4. Prior School Year or Year-to-Date report card for private or public school students; annual evaluation for homeschool students;
5. Individual Education Plan (IEP) or 504 Plan, if available.

Scholarships are awarded to eligible students in the following order of priority: renewing students from the previous school year; students retained on the previous school year's wait list; newly approved applicants; and late-filed applicants on a first-completed, first-awarded basis.

Eligibility is conditional until the Florida Department of Education (FDOE) has cross-checked the student against the rosters for public school and the other Florida scholarship programs. The cross-checks begin in July of each year, and continue as new applications are found conditionally eligible until all available program funds have been exhausted.

Scholarship Funding

Scholarship accounts for students who pass the cross-check will be funded by FDOE in four equal amounts during the school year no later than August 1st for renewing students, September 1st for new students, then November 1st, February 1st and April 1st for all students. The state determines the level of funding for the program each year. If sufficient funding runs out or is not available, eligible students will be placed on a waiting list.

Scholarship Award Values

The award for a new student entering the program shall be based on the student's IEP / matrix level of service, grade level and county of residence.

The funding for a student without an IEP or matrix level of service shall be assigned to matrix level 253 (the matrix levels range from a low of 251 to a high of 255). If a parent chooses to request and receive an IEP, IEP reevaluation (allowed once every 3 years), or matrix level of service from their school district, the amount of the child's FES-UA award shall be adjusted as needed based on the level of service assigned, and will remain at that level until and unless an IEP or matrix level reevaluation is requested.

There is also a possibility that a student's FES-UA award funding will be prorated. The FDOE funds accounts 4 times per year (8/1 for renewing students, 9/1 for new students, and then 11/1, 2/1 and 4/1 for all students). If a student's information is submitted by an SFO to FDOE at least 30 days before a payment is scheduled, and the student passes the public school crosscheck, the FDOE will fund the student's account. If the 30 day requirement is missed or the student does not pass the crosscheck, the FDOE will not fund the student's account. The funding for student's approved after March 1 is zero.

Scholarship Acceptance

Once a student is determined eligible AND has received approval for funding, the parent/guardian must:

1. Un-enroll the eligible student from Public School – if the eligible student is still enrolled in a public school, you must un-enroll him/her before using the AAA FES-UA Program.
2. Un-enroll the eligible student from Step Up for Students – if the eligible student has a Step Up for Students scholarship, you must un-enroll him/her before using the AAA FES-UA Program.

Failure to meet the above requirements may result in the loss of the FES-UA Program award. Households that are determined eligible AND have received funding for the upcoming school year will receive a Scholarship Award Letter in an email directly from AAA.

The use of a scholarship cannot be postponed. If the scholarship will be used primarily for full-time enrollment in a private school, the household must select an eligible private school via the online School Commitment Form ("SCF") for their student(s) as soon as they receive the scholarship determination email. Failure to meet the deadline stated on the SCF may result in the forfeiture of the awarded scholarship.

Private schools should not accept any students without an SCF unless the household: 1) is willing to self-pay their tuition and fees until they are awarded a scholarship and 2) will self-pay if they are not.

If a household receives an award letter in error or the household's eligibility is revoked, the private school that has enrolled the student will be notified as soon as possible. By accepting the scholarship student(s) and scholarship payment(s), the private school agrees to repay any scholarship payment(s) incorrectly made and any overpayment on behalf of the scholarship student(s), regardless of the reason.

Households that document eligibility but are placed on a waitlist do not have a scholarship until/unless they receive a notification that they have been funded.

How Can the FES-UA Program Funds be Used?

