

# **Parent Handbook**

## **Empowerment Scholarship Account Program**

### **School Year 2022-2023**

**Arizona Department of Education  
1535 W. Jefferson Street Bin #41  
Phoenix, AZ 85007  
602-364-1969**

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April 29, 2022

Dear Parents and Students,

Welcome! We are happy to have you as a part of the Empowerment Scholarship Account (ESA) program.

Arizona's ESA program was passed by the state legislature and signed into law in 2011. The Arizona Department of Education ("ADE" or "Department") is responsible for administering the program according to state law and rules. Specific state statutes enacted by the state legislature and administrative rules enacted by the Arizona State Board of Education ("SBE") govern the program. These governing statutes and rules, which the Department is required by law to adhere to, can be found in Appendix A and Appendix B. This ESA Parent Handbook, which contains information related to policies and processes of the ESA program, shall comply with the statutes and the rules adopted by the legislature and SBE [Arizona Revised Statute (A.R.S.) 15-2403(J)]. If there is a conflict between statute and rule, statute supersedes, however, SBE and ADE will seek legal advice from their respective attorneys.

While ADE administers the program and the day-to-day operations of the program, the State Board of Education is charged with the appeals process for ESA administrative decisions. Learn more about the appeals process at [Empowerment Scholarship Account \(ESA\) Program | Arizona State Board of Education \(az.gov\)](#).

Please know that we are here to help! The mission of our team is to provide excellent customer service and support to ESA students and their families. The goal of this parent handbook is to provide guidance to help navigate this innovative program. In addition to this handbook, we have other resources that might be helpful, such as the [parent guide](#), which is a great quick reference tool for all families. We also try to send out a weekly email bulletin with the latest news and program tips. Further, please visit the ESA website at [www.azed.gov/esa](http://www.azed.gov/esa) for other tools, up-to-date information and to register to attend one of our regularly scheduled ESA town halls.

Again, welcome to the ESA program!

Sincerely,  
The ESA Team

# Chapter 1: Introduction

The importance of providing a world-class education to all Arizona children cannot be overstated or hold more emphasis in our state today. Historically, Arizona has pioneered breakthrough programs that have grounded themselves in supporting district and charter school initiatives, expanding options, increasing transparency, and delivering a high-quality education. In 2011 and under the direction of the Arizona State Legislature, the ESA Program was developed to continue along the path of innovative education reform.

## What is an Empowerment Scholarship Account?

An ESA is an account administered by ADE and funded by state tax dollars to provide options for the education of qualified students in Arizona. ESA funds do not constitute taxable income to the parent of the qualified student.

The ESA program allows parents of qualified students to utilize public monies to purchase educational services from private schools, education providers, and/or vendors. Eligible students receive 90% of the State aid<sup>1</sup> that would have gone to the student's school district or charter school had the student remained enrolled in the public school system.

Pursuant to A.R.S.§15-2402(B)(1), an ESA Account Holder must use at least a portion of the funds to provide an education in at least the following subjects: reading, grammar, mathematics, social studies, and science.

## Accepting an Empowerment Scholarship Account

By accepting an ESA, the Account Holder enters into a contract with ADE pursuant to A.R.S.§15-2402(B). In exchange for the Account Holder's commitment to the obligations set forth in the ESA contract, ADE creates an ESA for the current school year and agrees to transfer ESA funds on a quarterly basis once the contract is executed by all parties.

Funding varies based on annual legislative state budget allocation and the specific ESA eligibility category. Learn more at [Frequently Asked Questions | Arizona Department of Education \(azed.gov\)](#), under ESA Funding.

The Department reserves the right to terminate an ESA for violations of the contract (*please refer to your contract for all terms and conditions*), applicable policies, rules, or laws. Examples of violations that are likely to result in termination include:

- Enrolling the student in a public district school, charter school, and/or public online schools (including summer public school), without paying the public school
- Accepting any School Tuition Organization (STO) scholarship or tax credit scholarship

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<sup>1</sup> This does not include any federal funding

while on an ESA contract

- Failing to provide debit card transaction receipts by the quarterly deadlines
- Failing to spend a portion of your student’s ESA funds annually in at least the following subjects: reading, grammar, mathematics, social studies, and science.
- Misspending funds or committing fraud

## Handbook Purpose

The purpose of the ESA handbook is to provide information concerning the policies, procedures, and implementation of the ESA program.

## Handbook Updates

Pursuant to A.A.C. R7-2-1503(1), this handbook is reviewed by ADE under the guidance of the SBE. On or before March 1 of each year, ADE provides SBE with a handbook, developed in consultation with parents of children on the ESA program, that includes information relating to policies and processes of ESA. SBE adopts the handbook in May 1st of each year. SBE limits substantive changes to the handbook to once every three years, but policies can and will be added and/or redacted in response to newly enacted legislation, court decisions, rule changes, and/or suggestions for best practices, which may occur more frequently, in which case ESA staff will notify Account Holders of these types of necessary change(s) to the handbook and their effective date(s) via the ESA website and/or through other types of communication.

## How to Stay Updated

We encourage ESA Account Holders to visit ADE’s ESA website, [www.azed.gov/esa](http://www.azed.gov/esa), for the most up-to-date information. ADE will communicate with ESA Account Holders by sending emails from either **ESA.Communications@azed.gov** or **esacommunications@comms.azed.gov**. These are “no-reply” email addresses, designed to send out relevant ESA information and updates in email blasts. ADE recommends ESA families read all communications from the Department and add both email addresses to their contacts to avoid critical email correspondence going to spam or junk folders.

## How to Get Assistance

- The ESA Support Team is available Monday – Friday from 9am-4pm at **602-364-1969**.
- Our team is available any time using HelpDesk at <http://helpdesk.azed.gov/>.
- HelpDesk allows the Department to track and ensure timely responses to all inquiries. For more information about the HelpDesk System, see Chapter 9.
- To escalate a concern, reach out at [Submit an ESA Complaint | Arizona Department of Education \(azed.gov\)](#), these are forwarded to the appropriate ADE leadership team member.

**NOTE:** ESA staff are trained to provide support and offer technical assistance regarding applications, program questions, purchases, and expenses, but staff cannot provide guidance or recommendations to families about schools, vendors, or providers.

## Changes Related to Emails, Addresses and Phone Numbers

ESA Account Holders can update an email address, mailing address, and/or phone number, by logging into the student's ESA account via the ESA portal and making changes as needed. Account Holders must update contact information with the Department and ClassWallet within 30 days of the change.<sup>2</sup>

## Arizona Residency Verification

In accordance with A.R.S.§15-2401(5), “[p]arent means a resident of this state who is the parent or legal guardian of a qualified student.” A.R.S.§15-2401(7) defines a qualified student as a resident of this state. Therefore, a parent or legal guardian may be asked to provide proof of Arizona residency at the time of application AND at any time they are enrolled in the ESA program.

## Secure Information

### *Confidentiality*

Under state law, including A.R.S.§15-1045, which incorporates the protections of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Acts (FERPA), the Department has the obligation to ensure all student “education records” are kept confidential and secure. While certain records collected or maintained by ADE or SBE through the ESA program may not fall within FERPA’s definition of “education records,” it is likely that other records that come into possession of ADE or SBE through the ESA program are “education records” for FERPA purposes.<sup>3</sup> The Department and ESA staff will not release personally identifiable information regarding your child, including financial information or personal details (this includes your contract information) to private schools, providers, vendors, or stakeholders. ClassWallet respects the confidential nature of an Account Holder’s Personal Information and collects only the data required to provide ClassWallet services. ClassWallet will not share or distribute an Account Holder’s Personal Information except as provided in the applicable Terms of Service and the ClassWallet Privacy Policy or as may be required by law.

### *Parent Advisory Council*

The Arizona Department of Education (ADE) developed the Parent Advisory Council (PAC) as just one of the structured means of getting parent feedback on specific ESA program processes and procedures. The PAC is a group of parents who meet at least three times per academic year with ESA staff to share challenges, give feedback and to discuss ways to improve the program for all ESA families. Information on parent participation in the PAC is available on our website at [ESA Parent Advisory Council | Arizona Department of Education \(azed.gov\)](https://www.azed.gov/parent-advisory-council)

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<sup>2</sup> Arizona Administration Code (A.A.C) R2-71502(D)

<sup>3</sup> Information Collected Under A.R.S., Title 15, Chapter 19 and Public Records Requests, Ariz. Attorney General Op. No. I20-010 (Aug. 3, 2020), <https://www.azag.gov/sites/default/files/2020-08/I20-010.pdf>



## *Advocates*

ESA staff also protects ESA students' personally identifiable information by only communicating with ESA Account Holders and Applicants directly. Account Holders and Applicants may have advocates, friends or family members assist in the ESA process/conversations/correspondence regarding the ESA account and/or application, but ADE's expectations are that the Account Holder and/or Applicant takes full responsibility for the ESA, use of funds, and accountability tied to the ESA. While Applicants may use advocates for assistance throughout the ESA application process, ADE's expectation is that an Applicant or Account Holder is always on the call or email when communicating with ADE regarding his/her ESA.

If an Applicant or Account Holder wants to include an advocate in their communications with ADE, then the Applicant or Account Holder must submit a written request to ADE. The Applicant/Account Holder must maintain involvement throughout the ESA process, including asking questions, addressing issues of concern, or otherwise. Consistent involvement in all communication regarding a student's ESA empowers Account Holders and Applicants to get the most from the ESA program.

Advocates may not submit documents to ADE on behalf of the Applicant/Account Holder. The Account Holder/Applicant must submit his/her own documents, but may copy the advocate on an email, or invite them to be on a call.

## *Securing Your Information*

Account Holders should secure their prepaid debit cards and/or ClassWallet account just as they would secure their personal debit cards/bank account. The Department encourages Account Holders to use caution when providing personal information to third parties. This includes, but is not limited to, social security numbers, dates of birth, ClassWallet debit card information, ClassWallet login and password, Application IDs, usernames, and passwords. To further protect against the possibility of fraud or unauthorized release of personally identifiable information, the Department recommends Account Holders refrain from sharing details of contract or award information and never release the custody of the ESA debit card or card number to third parties.

## **Homeschool Affidavits**

A.R.S.§15-2402(B)(5) requires that the parent of a qualified student **not** file an affidavit of intent to homeschool. This means that an ESA contract serves as the "affidavit" or proof that the student is receiving an education as required by Arizona law. If there is already a homeschool affidavit on file, please contact the county superintendent's office for withdrawal instructions.