The accounts can be used to pay for the following categories of educational expenses for the eligible student only: **(NO PRIVATE SALE PURCHASES WILL BE APPROVED)**

1. Eligible instructional materials as specified in the Family Empowerment Scholarship for Students with Unique Abilities (FES-UA) Purchasing Guide available at <https://fcsua.org/docs/FESUA/FES-UA-24-25-GUIDELINES.pdf>;
2. Curriculum and curriculum materials as specified in the Family Empowerment Scholarship for Students with Unique Abilities (FES-UA) Purchasing Guide available at <https://fcsua.org/docs/FESUA/FES-UA-24-25-GUIDELINES.pdf>;
3. Specialized services by approved providers or by a hospital in this state which may include, but are not limited to applied behavior analysis services, speech-language pathologists, occupational therapy; physical therapy; services from listening and spoken language specialists This category is for services provided by the provider directly to / for the student only; equipment purchases will not be approved;
4. Tuition and fees at an eligible private school. For the list of eligible private schools, go to <http://www.floridaschoolchoice.org/information/privateschooldirectory/>
5. Enrollment in, or tuition or fees associated with enrollment in, a home education program;
6. Tuition or fees associated with enrollment in an eligible postsecondary educational institution or a program offered by the institution;
7. Tuition or fees associated with enrollment in a full-time private tutoring program authorized under s. 1002.43
8. Tuition and fees for part-time tutoring services by a state-certified teacher, one who holds a bachelor's degree or graduate degree in the subject area, one who can show Mastery of the subject or a person certified by a nationally or internationally recognized research-based training program;
9. Tuition or fees associated with enrollment in a virtual program offered by a department-approved private online provider that meets the provider qualifications specified in s. 1002.45(2)(a), the Florida Virtual School as a private paying student, or an approved online course offered pursuant to s. 1003.499 or s. 1004.0961;
10. Fees for nationally standardized, norm-referenced achievement tests, AP exams, industry certification exams, assessments related to postsecondary education or other assessments;
11. Contributions to Florida Prepaid College Program or Florida College Savings Program; go to <https://www.myfloridaprepaid.com/fag/can-find-information-saving-college-using-funds-gardiner-scholarship/> for more information;
12. Contracted services provided by a public school or school districts;
13. Fees for specialized summer education programs;

14. Fees for specialized after-school education programs;
15. Transition services provided by job coaches;
16. Fees for an annual evaluation of educational progress by a state-certified teacher under s.1002.41(1), if this option is chosen for a home education student;
17. Tuition and fees associated with programs offered by Voluntary Prekindergarten Education Program providers approved pursuant to s.1002.55 and school readiness providers approved pursuant to s.1002.88;
18. Fees for services provided at a center that is a member of the Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship International;
19. Fees for services provided by a therapist who is certified by the Certification Board of Music Therapists or credentialed by the Art Therapy Credentials Board;

Please review the Family Empowerment Scholarship for Students with Unique Abilities (FES-UA) Purchasing Guide available at <https://fcsua.org/FESUA/fesua.html> for more information about the authorized categories of educational products and services.

Once a FES-UA Program account has been established, the parents/guardians must procure the necessary educational services for the student whether or not the services to be procured are eligible to be funded by the scholarship account. If the student's account has been inactive for 2 consecutive fiscal years, the student will be ineligible for additional scholarship funding until AAA verifies that an eligible expenditure has occurred.

Pre-Authorization is Required for Certain Purchases

Pre-approval by AAA is required before purchasing certain categories of educational expenses as set forth in Appendix B of the Family Empowerment Scholarship for Students with Unique Abilities (FES-UA) Purchasing Guide available at <https://fcsua.org/FESUA/fesua.html>.

Households must submit the Educational Benefit Form for the items requiring pre-authorization as listed in Appendix C of the Family Empowerment Scholarship for Students with Unique Abilities (FES-UA) Purchasing Guide available at <https://fcsua.org/FESUA/fesua.html>.

Approvals of pre-authorizations are decided on a case-by-case basis. Allow ten (10) business days for processing complete pre-authorization requests inclusive of all required documents such as the Educational Benefit Form. Once a request is processed, the status of the request will update to Approved, Declined or Pending Guardian Additional Information.