# Chapter 2: Spending and Program Requirements

The ESA program is intended to allow Account Holders to make the educational choices that best serve their student's needs. Tasked with administering the ESA program by the Arizona State Legislature, the Department is required by law to follow all ESA statutes and rules. These statutes and rules can be found in Appendix A and Appendix B. **Important things to keep in mind:**

1. The ESA program does not have a list of approved schools, vendors, or providers.<sup>4</sup>
2. It is at the Account Holder's discretion to choose the provider and ensure that he/she has the proper credentials prior to receiving a service.
3. It is the Account Holder's responsibility to follow the law and ESA contract and use ESA funds for items allowed under A.R.S.§15-2402(B)(4). Although ADE cannot provide legal advice, this handbook will provide technical assistance to help determine what items are allowed.
4. ESA Account Holders may not hire immediate family members. Immediate family members may include an ESA student's parent, sibling, or any other person with whom student resides. See e.g. A.R.S. §38-502(9).
5. Hiring another ESA student's parent and paying them *directly* with ESA funds is strictly prohibited. However, payment to a student's parent's business or employer for services being provided is allowed.
6. A.R.S.§15-2402(B)(1) requires that a portion of ESA must be used in at least the subjects of reading, grammar, mathematics, social studies, and science.
7. Account Holders cannot use one student's ESA account to cover another student's educational expenses.
8. Services must be paid for and provided within the same contract year (July 1-June 30). An exception can be granted for renewals that pre-pay enrollment fees.
9. Pre-payment of services are allowed only within the same contract year (July 1-June 30). An exception can be granted for renewals that pre-pay enrollment fees.
10. Account Holders cannot use ESA funds retroactively (to pay for quarters in which the

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<sup>4</sup> ClassWallet has vendors listed in their platform

student was not yet eligible for the program).

# **Approved Spending Categories for ALL Students**

## Approved Spending Categories for ALL Students<sup>5</sup>

### Approved Spending Categories listed in A.R.S.§15-2402(B)(4), Description

Tuition or fees at a qualified school and required textbooks at a qualified school. A qualified school is defined as a private school located in Arizona<sup>6</sup> serving PK-12th grades. The school must not discriminate on the basis of race, color, or national origin

Tutoring services. All services must be delivered by a qualified individual. Credentials cannot be expired<sup>7</sup>

Curriculum. A course of study for content areas or grade levels, including any supplemental education materials required or recommended by the curriculum, approved by the Department<sup>8</sup>

Tuition or fees for a nonpublic online learning program, Online learning programs or courses

Fees for nationally standardized norm-referenced achievement tests and grade level testing, Advanced Placement exams and/or other exams related to college or university admissions—such as ACT or SAT— prep exams and grade level standardized achievement testing

Tuition or fees at an eligible postsecondary institution and the purchase of required textbooks, Community college, as defined in A.R.S.§15-1401, a university under the under the AZ Board of Regents, or an accredited in-state private postsecondary institution

Account fees, lost or stolen card fee and expediting service fees only

Services provided by a public school, approved individual classes and extracurricular programs at a public school

Uniforms. Uniforms must be purchased from or through a qualified school or vendor that the school

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<sup>5</sup> While there are many services and items that can be purchased with ESA funds, there may be cases where reimbursement is the only purchase option. Account Holders may also request an MCC code no longer be restricted. Please review this process on page 36.

<sup>6</sup> A qualified student who resides within the boundaries of an Indian reservation in this state may attend a private school in an adjacent state that is within 2 miles of the border of the state in which the student resides.

<sup>7</sup> For tutoring services, a qualified individual means an individual with an approved credential as described later in this Handbook or a facility accredited by a state, regional or national accrediting organization.

<sup>8</sup> Pursuant to A.R.S.§15-2401(2), supplemental materials must be required or recommended by the curriculum. Supplemental material means relevant materials directly related to the course of study for which they are being used to introduce content and instructional strategies or that enhance, compliment, enrich, extend, or support the curriculum. A.A.C. R7-2-1501(14). Note: Although an Account Holder may have an item that qualifies as a supplemental material, the item must still be required or recommended by a curriculum pursuant to statute.

recommends or requires

## **Tuition or Fees and Required Textbooks at a Qualified Private School**

As an approved expense, tuition may be paid for the ESA student named on the ESA contract.

Account Holders must submit a complete (detailed) invoice from the school, which they will submit with their ClassWallet payment request. See A.A.C. R7-2-1508(C) and Chapters 3 and 4 for more information. The invoice must include ALL of the following:

- Student's name
- Name of the private school
- Transaction date
- Tuition or type of fees charged
- Total amount paid

Failure to submit a complete paid invoice will result in the expense being rejected. For all invoices, any amount requested for payment that is over the amount on the invoice may be rejected.

### **Approved Private School Fees**

The following is a list of approved fees that may be charged by a private school:

- Application fees
- Computer lab fees (pursuant to A.R.S. §15-2402(6)(a) this fee cannot include the purchase of a personal computer, laptop, or tablet, etc.)
- Enrollment fees
- Facility Fees
- Lab fees (Science labs, Math labs, etc.)
- Musical instrument fees
- Payment processing fees
- Registration fees
- Required book or textbook fees
- Supply fee (pursuant to A.R.S. §15-2402(6)(c) this cannot include consumable items such as pens, paper, and markers)
- Tutoring fees
- Uniform fees

**NOTE:** Many schools charge fees for items that by law, cannot be approved (e.g., transportation, computer hardware, technological devices, consumable supplies, or materials, etc.). As a result, fees should be itemized. Please review **Disallowed Spending Categories**, for additional information.

## Tutoring or Teaching Services

Tutoring or teaching services must be provided by a qualified individual with one of the approved credentials listed below or a facility that is accredited by a state, regional, or national accrediting organization. Virtual tutoring is allowed when provided by a qualified individual or facility that is accredited by a state, regional, or national accrediting organization. Before paying for tutoring services from a provider, please note:

- Hiring immediate family members is prohibited. ESA funds cannot be used to hire immediate family members of the ESA student to provide approved tutoring services. Immediate family members may include an ESA parent, sibling or any other person with whom the ESA student resides. See e.g. A.R.S. §38-502(9).
- Account Holders must submit the tutor's credentials<sup>9</sup> when submitting an expense through the ESA portal.
- ESA will only accept a copy of the actual valid credential. Copies of the credential can be in the form of a photograph, scan, print to PDF, etc., but must be the actual valid credential, and cannot simply be a screenshot of an online credential. For example, a screenshot of the tutor/teacher's certification status from the Online Arizona Certification Information System (OACIS) will not be accepted.<sup>10</sup>
- Expired credentials will not be accepted. All credentials must be up to date prior to submission to avoid a rejected or disallowed item.

## Approved Tutor/Teacher Credentials for Core Subjects<sup>11</sup>

### NOTES:

- Core subjects are grammar, mathematics, science, social studies, and reading
- ESA only requires ONE of the approved credentials listed, not all that may be listed

Individual Tutor/Teacher must have a Bachelor's degree or higher with copy of degree or transcripts (official or unofficial) or State Teaching Certificate or State Substitute Certificate

Tutoring/Teaching Facility must have Accreditation by a state, regional, or national accrediting organization

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<sup>9</sup> ESA reserves the right to ask Account Holders to resubmit credentials. Altering or manipulating any credential may result in termination and/or referral to the SBE, who can refer cases of fraud or misuse of funds to the Attorney General's Office.

<sup>10</sup> A screenshot, or screen capture, or screen grab, is a digital image that shows the contents of a computer display.

<sup>11</sup> Core subjects are those required by A.R.S. §15-2402(B)(1), and include grammar, mathematics, science, social studies, and reading.

## Approved Tutor/Teacher Credentials for Specific Subjects

The following is a list of specific subjects each of which require a specific credential.<sup>12</sup>

- Art
  - Associate degree or higher
  - Credential in the area of instruction (membership cards will not be accepted)
  - State Teaching Certificate in Art
  
- Dance
  - Associate degree or higher
  - Credential in the area of instruction (membership cards will not be accepted)
  - Dance Educators of America Certificate
  - Dance Master of America Certificate
  - National Association of School of Dance Certificate
  - State Teaching Certificate with Dance endorsement
  
- Drama
  - Associate degree or higher
  - Credential in the area of instruction (membership cards will not be accepted)
  - State Teaching Certificate in Drama
  
- Driver's Education
  - Teaching Certificate with Driver's Ed endorsement
  - Three semester hour course taken from an accredited institution (submit certificate of completion)
  - 45 hours of state-approved classes in each of the following: safety education, driver

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<sup>12</sup> This is not an exhaustive list; there are many state, regional, and national credentials that may be accepted by ESA.

and highway safety education, and driver's education laboratory experience (submit official transcript or certificate with 45 hours of state-approved classes in each of the classes listed)

- Foreign Language
  - Associate degree or higher
  - Credential in the area of instruction (membership cards will not be accepted)
  - State Teaching Certificate in a Foreign Language
  
- Gymnastics
  - Associate degree or higher
  - Certified Personal Trainer
  - Sports Medicine Endorsement/Certificate
  - State Teaching Certificate with P.E. endorsement
  - USA Gymnastics or related credential
  
- Martial Arts
  - Associate degree or higher
  - Certified Personal Trainer
  - Sports Medicine Endorsement/Certificate
  - State Teaching Certificate with P.E. endorsement
  - United States Martial Arts Association (USMA) or related credential (membership cards will not be accepted)
  
- Music
  - Associate degree or higher
  - Credential in the area of instruction (membership cards will not be accepted)
  - State Teaching Certificate in Music



- Physical Education
  - Associate degree or higher
  - Certified Personal Trainer, AIA Training Certificate or NFHC Coaching Certificate w/ DPS Fingerprint Clearance Card
  - State Teaching Certificate with P.E. endorsement
  - Sports Medicine Endorsement/Certificate
  
- Swimming
  - American Red Cross Certificate for Lifeguards
  - American Red Cross Certificate for Swimming and Water Training
  - SWIM USA Certificate
  - Water Safety Instruction (WSI) Certificate
  
- Yoga
  - Associate degree or higher
  - Certified Personal Trainer
  - Credential in the area of instruction (membership cards will not be accepted)
  - Registered Yoga Teacher (RYT) credential
  - Sports Medicine Endorsement/Certificate
  - State Teaching Certificate with P.E. endorsement

**NOTES:**

- Degrees or transcripts issued by a foreign educational institution must be evaluated for U.S degree equivalence by a vendor qualified to make such evaluations.
- Make sure to obtain a complete invoice from the school, tutor, facility, or league to avoid a payment delay.

## Extracurricular Activities, Physical Education & Educational Camps

**Extracurricular activities** such as chess, horseback riding lessons, home economics, cooking classes, sewing, personal finance, and woodworking classes may be approved if credentials are provided for the individual or facility providing the service.

Other types of approved activities include those that are **physical education** related, including access to facilities that offer exercise related activities, gyms (including memberships), and sports (i.e., baseball, football, soccer, basketball, track) that are offered through a local league. Other physical education related activities may be approved by the Department if credentials are provided for the league, organization, or individual providing the service.

- **Sports and educational camps** provided by a credentialed individual or facility are approved.
- **Tickets** for zoos, science or art centers, museums, plays, ballet, orchestra, musicals, etc., are allowed for the individual ESA student; family memberships or tickets for others are not allowed.
- **Gym or physical education facility memberships** are allowed for the individual ESA student; family memberships are not allowed.
- **Uniforms** for these activities cannot be purchased with ESA funds, unless specifically required by the class or program.

**NOTE:** Overnight educational camps and out-of-state camps are *not* approved and cannot be paid for with ESA funds.

## Educational Materials

This is a list of approved educational materials which **do not** require curriculum. This list is not exhaustive, see our website that is updated regularly at [ESA Allowable Items | Arizona Department of Education \(azed.gov\)](https://www.azed.gov/ESA-allowable-items)

- Atlases
- Board games
- Books (including audio/digital)
- Calculators (e.g., standard, graphing, scientific, etc.)
- Coloring books
- Curriculum
- Dictionaries
- Educational DVDs and CD
- Educational flash cards
- Educational workbooks
- Globes
- Magazines
- Manipulatives: items that help with counting, time, measurement, shapes, addition, etc. (e.g., math cubes, Legos, blocks, shapes, letters, etc.)
- Maps
- Microscopes and slides

- Periodic tables
- Planners
- Prompt cue cards for behavioral/educational support
- Puzzles
- Textbooks (including audio/digital/USB)
- Timers

Questions about making a purchase? Reach out to our team anytime at <http://helpdesk.azed.gov/>

## Supplemental Materials

Arizona Revised Statute (A.R.S.) 15-2002(2) and Arizona Administrative Code (A.A.C.) R7-2-1501(3) both define curriculum as a “course of study for content areas or grade levels, including any supplemental material required or recommended by the curriculum, approved by the department.”

In 2020, the State Board of Education, working in collaboration with the Arizona Department of Education and stakeholders, defined *Supplemental Materials* as “relevant materials directly related to the course of study for which they are being used that introduce content and instructional strategies or that enhance, complement, enrich, extend or support the curriculum.” See A.A.C. R7-2-1501(14).

Examples of supplemental materials (which, by statute require a curriculum) include, but are not limited to:

- Art supplies (required by a class or course of study)
- Dolls
- Educational area rugs
- Gardens
- Gym equipment
- Instruments
- Kitchen items/Home Economics (cannot be commercial or full size)
- Non-educational CDs or DVDs
- Stickers
- Supplies (pursuant to A.R.S.§15-2402(6)(c) this cannot include consumables, such as paper, pens, or markers)
- Telescope
- Toys
- Workshops

To receive approval for supplemental materials, documentation must be provided that *clearly demonstrates* that the **item is recommended or required by a curriculum or course of study, though the specific words “recommended” or “required” need not be present.**

This **documentation** can include, but is not limited to:

- Activity and Study Guides
- Class or Course of Study (please provide enrollment information)
- Class Learning Objectives
- Learning Guides
- Lesson Plans
- Teacher Guides/Manuals

When providing documentation, *please highlight, or otherwise indicate with page numbers, screenshots, or any other method that specifies exactly where the item is:*

- *required or recommended, or*
- *other language that indicates or conveys that the item is needed or necessary to complete the curriculum.*

Keep in mind, how-to guides, research articles, product instructions and manuals provided by a product manufacturer, etc., may not always be considered curriculum.

## Other Items

- Subscriptions for educational kits, boxes, programs, etc. may be purchased for one (1) year from the date of purchase only. Please note that each subscription, educational kit or box must include a curriculum.
  - Kits offering lifetime access are not necessarily prohibited, so long as the lifetime membership grants access to the content purchased within the contract year and does not provide new content beyond the term of the contract year within which the subscription/lifetime access was purchased.
- Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) and Science, Technology, Engineering, Art and Mathematics (STEAM) curriculum are approved, this includes items related to coding and robotics. However, any supplemental materials that include computer hardware and/or technological devices are not allowed in accordance with A.R.S. §15-2402(B)(6)(a).

## Tuition or Fees for a Private Online Learning Program

Some students learn better in the comfort of their home and at their own pace. ESA approves tuition or fees and required textbooks for private online schools or online learning programs and/or courses.

- ESA funds cannot be used to pay for family memberships or for multiple students, only an individual student membership for the qualified ESA recipient.
- ESA funds can be used for online programs or online subscriptions for the contract year.

**Helpful Hint:** When paying for an online program, the Account Holder can make the ESA recipient student the Account Holder and set the billing to either the parent's name OR the parent and student's names.

- Name: Billy Doe (student) / Billing name: John Doe (parent)
- Billing name: John Doe - for Billy Doe

If there are multiple students on the ESA program in the same household, each student's account must be used to purchase their own individual access to online learning program(s).

## Services Provided by a Public School

ESA funds may be used to pay for individual classes and/or extracurricular programs provided by a public school, such as drama club, band, cheerleading, sports, art classes, music classes, speech and debate,

CTEDs, etc. Uniforms for these activities cannot be purchased with ESA funds unless specifically required by the class or program.

Please keep in mind that public schools have discretion on whether to accept ESA recipients for such activities, even if ESA funds are being used to pay for the classes or extracurricular activities.

If a public school accepts an ESA student, please make sure that the following is done to avoid account suspension:

- Make sure the student is not enrolled in the school as “tuition payer code 1” (public schools understand this terminology). Enrolling in a public school violates the ESA statute and contract. Improper enrollment may result in termination from the ESA program and require a repayment of ESA funds.
- Make sure that the public school provides an itemized and complete paid invoice for all activities and/or classes.

For any questions about paying for services at the public school, please contact the school or district office.

### **Fees for Achievement Tests, Placement Tests, and College Entry Exams**

Pursuant to A.R.S.§15-2402(4)(g), Account Holders can utilize ESA funds to pay for their student to participate in nationally standardized norm-referenced achievement tests. These tests can help determine the student’s ability to show mastery of appropriate grade level material. Funds can also be used for advanced placement exams, or any exams related to college or university admission. Prep courses for these exams are also allowed.

### **Tuition or Fees and Required Textbooks at an Eligible Postsecondary School**

In accordance with A.R.S.§15-2401(4), ESA funds can also be used for an eligible post-secondary institution such as:

- a. An Arizona community college, as defined in A.R.S.§15-1401
- b. A state university that is under the jurisdiction of the AZ Board of Regents
- c. An accredited in-state private university

ESA funds may be used for textbooks required by the university or college classes, but cannot be used for room and board, meals, meal plans, food, transportation, etc.

### ***Dual Enrollment***

ESA funds may also be used to pay for dual enrollment at a university or college.

The term dual enrollment refers to students being enrolled in two distinct academic programs or educational institutions at the same time.

The term is most prevalently used in reference to high school students taking college courses while

they are still enrolled in a secondary school (i.e., a dual enrollment student), or for programs that allow high school students to take college-level courses (i.e., a dual enrollment program). For this reason, the term early college is a common synonym for dual enrollment. As a reminder, if a student has not graduated high school or obtained a GED, funds must still be spent on K-12 expenses, even if participating in dual enrollment courses.

# **Approved Spending Categories for Students with a Disability**

## Eligible Students

For students who qualify for the ESA program as a child with a disability through a special education evaluation, individualized education program (IEP) or 504 Plan from an Arizona public school district or charter school, the qualified student is eligible for additional services, therapies, paraprofessional services, associated goods, assistive technology, and tuition for vocational and life skills as approved by the Department.

Learn more about disability categories at <https://www.azed.gov/specialeducation/disability-categories/>. Account Holders with a student who qualified for the ESA program under a section other than “child with a disability,” but who believe their student may have a disability, should seek an evaluation from their home district. If a new evaluation from an Arizona public school district is obtained, the Account Holder should then contact ESA to update their student’s category of eligibility.

## Associated Goods and Assistive Technology

In accordance with A.R.S. §15-2402(B)(4)(c)(iv), a qualified student with a disability who has an Arizona MET, IEP, or 504 plan on file may be able to use ESA funds to purchase associated goods and services, including sensory items, when applicable, along with educational and psychological evaluations, assistive technology rentals, and braille translated goods and services approved by the Department. A.A.C. R2-7-1505 states that associated goods may include computer hardware or technological devices that assist in accessing educational materials or services that are associated with the qualified student’s needs.

Account Holders who are seeking to use ESA funds for an associated good, assistive technology or service must provide the Department with **ONE** of the following:

- Documentation of the student being enrolled in a special education course of study, service, or other educational need with which the good or service *is associated with*, **OR**
- Provide the most current IEP/MET/504 plan or evaluation which indicates the need for the good or service, **OR**
- Provide a letter from a qualified special education service provider indicating the need for the good or service.

**NOTE:** While this is not intended to be an exhaustive list, qualified service providers include, but are not limited to: special education teachers, Physical Therapists, Occupational Therapists, etc.; examples of other qualified special education service providers can be found at <https://bit.ly/3hq242v>

Failure to meet the above requirements under A.A.C. R7-2-1505(B)(4) when attempting use ESA funds to purchase computer hardware or technological devices will result in a disallowed purchase. If the purchase of an “associated good or service” has been disallowed due to the insufficient provision of documentation under A.A.C. R7-2-1505(B)(4), as Account Holder may resubmit the purchase with sufficient documentation to have it approved. When submitting any documentation, please highlight, mark the area(s), or use any other method that indicates that the requested items are associated with or needed for the educational need(s) of the student.