1. If Approved, your payment will be included in the next weekly scheduled payment run.
2. If Declined, the reason will be listed. You may appeal the decision by following the steps listed below.
3. If Pending Guardian Additional Information, please check your email for our request for additional information and provide it by the listed deadline.

Pre-authorizations will have a 90-day expiration date from the approval date and will expire if not used. You can re-submit a new pre-authorization form if the prior one was expired.

Appealing a Denied Request

You may appeal a denial of a request for payment as follows:

If a proposed expenditure was denied that is listed as eligible, provide the citation to the Family Empowerment Scholarship for Students with Unique Abilities (FES-UA) Purchasing Guide available at <https://fcsua.org/FESUA/fesua.html>.

If an expenditure was denied that is listed as ineligible in Appendix A to the Family Empowerment Scholarship for Students with Unique Abilities (FES-UA) Purchasing Guide available at <https://fcsua.org/FESUA/fesua.html>, your appeal will be denied.

If an expenditure was denied that is subject to pre-authorization according to Appendix B of the Family Empowerment Scholarship for Students with Unique Abilities (FES-UA) Purchasing Guide available at <https://fcsua.org/FESUA/fesua.html>, and you have not provided the Educational Benefit Form when required, your appeal will be denied.

If an expenditure was denied that is subject to pre-authorization according to Appendix B of the Family Empowerment Scholarship for Students with Unique Abilities (FES-UA) Purchasing Guide available at <https://fcsua.org/FESUA/fesua.html>, and you have provided the Educational Benefit Form if required, or if an expenditure was denied for some other reason, explain in detail the necessity and educational value of the expenditures. Include support and/or a letter from a Licensed Physician or Therapist with a recommendation for requested education item(s) on the physician's or therapist's letterhead. You will be given the final decision in 10 business days. You will NOT be reimbursed for your purchase with FES-UA Program funds if the pre-authorization form and appeal are denied.

Scholarship Distributions to Approved Service Providers

Direct payment to vendors and service providers for eligible purchases from the eligible student's FES-UA Program funds by AAA is allowed. All payments are made as an ACH Debit transfer. The parent or guardian must select "Vendor Disbursement" and include the supporting invoice (and approved Pre-Authorization Form if required) with the submission. Generally, payment requests that have been submitted and approved by Tuesday of each week will receive payment by Friday of that same week.

Scholarship Distributions to Parents/Guardians for Approved Expense Reimbursement

Direct reimbursement for eligible purchases from the eligible student's FES-UA Program funds by AAA is allowed. All payments are made as an ACH Debit transfer. The parent or guardian must select "Guardian Reimbursement" and include the supporting paid receipts (and approved Pre-Authorization Form if required) with the submission. Generally, payment requests that have been submitted and approved by Tuesday of each week will receive payment by paid Friday of that same week.

Scholarship Distributions to Private Schools

Direct payment to eligible private schools for tuition and fees for the benefit of the eligible FES-UA Program student by AAA is allowed. All payments are made as ACH Debit transfers only.

Private schools may not charge a different rate for scholarship students. The same tuition schedule must apply to all students enrolled whether they are on AAA scholarships or their parents are paying for their tuition. Scholarship students are allowed to receive private scholarships to assist with meeting their portion of the financial responsibility to the private school.

It is the responsibility of the household to determine if the chosen private school is meeting a student's needs. If the private school is not meeting a student's needs, the household may transfer a student at any time during the school year or if the student is deemed eligible for renewal at the start of the next school year. The scholarship follows the student to any eligible private school as long as the household is eligible. For information on changing private schools during the school year, see the "Student Transfer Procedure" on page 11.

Parental Payments for Private School Tuition and Fees

Parental payments are necessary when an eligible private school's tuition and fees total *more* than the awarded scholarship. The household is responsible for the additional charges that exceed the awarded scholarship.

At times, the private school may award a supplemental private scholarship to the household, but if this does not occur, the difference is the sole responsibility of the household. NO EXCEPTIONS.

All households must remain current with their payments to the private school for any fees owed by the household, not including the scholarship payments. Failure to pay, or make arrangements to pay, a balance owed may result in the private school suspending or expelling your student. If the student is expelled, the student may not be eligible for additional FES-UA Program scholarship funds.

Private School Tuition and Fee Payments

By accepting student(s) eligible to receive the FES-UA scholarship and scholarship payment(s), a private school agrees to repay any scholarship payment(s) incorrectly made and any overpayment on behalf of the student(s), regardless of the reason. Failure to return the funds to AAA could lead to loss of eligibility as a participating private school in the scholarship program and/or may have legal ramifications relating to the scholarship laws. The household is responsible for any balance of tuition/fees not covered by the scholarship.

Private School payments are generally paid in four installments during the school year. The payment calendar can be found at <http://www.aaascholarships.org/schools>

Before each installment is processed, a verification report will become active in the school's SMP account, listing the student's name and scholarship payment amount.

1. The **school must**: 1) verify each student's information, 2) indicate each student's absences to date and 3) state whether the household is current with any monies privately owed to the private school. The private school must submit the verification report by the stated deadline. Private schools must explain any "no" answers, in writing, on this report and/or attach documentation.
2. Once the school has finished its part, the **parent/guardian must** 1) receive a notification by email to review the verification report, 2) login to their SMP account, 3) click Verification Report Active for the individual student, and 4) complete and submit the form by the deadline.

Scholarship payments will be directly deposited to the eligible private school selected by the household for verification reports that are completed and approved by the deadline.

a)

Student withdrawals may result in the private school being required to reimburse the scholarship for the difference between the expected reimbursed enrollment period and actual time period the student attended the private school. For information on changing private schools during the year, see the "Student Transfer Procedure" below. The scholarship pays only for services rendered.

If any student receiving a scholarship from AAA also receives a scholarship from another Scholarship Organization or the State of Florida, the private school and/or guardian must contact AAA and the private school must immediately return the funding to AAA. Failure to report such situations to AAA may result in a private school's loss of eligibility to enroll new scholarship students and/or to legal ramifications with the State Attorney's Office.

If a private school receives a payment for a student who is not currently attending the private school, the private school must immediately return the funds to AAA unless the payment is the final "exit" payment as determined by AAA. If the student has expenses over and above tuition for attendance at the private school before the receipt of the exit payment, it is the household's responsibility to pay the debt. The private school may not retain the funds. If pro-rated monies are owed to the private school, a payment will be issued following submission of the Student Withdrawal Form (SWF).

Failure to return the funds to AAA in these situations could lead to loss of eligibility as a participating private school in the AAA scholarship program and/or may have legal ramifications relating to the scholarship laws.

Student Transfers

One of the benefits of private education is that if the parent/guardian is not satisfied with a private school, the parent/guardian may choose another in-state private school that better meets the needs of a student.

A student's scholarship may be transferred to another eligible in-state private school at any time during the year. However, AAA will not renew or transfer scholarships while money is owed to a previous private school.

If the parent/guardian plans to withdraw a student during the school year, the parent/guardian should notify the private school at least two weeks prior to withdrawal.

How to transfer a scholarship during the school year:

1. The private school that the student is leaving must complete a Student Withdrawal Form (SWF) online within **5 business days** of being notified that the student is leaving. AAA will not transfer a scholarship until the exited private school confirms that: 1) the household has no outstanding balance owed or 2) a payment plan is in place.
2. The parent/guardian is responsible to find another eligible private school within **5 business days** after exiting the previous private school. You must click on the Find a School button, click on the private school of choice to begin the SCF process. Any SCFs that reach AAA more than 5 business days after a student exits a private school may result in **forfeiture** of the scholarship. *Example: If the student's last day is on a Friday at **SCHOOL A**, the new SCF must be submitted to AAA by **SCHOOL B** no later than the following Friday.*
3. The new private school will receive a notification to start the SCF for each student and s return to the parent for review. The parent will receive a notification from the school to review and submit the SCF to AAA for approval.