Please make all requests for pre-approvals or approvals on sensory items, associated goods or assistive technology using HelpDesk at <http://helpdesk.azed.gov/>. Due to the large volume of requests, please allow the team at least **3-5** business days to review, research, and respond to inquiries.

## **Educational Therapies and Services**

In accordance with A.R.S.§15-2402(B)(4)(c)(i), both in person and virtual educational therapies from a *licensed or accredited* practitioner or provider are approved ESA expenses. However, to receive approval, the individual providing the therapy or therapeutic service must provide the Account Holder with a copy of their valid license or accreditation.

No screenshots from the accrediting organization will be accepted.

### **The copy must be:**

- Legible
- Not expired
- Issued by an accredited board (must be provided by the therapist/provider, screenshots will not be accepted)

## List of Approved Therapies

**NOTE:** This is not an exhaustive list, for questions about therapies that are not listed, please contact our team at <http://helpdesk.azed.gov/>.

### Therapy, Accreditation

- Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) and Verbal Behavior Analysis, Cognitive Behavioral Therapy and Play Therapy
  - BCBA (Board Certified Behavioral Analyst), BCBA-D (Board Certified Behavioral Analyst – Doctorate), BCaBA (Board Certified Assistant Behavioral Analyst), Licensed Psychologist or Counselor
- Aquatic Therapy
  - Aquatic Physical Therapy license, Occupational Therapy license, or Physical Therapy license
- Art Therapy
  - American Art Therapy Association (AATA), Occupational Therapy license, or Physical Therapy license
- Equine Therapy; Hippotherapy; Therapeutic Riding
  - Certified Horsemanship Association, Certified Therapy Horse Association (CTHA), Equine Therapy Association (ETA), Equine Assisted Growth and Learning Association (EA-GALA), National Association of Certified Professionals of Equine (NACPET), North American Handicap Riding Association (NAHRA) Occupational Therapy license or OT assistant license, Physical Therapy license or PT assistant license, Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship International (PATH), Recreational Therapy Certificate
- Hand Therapy
  - Occupational Therapy license or related therapy credential, Physical Therapy license; PT assistant; OT assistant
- Music Therapy
  - American Music Therapy Association (AMTA), Certification Board for Music Therapists (CBMT)
- Occupational Therapy (OT)

- Occupational Therapy license (OT assistants are approved)
- Orientation and Mobility Specialist (COMS)
  - ACVREP Certified Orientation and Mobility Specialist
- Physical Therapy (PT)
  - Physical Therapy license (PT assistants are approved)
- Recreational Therapy
  - American Therapeutic Recreation Association (ATRA), National Council for Therapeutic Recreation Certification(NCTRC), Recreational Therapy License
- Relationship Development Intervention (RDI) Therapy
  - BCBA (Board Certified Behavioral Analyst or Doctorate), BCaBA (Board Certified Assistant Behavioral Analyst), Licensed Psychologist and counselor, RDI certificate, Registered Behavior Technician (RBT)
- Social Group Therapy
  - Certification in Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy (CBT)Licensed counselorPsychologist license, school counselor or special education teacher (certified), Social Work Counselor Certificate, Speech therapy or Occupational therapy license
- Speech Therapy
  - Speech Language Pathologist Therapy license (SLP Assistants are approved)
- Vision Therapy
  - Optometrist (pediatric, behavioral, or developmental)

**NOTES:**

- Fees for late, cancelled, or missed appointments are disallowed
- Pursuant to A.R.S.§15-2402(B)(4)(c) students who are not identified as a student with a disability are not authorized to use ESA funds for therapies. A student must have an evaluation MET, IEP, or 504 plan issued by an Arizona public school on file with ESA prior to paying for these services with ESA funds.
- Account Holders may request approval to use a provider whose credential is not listed through the HelpDesk at <http://helpdesk.azed.gov/>.
- Due to the large volume of requests, please allow the team at least **3-5** business days to review,

research, and respond to inquiries.

## Medical Insurance

Pursuant to A.R.S. §15-2402(B)(4)(c)(i), ESA funding can be utilized along with private medical insurance to pay for educational therapies for qualified students with a disability. Documentation must include a statement or invoice indicating the amount not covered by insurance.

## Paraprofessionals or Educational Aides

Paraprofessionals and aides are an approved expense for students with disabilities. Paraprofessionals are not the same as tutors or teachers; these individuals are there to assist the tutor, teacher, or parent with the education of the student. Credential requirements are below:

### Approved Paraprofessional or Educational Aide Credentials

#### Credential

Associate degree or higher, Copy of degree or complete and full transcripts must be submitted

60 or more college credit hours from an accredited school, Copy of complete and full transcripts must be submitted

Pass 1 of the 3 paraprofessional tests, *Official scores must be submitted; ESA will not accept proof of passing or unofficial scores*, ACT Workkeys, ParaEducator, Praxis ParaPro

## Educational and Psychological Evaluations

When a student is struggling in their educational setting, parents are motivated to understand what underlying factors are contributing to the difficulty that may be limiting their child's progress. A psycho-educational evaluation or assessment is the process through which a psychologist or similar licensed professional observes and evaluates students.

In accordance with A.R.S. §15-2402(B)(4)(c)(iv), students with a disability identified by the public school through a special education multidisciplinary evaluation team (MET) or IEP may use ESA funds to obtain a private psycho-educational evaluation. Documentation must be on file with ESA.

**NOTE:** The Department cannot accept private evaluations or private school evaluations for the purpose of updating a child's disability category or funding. See "Change in Disability Category" in Chapter 2 to learn how to update a student's disability category.

## Vocational and Life Skills Education for ESA Students with a Disability

Vocational education programs prepare students to work in numerous trade jobs or crafts. Vocational education can also be referred to as "career education" or "technical education" provided by a vocational/trade school or program. A life skills education program is the building block that allows

students to apply knowledge they acquire to real problems and situations. It is a form of education that encourages students to effectively transition into adulthood by helping students to develop sound judgment and good habits for long-term stability, wellness, and success. Combined, both vocational and life skills education programs are designed to help a student develop skills or interest in technical, trade, or craft-like careers while learning necessary skills such as self-reflection, critical thinking, problem solving, and interpersonal skills. This allows a student to live and work independently.

Pursuant to A.R.S.§15-2402(B)(4)(c)(iii), qualified students with a disability are able to utilize ESA funds for vocational and life skills education, approved by the Department.

ESA funds can be spent on tuition at vocational, trade schools or programs such as but not limited to:

- Career and Technical Education Districts (CTEDs)
- Community colleges Joint Technical Education Districts
- Joint Technical Education Districts (JTEDs)
- Trade schools
- Vocational schools

## **Additional Information for Parent of a Student with a Disability**

It is important to understand that the decision to participate in the ESA program means that a child does not have the same protections under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) (the federal law governing Special Education) as a publicly enrolled student with a disability. Nevertheless, children with disabilities who attend private schools through the ESA program may still receive certain services from their district of residency, as described below.

### *Child Find*

In Arizona, public schools are responsible for identifying all children with disabilities within their geographic boundaries,<sup>13</sup> including children with disabilities who are attending private schools and those who are homeschooled. A.A.C. R7-2-401(D)(1). This is known as “Child Find.” 20 U.S.C.§1412(a)(3); 34 C.F.R.§300.111(a).

When an Account Holder enters into a contract with ADE, they agree to release the school district or charter school from all obligations to educate the ESA student. However, under the IDEA a public school retains its responsibility to evaluate a student upon receiving a written request from the student’s parent or guardian.

ESA does not require a new special education evaluation if one is already on file. If the parent or guardian of an ESA student believes their child needs to be evaluated, they may refer to the table

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<sup>13</sup> Charter schools are responsible for child identification activities for students enrolled in the charter school. A.A.C. 47-2-401(D)(4)(a). Charter schools are not, however, responsible for outreach under the Child Find regulations because they have no specific geographic boundaries.

below to determine which public school is responsible for performing the evaluation. ESA students without a disability cannot use ESA funds to pay for a private special education evaluation. ESA students who qualified for the ESA program as a student with a disability under A.R.S. §15-2401(7)(a)(i)-(iii), may use ESA funds to pay for a private special education evaluation. See A.R.S. §15-2402(B)(4)(c)(iv).

### **Child's Current Placement, Responsible Public School**

Homeschooled Student(s), The school district in which the parent resides. A.A.C. R7-2-401(D)(4)(b); A.R.S. §15-763(C).

Non-Profit Private School, The school district in which the private school is located. A.A.C. R7-2-401(D)(4)(b).

For-Profit Private School, The school district in which the parent resides. Letter to Chapman, 49 IDELR 163 (OSEP 2007).

### *Proportionate Shares & Equitable Services*

Children with disabilities who attend private schools (with or without an ESA) are considered parentally placed private school children with disabilities. While these students do not have an "individual right to receive some or all of the special education and related services that the child would receive if enrolled in a public school,"<sup>14</sup> they might still be entitled to receive some special education and related services provided by the school district under the IDEA's proportionate share provisions.<sup>15</sup>

Accordingly, ESA students with disabilities who attend non-profit private schools or who are homeschooled may be eligible for some services through their school district.<sup>16</sup> For information on these services, please [visit the ESS website](#). Parents may choose not to participate in proportionate share services offered from a local LEA through the Child Find process but should be aware that this may be an option. Accepting or rejecting this process has no bearing on your ESA contract or eligibility.

### *Change in Disability Category*

A student's ESA contract is renewed on an annual basis, notwithstanding any changes to their evaluation. Therefore, if the student has a special education evaluation currently on file with the ESA program, ADE will not require a new evaluation to remain in the program.

**If an Account Holder wishes to have their student re-evaluated to update their current educational needs, they must make a written request to the appropriate public school or district.**

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<sup>14</sup> 34 C.F.R. § 300.137(a)

<sup>15</sup> See 34 C.F.R. §§ 300.130 through 300.144.

<sup>16</sup> Federal law does not allow public school districts and charter schools to consider parentally placed private school children with disabilities who attend private schools through a state-funded voucher or scholarship program (such as Arizona's ESA program) differently from other parentally placed private school children with disabilities for the purpose of providing equitable services. 34 C.F.R. § 300.132(a).

By law, the Department cannot accept private evaluations or private school evaluations for the purpose of updating a student's disability category and/or funding.

Some important things to keep in mind:

- a. If a student attends a non-profit private school, the public-school district in which the private school is located is responsible for the evaluation process.
- b. If a student attends a for-profit private school or is homeschooled, the public school district in which the student resides is responsible for the evaluation.
- c. For any questions about who may be responsible for the evaluation of a student, please contact Exceptional Student Services (ESS) at 602-542-4013.

Once an updated evaluation has been obtained for an ESA student:

- Please submit a HelpDesk ticket at <http://helpdesk.azed.gov/> along with the new evaluation, requesting an update of the account or application.
- When the request is processed, a new contract is issued. Please be aware, not all reevaluations will increase the award amount. In some cases, based on the new eligibility category, the amount may be reduced.
- Please sign the new contract immediately, notifying ESA staff after signing to avoid funding delays.

As a reminder, only children who are identified as a child with a disability by a public school through an evaluation (or IEP) are entitled to spend ESA funds on educational therapies, paraprofessional services, tuition for vocational and life skills education, educational and psychological evaluations, assistive technology rentals, braille translation, or associated goods. *See the "Associated Goods & Assistive Technology" section for more information.*

### *Preschool Severe Delay (P-SD)<sup>17</sup> Funding*

Students with a disability in the ESA program under the specific disability category of **Preschool Severe Delay (P-SD)** need to have a re-evaluation done by an Arizona public school or district when they enter their Kindergarten year (age 5 on or before September 1), or their account will be set to 'base level funding'.

A re-evaluation is not a requirement to continue with ESA, but is needed for any changes in funding, as the P-SD category cannot move with a student into kindergarten. Please watch for any correspondence regarding this situation. Account Holders can also contact the ESA Support Line at 602-364-1969 or the HelpDesk at <http://helpdesk.azed.gov/> to learn if a specific account will be affected.

### *Developmental Delay (DD) Funding*

Students with a disability in the ESA program under the specific disability category **Developmental**

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<sup>17</sup> See A.R.S. §15-2401(7)(a)(ii) and A.R.S. §15-761(24)

**Delay (DD)** need to have a re-evaluation done by an Arizona public school or district prior to turning age 10, or their account will be set to 'base-level funding'. Pursuant to A.R.S.§15-2401(7)(a)(ii) and A.R.S.§15-761(3), this category is only for students between the ages of 3-9.

A re-evaluation is not a requirement to continue with ESA, however the account will be set to 'base level funding'. The ESA team will contact Account Holders when their student is approaching the school year that they will be turning 10. Account Holders can also contact the ESA Support Line at 602-364-1969 or the HelpDesk at <http://helpdesk.azed.gov/> to learn if a specific account will be affected.

### *Students with a Disability (After 12<sup>th</sup> grade)*

Pursuant to A.R.S.§15-2402(4)(n), a student with a disability may be entitled to an education until the age of 22 if the student is not ready to graduate high school or obtain their GED.

When a student is identified as being a student with a disability with ESA, and in the spring of their 12<sup>th</sup> grade cohort year, ESA will notify the Account Holder that action is required.

Upon receipt of this notification, an Account Holder will be prompted to log into the ESA Applicant Portal, select the eligible student, and make the following selection:

- **NO:** By selecting this option, I attest that my child is not scheduled to graduate high school or obtain a GED by the end of this school year. I understand that a renewal contract will still need to be signed to continue to receive any additional support.
- **YES:** By selecting this option, I attest that my child is expected to graduate high school or obtain a GED by the end of this school year. I understand that an exited contract will still need to be signed to continue to access any remaining funds for allowable expenses.

By making this selection, you will verify that you have read and understand the following:

- *You understand that providing false information is considered failure to comply with the terms of the contract or applicable laws and that your account is subject to suspension/termination. See A.R.S.§15-2403(C)*
- *You understand that when your child does graduate from high school or obtains a GED, you must notify ESA immediately.*
- *If changes need to be made, you will need to contact ESA immediately for assistance or submit a HelpDesk ticket at <http://helpdesk.azed.gov/>*

An Account Holder can attest that their student is not yet ready to graduate or obtain their GED until the year the student turns 22, as that will be their final funded year with ESA.

### **NOTE:**

An Account Holder who attests that their student continues to need a K-12 education, must provide their student a K-12 education. An Account Holder found to be providing only a post-secondary education may have their student's account suspended and repayment may be required.



# Disallowed Spending Categories

## Disallowed Spending Categories

In accordance with A.R.S. §15-2402(B)(6), the following categories are prohibited, however, please note that some of the items below **may be** approved as *Associated Goods or Assistive Technology* for qualified students with a disability. See section, *Approved Spending Categories for Students with a Disability* for more information.

This list is **not exhaustive**; the Department reserves the right under statute to not approve items not listed.

### Disallowed Spending Categories, Description

Consumable educational supplies, Paper, pens, and markers

Computer hardware & other technological devices, Laptops, iPads or other tablets, desktop computers, iPods or other electronic music players, keyboard, mouse, USB drives, computer chips, memory hardware, hard drives, input and output devices, communication devices, secondary storage, expansion cards, mother-boards, power supply units, DVD players, printers, Wi-Fi, internet, etc.

Transportation of the pupil, Airfare, reimbursement for gasoline or mileage, bus passes, taxis, ride share, transportation provided by the school, etc.

**NOTE:** The following are not approved for purchase with ESA funds, however, **some** of the items below may be approved as *Associated Goods or Assistive Technology* for qualified students with a disability:

- After-school care fees
- Amazon Prime (or similar fees)
- Ammunition
- Animals (live and including larvae, invertebrates, etc.)
- Assembly or installation fees
- Automobiles
- Bedding
- Before-school care fees
- Bicycles
- Boarding schools
- Breakfast fees
- Cancellation fees
- Cabinets/carts
- Church or school support fees
- Climbing equipment
- Competition fees
- Consultation fees
- Daycare fees
- Electronics
- Event fees
- Fees associated with a rental item
- Fixed assets
- Fixtures
- Food
- Fundraising fees (Scrip, etc.)
- Furniture
- Gasoline/oil
- Gemstones (precious and semi-precious)
- Graduation fees
- Home improvement
- Hotels/lodging
- Kitchen Appliances such as freezers or refrigerators (commercial or full size)
- Land/real property
- Landscaping materials (e.g., rocks, trees, shrubs, grass, turf, curbing, etc.)
- Late payment fees

- Late pick-up fees
- Lunch fees
- Medications
- Motorcycles
- Obligation fees
- Out-of-state education or therapy camps (summer included)
- Parent training/courses
- Play equipment
- Playgrounds
- Pool passes
- Printing/binding (copy services)
- Recital fees
- Recreational centers or event tickets
- Rehabilitation/treatment facilities
- Returned payment fees
- Room organizers
- Shade structures
- Sports camps
- Swimming pools and saunas
- Technology fees (for the purchase of tablets, USB drives, laptops, desktops, etc.)
- Theme Park tickets/passes
- Travel
- Tutor prepping/planning
- Weapons
- Yearbook fees
- Vitamins and supplements

ADE will not approve the purchase of the following items unless they are required as part of a school uniform, which includes, but is not limited to the following:

- Accessories
- Belts
- Hair accessories
- Lanyards
- Shoes
- Socks
- Spirit or school team clothing
- Tights and hosiery

ADE will not approve the purchase of the following items *unless* they are required as part of a **course of study**, which includes, but is not limited to the following:

- Dance attire/costumes
- Gymnastics attire/costumes
- Sports uniforms and related equipment
- Swimsuits
- Yoga attire

### **Non-Approved Therapies and Services**

- Acupuncture
- Blood work (labs)
- Chiropractors
- Craniosacral Therapy
- Dental exams or services
- Eye exams
- Health exams
- Hyperbaric Oxygen Therapy

- Massage Therapy
- Medical Equipment/Services

- Nutritionists
- Physical exams

# **ClassWallet Virtual Accounts**

# Chapter 3: ClassWallet Virtual Accounts

## About ClassWallet

ClassWallet is a third-party vendor that administers ESA funds in a virtual account. Once a student is accepted into the ESA program, funds awarded are entrusted to the Account Holder in a virtual account administered by ClassWallet.

ClassWallet's platform is designed to streamline and automate the spending and tracking of ESA funds and allows ESA Account Holders to manage payments to schools, providers, and vendors.

## Establishing a ClassWallet Account

Once a student's ESA contract is signed, it takes approximately 3 weeks to set up and fund the ClassWallet account.<sup>18</sup> Once the account is set up, ESA will request quarterly funds from the Treasurer's Office. Upon approval by the Treasurer's Office, the treasury will release the funds to ClassWallet for disbursement.

ClassWallet will send an email to ESA families letting them know funds are available.

## Accessing a ClassWallet Account

Account Holders can access their student's ClassWallet account via the ESA Applicant Portal. Once logged in, click the blue button ***Go To ClassWallet Account***. The link will take users directly to ClassWallet.

If an Account Holder has multiple students within the ClassWallet platform, they can log in once and toggle between children's ClassWallet accounts using the dropdown menu on the top right of the homepage.

Information on navigating the platform, as well as helpful tutorials is available from ClassWallet at [Home \(force.com\)](https://www.force.com).

## Contacting ClassWallet

ClassWallet can be reached by phone at 1-877-969-5536 Monday through Friday from 8am to 8pm EST and Saturday from 10am to 4pm EST or via email anytime at [help@classwallet.com](mailto:help@classwallet.com).

## Four Ways to Use Your ESA Funds in ClassWallet

ClassWallet offers four different ways to make purchases or payments on their platform: Marketplace, Pay Vendor, Debit Cards, and Reimbursement.

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<sup>18</sup>Accounts may take a bit longer during a holiday or unforeseen circumstance such as a pandemic, natural disaster, etc.

Please visit ClassWallet at [Home \(force.com\)](https://force.com) for more information on each purchase option. ClassWallet vendors are listed in the Marketplace and Pay Vendor at [ClassWallet | Shop](#) and [ClassWallet | Vendor Pay](#).

**Marketplace:** Account Holders can place orders with various online vendors within the ClassWallet Marketplace. Upon approval, all orders are shipped directly to the address on record.

**Pay Vendor:** If a student's private school and/or providers are registered in ClassWallet, they are in the Pay Vendor section on the ClassWallet homepage. Using Pay Vendor, payments can be made directly to private schools, providers, and vendors. A complete invoice must be uploaded (*see page 45*) for Pay Vendor transactions. An Account Holder is not required to provide any credentials for the providers in Pay Vendor as they are already registered in ClassWallet.