4. AAA will complete the transfer process when the Withdrawal and SCF is received. This process may include:
 - 1) a final payment to the private school that is being exited, or 2) a request for refund of overpayment from the private school that is exited.

If at any time while utilizing the scholarship a student returns to public school, the student will lose the FES-UA scholarship. The household will be required to reapply and document eligibility to qualify in future years for the FES-UA Program.

Scholarship Distributions to Florida Prepaid College or Florida Savings Program

To transfer funds to the Florida Prepaid College Program or the Florida Savings Program, the parent/guardian must establish an account with the Florida Prepaid College Board. Go to <https://www.myfloridaprepaid.com/faq/can-find-information-saving-college-using-funds-gardiner-scholarship/> for more information on establishing an account. Once the account has been established, the parent/guardian of a FES-UA Program recipient can request a transfer of the awarded funds to the established account by providing the required information. See "Transfer to Florida Prepaid College & Savings Plan Form" on our website.

Loss of a Scholarship

A household may lose an FES-UA scholarship for any of the following reasons:

1. Providing fraudulent information or withholding information on the application;
2. Failing to comply with the requirements of the Sworn Compliance Statement;
3. Continuing to attend a Florida public school, including:
 - a. Florida School for the Deaf and the Blind,
 - b. Florida Virtual School (as a public school student),
 - c. College-Preparatory Boarding Academy,
 - d. A developmental research school,
 - e. A district charter school,
 - f. A district virtual education program (as a public school student) or
 - g. Florida VPK (unless being funded with FES-UA Program funds).
4. Accepting a Florida Income-Based Scholarship (with AAA Scholarship Foundation or Step Up for Students) during the same period the child is receiving an FES-UA scholarship;
5. Enrolling in a private school providing educational services to the Department of Juvenile Justice;
6. Accepting any payment, refund, or rebate from a provider of any services for the FES-UA Program;
7. Billing an insurance company, Medicaid, or any other agency for the same services that are paid through the FES-UA Program;
8. Not making any eligible expenditures from an account for two (2) consecutive fiscal years;
9. Not enrolling the student in an eligible postsecondary educational institution or a program offered by the institution for any period of three (3) consecutive years after high school completion or graduation;
10. Accepting multiple FES-UA Program awards (during the same period);
11. Failing to sign the "Payment Received Form" for payments within 5 business days of being notified by the school or within the time specified by school policy, whichever is less;
12. Failing to sign and return the Handbook Acknowledgement Form to AAA by the stated deadline;
13. Failing to assist with AAA's internal audit process, if required;
14. Owning, operating, or acting in the capacity of a principal or person with equivalent decision making authority of an eligible private school, regardless of where the student attends; and
15. Otherwise violating the conditions of the scholarship program.

Change of Contact Information

If there is a change of address, telephone, cell phone or email address, the parent/guardian must immediately notify AAA in writing and, in the event of a change of address, provide a copy of an updated driver's license or utility bill.

A scholarship can be transferred to any eligible private school in the state as long as eligibility is maintained.

Failure to inform AAA of the household's current email address may result in the household not receiving important, time-sensitive communication from AAA and may result in the loss of a scholarship. It is very important that AAA be able to reach you!

Handbook Disclaimer and Acknowledgment

The information, policies, and procedures described in this Handbook are necessarily subject to change. Revisions may occur and the revised information may supersede, modify, or eliminate existing policies. By accepting a scholarship, you are acknowledging that you have received, read, and agreed to comply with the policies contained in this Handbook and any revisions made to it.

Reach us at 888-707-2465 or AAAGardiner@aaascholarships.org

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Program Handbook