**Debit Card:** ClassWallet offers a prepaid debit card to provide additional flexibility.

For each transaction, credentials (if paying a provider) and a complete invoice will need to be uploaded in the ClassWallet platform. Invoices/receipts and any associated credentials can be uploaded after each purchase, **and all transactions must have a corresponding invoice/receipt uploaded in the quarter that the transaction occurred.**

Account Holders must upload a corresponding receipt after every **20** transactions to avoid ClassWallet debit card deactivation and to continue making purchases with the debit card.

**Remember, a credential must be submitted for debit card transactions, even if the provider is a vendor in the ClassWallet platform.** When paying through the Marketplace or Pay Vendor, credentials are not required, as the provider or vendor submitted the required credential upon registration. **See pages 41-43 for additional information regarding the ClassWallet debit card.**

**Reimbursement:** If an Account Holder cannot make a purchase or pay for an educational service using one of the ways listed above, they may be eligible for the reimbursement option.

To receive reimbursement, a bank account must be linked and verified with ClassWallet.

If an Account Holder has multiple children in the program, the bank account only needs to be linked once.

More information on reimbursement is available from ClassWallet at [Reimbursement \(force.com\)](#).

**NOTES:**

- Reimbursements can only be submitted for transactions made *after* the date that the ESA contract was signed
- Reimbursements can only be submitted during the contract term and cannot be submitted after the student has left the program
- For each reimbursement order, credentials (if applicable) and a complete or itemized invoice must be uploaded into the ClassWallet platform.

## Payments to Schools and Providers

Once payment is submitted and approved by ESA staff, payment to the providers and schools will be released by ClassWallet. Schools and providers typically receive payment within 2-5 business days. Schools and providers receive a list of their students showing payment date and amount.

## Registration in ClassWallet (Vendors, Providers, Schools)

A student's private school or provider(s) must be registered in ClassWallet in order to use the platform to make a payment to them. We recommend checking with the school or provider to see if they are registered.

A school, provider and/or vendor can register in ClassWallet at [Service Provider Pre-Registration](#). If a provider or school has not registered in ClassWallet and they would like more information on how they can register, please ask them to contact ClassWallet at [help@classwallet.com](mailto:help@classwallet.com) or 1-877-969-5536.

ClassWallet charges a 2.5% processing fee to vendors, providers, and schools, and not directly to the ESA Account Holder. However, the vendor has discretion to charge Account Holders a processing fee to offset this expense.

## ClassWallet Prepaid Debit Cards

Account Holders must request a debit card directly from ClassWallet. Cards are shipped directly to the address on record within 10-14 business days.

The card will include the first and last names of the Account Holder and the student that the account is associated with. Private schools and/or vendors are not allowed to keep debit cards. The ClassWallet debit card must always be in an Account Holder's possession.

The card debits against the Account Holder's virtual wallet balance. Inside the ClassWallet portal, an Account Holder can view debit card transactions, upload receipts in the platform and associate receipts with specific debit card charges.

If at any time the debit card feature is suspended, an Account Holder can continue to make purchases using the Marketplace and Pay Vendor features. Keep in mind that Account Holders must agree to the ClassWallet debit card Terms and Conditions to access the feature. Failure to comply may result in suspension of debit card privileges.

## Deadline for Debit Card Transactions

### Quarter, Purchasing Dates, Deadline

- 1, July 1-September 30, September 30
- 2, October 1-December 31, December 31
- 3, January 1-March 31, March 31
- 4, April 1-June 30, June 30

### IMPORTANT:

- Debit card holders must upload receipts after every **20 transactions** to avoid deactivation and to continue making purchases with the debit card.
- All debit card transactions must have a receipt uploaded within the same quarter that the transaction occurred.
- Receipts must be submitted in the **ClassWallet** platform at <https://www.azed.gov/esa/portal/>.
- Account Holders will be notified if there are any outstanding receipts each quarter. If an Account Holder fails to submit the outstanding debit card receipts following the quarterly deadline, the Department is required to notify the Account Holder. The Account Holder will then have a **grace-period of 10 days to submit any outstanding receipts**. If the Account Holder fails to submit the receipt, the Department will suspend the debit card and may close the account.

## Allowable Forms of Payment for ClassWallet Debit Card

ESA cards can be used in the following ways:

- Point of Sale (swiping the card or manually inputting card number)
- PayPal
- Square/VENMO

### NOTES:

- As part of the contract between ClassWallet and the Arizona State Treasurer, the debit card does have limitations and certain MCC codes are restricted due to the potential risk to parents of misspending unintentionally.
- Code restrictions include code 8211 (Schools, Elementary and Secondary), as payments to private schools should be made through Pay Vendor in the ClassWallet portal.
- If the debit card doesn't work at a specific business or vendor because of a restricted MCC code, the item will need to be purchased another way.

For MCC code requests, questions, or concerns, please submit a HelpDesk ticket at <http://helpdesk.azed.gov/>. Please include the organization or business name and the MCC code they are registered under so that we can fully research the request.



All MCC code exceptions and allowed requests will be extended to all Account Holders. The Department will notify all account holders of the inclusion of these new MCC codes via an email blast within 5 business days. A complete list of approved MCC codes is available on the ADE website and will be updated if a new approved code is added.

## **Prohibited Use**

Debit cards will be suspended for:

- Failure to upload receipts after 20 consecutive transactions
- Failure to submit debit card transaction receipts each quarter
- Attempted cash withdrawal
- Non-compliance with the ClassWallet Terms and Conditions

Cash withdrawals, cash advances, or cashier checks are prohibited with your ClassWallet debit card. Any Account Holder attempting to make a cash withdrawal will have their debit card automatically suspended and the account holder will need to notify ClassWallet directly for reactivation. The Department will issue a 10-day suspension letter via email to the Account Holder stating the reason for the suspension. The Account Holder will then have 10 days in which to respond and/or take action. Failure to contact the Department by the date stated on the letter may result in termination of the ESA.

# Chapter 4: Expense Submissions

When an Account Holder enters into an ESA contract with the Department, the Account Holder is required to report all expenses made with ESA funds.

To maintain ESA program eligibility the following must be completed:

- Debit card receipts must be submitted in the quarter that the transaction occurred
- Complete invoices or receipts must be included when submitting expenses or making payments in the ClassWallet platform
- All required credentials must be included when submitting debit card receipts or reimbursements (even if the provider or vendor is registered in the ClassWallet platform)
- If no spending occurs in a particular quarter, Account Holders are required to attest in the ESA portal that no funds were spent<sup>19</sup>

Pursuant to A.R.S. 15-2403(B) and A.A.C. R7-2-1508(A), the Department may perform audits to ensure compliance with ESA spending. Such audits may conform to the record retention requirements that were in place at the time the expense was made. The Department may only audit account activity from the last two fiscal years, including the current fiscal year.

Pursuant to A.A.C. R7-2-1508(B), the Department must provide an annual notice to each parent of when and how the Department will conduct reviews of expenses and audits. If the Department chooses to adopt risk-based auditing, the Department must provide formal notice to the Board at a Board Meeting.

In 2020, the State Board of Education, working in collaboration with the Arizona Department of Education and stakeholders, established the rule A.A.C. R7-2-1507(C): The Department shall not request repayment for an expense it has approved for a specific ESA. The Department shall treat similar expenditures by similarly situated account holders in the same manner so long as the account holder provides sufficient documentation to support the expense. This section does not create authorization for an account holder to expend funds in a manner not permitted by statute.

## Required Documents for all Expenses in ClassWallet Platform

As stated above, all expenses must be accounted for. This includes providing required credentials and complete (detailed) invoices for online programs, curriculum, and supplemental items required or recommended by the curriculum.

Pursuant to A.C.C. R7-2-1508(C-D), private school invoices MUST have the following:

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<sup>19</sup> A.A.C. R7-2-1508(J) does not waive the Account Holder's obligation to submit an attestation for "no expense" quarters to the Department, attesting no ESA funds were spent during the quarter.

1. Student's name
2. Name of the private school
3. Transaction Date
4. What ESA funds are paying for (tuition or fees)
5. Total amount charged to debit card must be reflected on the invoice
6. For reimbursements, proof of method of payment is required (e.g., an invoice showing "paid", a confirmation email showing payment was made/received, PayPal confirmation, etc.)

Invoices for tutors, paraprofessionals, or therapists MUST have the following:

1. Student's name
2. Name of provider or facility
3. Transaction Date
4. Rate amounts/type of service(s)
5. Total amount charged to debit card must be reflected on the invoice
6. For reimbursements, proof of method of payment is required (e.g., an invoice showing "paid", a confirmation email showing payment was made/received, PayPal confirmation, etc.)

**NOTE:**

**Handwritten receipts, screenshots of carts, credit card slips, or summary statements from vendors and/or providers will NOT be accepted.** It is important to look at the invoice to make sure all the required information is provided before submission.

### **Expense Categories in the ClassWallet Platform**

All ESA expenses must be categorized in the ClassWallet platform. Category selections are listed below:

- Assistive Technology Rentals (special education students only)
- Assistive Technology Purchases (special education students only)
- Associated Good (special education students only)
- Braille Translations (special education students only)
- Curricula
- Educational Materials/Items
- Educational Psychological Evaluations (special education students only)

- Educational Therapies and Services (special education students only)
- Educational/Psychological Evaluation (special education students only)
- Instrument Rental
- National standardized testing
- Online Learning Program
- Paraprofessional (special education students only)
- Post-Secondary (college/university)
- Post-Secondary Expenses
- Reading Books
- Services by a Public School
- Subscription Annual
- Subscription Monthly
- Subscription Quarterly
- Supplemental Material (required or recommended by the curriculum)
- Tuition for Life Skills/Vocational (special education students only)
- Tuition for Private Schools
- Tutoring (core subjects: grammar, math, science, social studies, reading)
- Tutoring (specific subjects: PE, music, art, karate, gymnastics, etc.)
- Tutoring (non-academic)
- Uniforms (must be purchased from or through a school or a vendor that the school recommends or requires)

## **Misspending or Disallowed Expenses**

- To protect the ESA program and taxpayer dollars, the Department pursues all misspending and disallowed expenditures. Additionally, the Department has a zero-tolerance policy on substantial misuse of funds with the intent to defraud. These cases are automatically referred to the State Board to approve a referral to the Attorney General's Fraud Unit.
- Spending any ESA funds in a category disallowed under the ESA contract, state law, administrative rule, program policies, or ESA Parent Handbook may result in account suspension and require repayment.

## **Suspension of ESA Account**

- Pursuant to A.A.C. R7-2-1509, when an account is suspended, the Department will notify the Account Holder via email. The notification will specify the reason for the suspension and allow the Account Holder 10 business days to provide ESA with documentation that shows an error was made **or** to submit repayment of the disallowed/misspent ESA funds.

## **Termination of ESA Account**

- If, within the 10 business days of notification, the Account Holder has not contacted ESA, a termination letter with the right to appeal will be emailed. Additional information

on the ESA Appeals Process, as well as how to file an appeal is available at <https://azsbe.az.gov/empowermentscholarship-account-esa-program>.

- The termination letter allows the Account Holder 30 calendar days to appeal the Department's decision. If no appeal is made in writing to SBE the ESA account is closed, and unused funds will be deposited back into the State's general fund. Any disallowed, misspent, or unsubmitted expenses will be sent to the Attorney General's Office for collection, fraud investigation, or both.
- If documentation is provided showing that an error was made or that suffices the purchase or payment, the account will be reactivated.

## Repayment Plans

- Pursuant to A.A.C. R7-2-1509(C), if the Department determines the documentation fails to demonstrate that the expense is allowable or that the Account Holder was a victim to identity theft or fraud, the Department shall provide notification to the Account Holder that the amount must be repaid.
- Pursuant to A.A.C. R7-2-1509, if ESA funds need to be repaid on an active account, the Department will offer plans of up to six months. (NOTE: Closed or terminated ESA accounts can coordinate payments with the Attorney General's Collections Office if/when applicable.)
- Once a parent agrees to a gradual repayment plan or repays an amount pursuant to A.A.C. R7-2-1509(A)(2)(b) or A.A.C. R7-2-1509(C), the Department shall lift the temporary suspension, reinstate the account, and make any disbursements that were withheld during the suspension.
- Except in cases which the Attorney General determines that an Account Holder has committed fraud, any expenditure from an Arizona Empowerment Scholarship Account for a purchase that is deemed ineligible pursuant to A.R.S. §15-2402 and that is subsequently repaid by the parent or accountholder shall be credited back to the Arizona Empowerment Scholarship Account.
- In 2020, the State Board of Education, working in collaboration with the Arizona Department of Education and stakeholders, established the rule A.A.C. R7-2-1507(C): The Department shall not request repayment for an expense it has approved for a specific ESA. The Depart shall treat similar expenditures by similarly situated account holders in the same manner so long as the account holder provides sufficient documentation to support the expense. This section does not create authorization for an account holder to expend funds in a manner not permitted by statute.

# Chapter 5: Renewing ESA Contracts

## Eligibility for Renewal

To remain eligible to renew an ESA contract, the Account Holder must have:

1. Submitted quarterly ClassWallet debit card receipts (if using the debit card).
2. Spent a portion of the ESA funds in at least the subjects of reading, grammar, mathematics, social studies, and science during the contract year (July 1-June 30)
3. Kept the account in Active Status, meaning it must not be suspended or terminated for contract violations such as:
  - Using ESA funds on disallowed expenses or misuse of ESA funds
  - Enrollment in public school at the same time as under ESA contract
  - Receiving an STO or tax credit scholarship while under ESA contract

## Renewal

Existing ESA students are considered “renewing students” and do not need to reapply. Any funds remaining at the end of the school year will roll over, provided the renewal contract is signed.

Contracts will be sent via email through EchoSign® and can be electronically signed with AdobeSign®.

Once the ESA program receives the renewal contract and any required documents, an email confirmation will be sent.

As of the 2021-2022 School Year, any funds that remain in accounts that have been closed for non-renewal, will be held for three academic years. If there is no renewal after three academic years, a notice will be sent. If there is no response within 60-days of this final notice, any remaining monies will be returned to the State.<sup>20</sup>

**If an account is closed due to non-renewal, a new application must be submitted.**

## Exited Contracts

Exited Contracts are for Account Holders who have a student who no longer qualifies for a K-12 education, because they have graduated high school or earned a GED, but they still have remaining funds that can be spent towards the student’s post-secondary education. Exited students do not receive any additional funding but are eligible to continue to spend funds per their contract and handbook

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<sup>20</sup> See A.R.S. §1515-2402(H)

agreement.<sup>21</sup>

If remaining funds are spent using a ClassWallet prepaid debit card, the Account Holder is still contractually obligated to upload the receipts for these expenses on a quarterly basis. Failure to do so can result in suspension and subsequent termination of the ESA account. If the student graduates high school or earns their GED, please notify the ESA team as soon as possible so that an exited contract can be sent.

**NOTE:**

See **“Students with a Disability (after 12<sup>th</sup> grade)”** on page 32 if the student is a qualified student with a disability and will not graduate high school or earn their GED at the completion of 12<sup>th</sup> grade.

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<sup>21</sup> See A.R.S. §15-2402

# Chapter 6: Termination or Closure

Below are some reasons termination or removal from the ESA program may occur.<sup>22</sup>

- Enrolling and attending a public-school district, charter, or public online school (this includes summer school)
- Receiving School Tuition Organization (STO) scholarships OR tax credit scholarships while on ESA
- Mispending ESA funds
- Failure to submit receipts for debit card transactions each quarter
- Fraudulent activity
- Loss of custody
- Providing false information or falsifying documents
- Not spending a portion of ESA funds during the contract year (July 1 through June 30)

## **Attending a Public School, Charter School, or Public Online School**

While a student is on an ESA contract and pursuant to A.R.S. §15-2402(H), the Account Holder agrees not to enroll the student in a public school district, charter school, or public online school; this includes summer school, any services such as speech services, or extra-curricular activities.

## **Receiving an STO or Tax Credit Scholarship**

Pursuant to A.R.S. §15-2402(A)(3), the Account Holder agrees not to receive any STOs or tax credit scholarships concurrently with an ESA.

If your student's ESA funds do not cover the full cost of the private school and you are unsure how the remainder is being paid, please contact your private school to make sure you are not receiving an STO or tax credit scholarship. If you believe you may have received an STO or tax credit scholarship, please contact ESA staff immediately.

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<sup>22</sup> This not an exhaustive list, just examples of reasons that accounts have been closed or terminated



# Chapter 7: Leaving the ESA Program

A student leaves the ESA program one of four ways:

1. Withdrawal: Account Holder requests that the student's ESA contract be closed.
2. Non-renewal: Account Holder chooses not to sign the student's renewal contract.
3. Completing the ESA program: Student exits the program upon completion of their 12<sup>th</sup> grade cohort year or receives a GED. Qualifying students with a disability may be eligible to continue, see page 32, Students with a Disability (After 12<sup>th</sup> grade).
4. Removal/Termination: ESA terminates the contract for failure to abide by program rules, program policies, ESA Parent Handbook and/or state law.

## Withdrawal

An Account Holder can withdraw their student from the ESA program at any time. To close a student's account, the account holder can do so within the ESA Portal. Account Holders can also submit a HelpDesk ticket requesting account closure.

The student's account will be reviewed, and any outstanding debit card receipts or invoices will need to be submitted. The Account Holder will receive email confirmation when the account has been closed. Once closed, any remaining funds will be returned to the State's general fund.

Pursuant to A.A.C. R7-2-1509, if an account is not closed in good standing, the Department will refer to the SBE. The Board may refer the case to the Attorney General's office for collections.

## Non-Renewal

Renewal contracts are sent to current Account Holders at the end of each school year. Pursuant to A.R.S. §15-2402(H), if an Account Holder chooses not to renew or does not sign a renewal contract, ESA will automatically close the account and any remaining funds will be held for a period of 3 academic years.

## Completing the ESA Program

When a student enters the ESA program, they continue to progress one grade level each year. This means that if the student enters the ESA program in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, the following year the student will move to 4<sup>th</sup> grade, even if the private school or the parent decides to retain the student.

At the completion of 12<sup>th</sup> grade, ESA students who have graduated high school or received a GED will receive an Exited Contract. Once exited from the ESA program, the student will have four years to use any remaining funds in the account.<sup>23</sup> All policies and laws regarding the ESA program must still be followed.

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<sup>23</sup> See A.R.S. §15-2402(4)

## Removal

The Department may remove a parent and/or student from the ESA program for a variety of reasons as discussed in Chapter 6. Upon removal, the parent may appeal the Department's decision. However, if a parent is removed due to committing fraud, the parent and the student may not reapply for the ESA program in the future.

# Chapter 8: Quick Reference

## ESA Department Contact Information:

The ESA Support Team is available Monday – Friday from 9am-4pm at **602-364-1969**. You can contact our team any time using HelpDesk at <http://helpdesk.azed.gov/>.

## ClassWallet Contact Information: Call 1-877-969-5536 or email [help@classwallet.com](mailto:help@classwallet.com)

- Contact ClassWallet directly for all debit card related issues and for questions related to order returns and refunds
- For preapprovals or questions about purchasing specific items, please submit a HelpDesk ticket at <http://helpdesk.azed.gov/>
- A vendor stating that they accept ESA funds does not mean they are approved or that the service is allowed for all students. Account holders are responsible for verifying that a purchase is permissible
- It is the Account Holder’s responsibility to follow the law and ESA contract and use ESA funds only for items allowed under A.R.S.§15-2402(B)(4). ADE can only provide technical assistance and not legal advice
- The Department does not regulate private schools or vendors, even if they are in the ClassWallet portal. Our team cannot recommend schools or providers. Please research and exercise caution when contracting with a school or vendor
- All purchases and/or payments require a corresponding receipt or detailed invoice
- Valid credentials are required for all teachers, instructors, tutors, providers and/or facilities
- Services offered in private or public schools by tutors, teachers or therapists do not require credentials, *if paid through the school*
- Account holders must spend a portion of the ESA funds annually, in at least the following subjects: reading, grammar, math, social studies, and science

# Chapter 9: HelpDesk Guidance

## Need to Submit a HelpDesk Request for ESA?

**HelpDesk requests are assigned every morning and are a team priority!**

Request approval, submit documents, ask questions and more! This is the best, most efficient way to communicate with any member of the ESA team.

### NOTE:

HelpDesk can be accessed at <http://helpdesk.azed.gov/>, as well as in the ESA Applicant Portal. There is a one-time set up for first time HelpDesk users.

- An email invitation is sent within a couple of minutes of clicking on **Submit a Help Desk Request** for the very first time. *Please check Spam/Junk folders if email is not received within a few minutes.*
- The email invitation to join the Arizona Department of Education (ADE) Organization is sent from the Zoho platform. This invitation will be sent to the same email address that was used when logging into the ESA Applicant Portal.
- The email invitation must be accepted within 30 days or the link to “Join Organization” will expire. Attempting to click on the “Submit a HelpDesk Request” feature when the email invitation to join the ADE organization was not accepted will result in a “User DoesNot Exist” error message.
- If the link expires, reach out to the ESA Support Team at 602-364-1969 to receive a new link.

### How to submit a HelpDesk ticket:

- After logging into the ESA Portal, create a Help Desk request by clicking on the link located on the right-hand upper corner **Submit a Help Desk Request**.
- Click on **Request a Service** link shown at the top right. To go back to the previous screen (landing page), click on the “X” icon at the top of the window. Please DO NOT click the browser back button.
- There are multiple program areas and departments in the system. However, to contact ESA directly, select either **ESA Compliance** or **ESA Operations**.
  - Select **ESA Compliance** if the request is about an approval or preapproval or purchase request
  - Select **ESA Operations** if the request is about an application, ESA contract, program withdrawal, personal information update or a general program question
- To change the template, click on the **Change Template** link at the top

- All the required fields with an asterisk “\*” next to the field name must be completed
- Select the appropriate “Subcategory” value which will give multiple options in the item drop down (*Please note that there are different item lists for different subcategory selections*)
- Documents can be attached within the HelpDesk request
- Click on the **Requests** menu to view all requests and the status

### Updating an Existing HelpDesk Request:

1. Click on the **Conversations** tab to view all the email conversations or notes. Add comments or notes by clicking the “Reply” button.
2. The request cannot be edited once it has been submitted, but you will be able to add to the conversation.
3. Once the initial request is satisfied, the team will close the ticket. **If there is an additional request, please submit a new HelpDesk ticket.**

### Getting an Error Message trying to access HelpDesk

Common error messages:

- *User doesn't exist, User not found*
- *Account is already associated with another ZOHO account*

If you receive one of these error messages or experience any other issue when using HelpDesk, please contact our ESA Support Team at 602-364-1969. We are happy to help!

Empowerment Scholarship Account Program School Year 2022-2023

[www.azed.gov/esa](http://www.azed.gov/esa)

# Common Acronyms

## Acronym, Meaning

504, Section 504 of the <a href="#">Rehabilitation Act</a>
AAC, Augmented Communication
A.A.C., <a href="#">Arizona Administrative Code</a> or Rules
ABA, Applied Behavioral Analysis
ADA, <a href="#">Americans with Disabilities Act</a>
ADD, Attention Deficit Disorder
ADE, <a href="#">Arizona Department of Education</a>
ADHD, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder
APE, Adaptive Physical Education
A.R.S., <a href="#">Arizona Revised Statutes</a>
ASD, Autism Spectrum Disorders
ASL, American Sign Language
AT, Assistive Technology
BD, Behavioral Disorder
CBA, Curriculum Based Assessment
CD, Cognitive Delay
COTA, Certified Occupational Therapist Assistant
CP, Cerebral Palsy
CW, <a href="#">ClassWallet</a>
DB, Deaf-Blind
DD, Developmental Delay
DIS, Designated Instruction and Services
DS, Down Syndrome
ED, Emotional Disturbance
ESA, Empowerment Scholarship Account
FAPE, <a href="#">Free and Appropriate Public Education</a>
FERPA, <a href="#">Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act</a>
HH, Hard of Hearing
IDEA, <a href="#">Individuals with Disabilities Education Act</a>
IEE, Independent Educational Evaluation
IEP, Individualized Educational Program
IPP, Individual Program Plan
LEA, Local Education Agency
LRE, Least Restrictive Environment
MET, Multidisciplinary Evaluation Team
O & M, Orientation and Mobility
<b>Acronym, Meaning</b>
OHI, Other Health Impairment
OT, Occupational Therapy
P-SD, Preschool Severe Delay

PAC, [Parent Advisory Council](#)  
PEI, [Plan Educativo Individualizado](#) (Spanish Acronym for [IDEA](#))  
PLAAFP, Present Levels of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance  
PLOP, Present Levels of Performance  
PT, Physical Therapy or Physical Therapist  
SAS, Supplementary Aids and Services  
SB, Spina Bifida  
SBE, [Arizona State Board of Education](#)  
SD, School District  
SDI, Specially Designed Instruction  
SI, Sensory Integration  
SLD, Specific Learning Disability  
SLI, Speech/Language Impairment  
SPED, Special Education  
STEAM, Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Math  
STEM, Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math  
STO, School Tuition Organization  
TBI, Traumatic Brain Injury  
TDD, Telecommunication Devices for the Deaf  
TS, Tourette Syndrome  
VI, Visual Impairment

## Appendix A: ESA Statutes

**LINK:** <https://www.azleg.gov/arsDetail/?title=15>

§ 15-2401. Definitions

In this chapter, unless the context otherwise requires:

1. "Annual education plan" means an initial individualized evaluation and subsequent annual reviews that are developed for a qualified student who meets the criteria specified in paragraph 7, subdivision (a), item (i), (ii) or (iii) of this section to determine ongoing annual eligibility through the school year in which the qualified student reaches twenty-two years of age and whether the student may be eligible pursuant to section 36-2981 and should be referred for eligibility determination.
2. "Curriculum" means a course of study for content areas or grade levels, including any supplemental materials required or recommended by the curriculum, approved by the department.
3. "Department" means the department of education.
4. "Eligible postsecondary institution" means a community college as defined in section 15-1401, a university under the jurisdiction of the Arizona board of regents or an accredited private postsecondary institution.
5. "Parent" means a resident of this state who is the parent, stepparent or legal guardian of a qualified student.
6. "Qualified school" means a nongovernmental primary or secondary school or a preschool for pupils with disabilities that is located in this state or, for qualified students who reside within the boundaries of an Indian reservation in this state, that is located in an adjacent state and that is within two miles of the border of the state in which the qualified student resides, and that does not discriminate on the basis of race, color or national origin.
7. "Qualified student" means a resident of this state who:

- (a) Is any of the following:
- (i) Identified as having a disability under section 504 of the rehabilitation act of 1973 (29 United States Code section 794).
  - (ii) Identified by a school district or by an independent third party pursuant to section 15- 2403, subsection I as a child with a disability as defined in section 15-731 or 15-761.
  - (iii) A child with a disability who is eligible to receive services from a school district under section 15-763.
  - (iv) Attending a school or school district that was assigned a letter grade of D or F pursuant to section 15-241 for the most recent year in which letter grades were assigned or is currently eligible to attend kindergarten and resides within the attendance boundary of a school that was assigned a letter grade of D or F pursuant to section 15-241 for the most recent year in which letter grades were assigned. A child who meets the requirements of this item and who meets the income eligibility requirements for free and reduced-price lunches under the national school lunch and child nutrition acts (42 United States Code sections 1751 through 1793) is not subject to subdivision (b) of this paragraph.
  - (v) A previous recipient of a scholarship issued pursuant to section 15-891 or this section, unless the qualified student's parent has been removed from eligibility in the program for failure to comply pursuant to section 15-2403, subsection C.
  - (vi) A child of a parent who is a member of the armed forces of the United States and who is on active duty or was killed in the line of duty. A child who meets the requirements of this item is not subject to subdivision (b) of this paragraph.
  - (vii) A child who is a ward of the juvenile court and who is residing with a prospective permanent placement pursuant to section 8-862 and the case plan is adoption or permanent guardianship.
  - (viii) A child who was a ward of the juvenile court and who achieved permanency through adoption or permanent guardianship.
  - (ix) A child who is the sibling of a current or previous Arizona empowerment scholarship account recipient or of an eligible qualified student who accepts the terms of and enrolls in an Arizona empowerment scholarship account.
  - (x) A child who resides within the boundaries of an Indian reservation in this state as determined by the department of education or a tribal government.
  - (xi) A child of a parent who is legally blind or deaf or hard of hearing as defined in section 36-1941.
- (b) And, except as provided in subdivision (a), items (iv) and (vi) of this paragraph, who meets any of the following requirements:
- (i) Attended a governmental primary or secondary school as a full-time student as defined in section 15-901 for at least forty-five days of the current or prior fiscal year and who transferred from a governmental primary or secondary school under a contract to participate in an Arizona empowerment scholarship account. Kindergarten students who are enrolled in Arizona online instruction must receive two hundred hours of logged instruction to be eligible pursuant to this item. First, second and third grade students who are enrolled in Arizona online instruction must receive four hundred hours of logged instruction to be eligible pursuant to this item. Fourth, fifth and sixth grade students who are enrolled in Arizona online instruction must receive five hundred hours of logged instruction to be eligible pursuant to this item. Seventh and eighth grade students who are enrolled in Arizona online instruction must receive five hundred fifty hours of logged instruction to be eligible pursuant to this item. High school students who are enrolled in Arizona online instruction must receive five hundred hours of logged instruction to be eligible pursuant to this item.
  - (ii) Previously participated in an Arizona empowerment scholarship account.
  - (iii) Received a scholarship under section 43-1505 and who continues to attend a qualified school if the student attended a governmental primary or secondary school as a full-time student as defined in section 15-901 for at least ninety days of the prior fiscal year or one full semester before attending a qualified school.
  - (iv) Was eligible for an Arizona scholarship for pupils with disabilities and received monies from a school tuition organization pursuant to section 43-1505 or received an Arizona scholarship for pupils with disabilities but did not receive monies from a school tuition organization pursuant to section 43-1505 and who continues to attend a qualified school if the student attended a governmental primary or secondary school as a full-time



student as defined in section 15-901 for at least ninety days of the prior fiscal year or one full semester before attending a qualified school.

(v) Has not previously attended a governmental primary or secondary school but is currently eligible to enroll in a kindergarten program in a school district or charter school in this state or attended a program for preschool children with disabilities.

(vi) Has not previously attended a governmental primary or secondary school but is currently eligible to enroll in a program for preschool children with disabilities in this state.

8. "Treasurer" means the office of the state treasurer.

§ 15-2402. Arizona empowerment scholarship accounts; funds

A. Arizona empowerment scholarship accounts are established to provide options for the education of students in this state.

B. To enroll a qualified student for an Arizona empowerment scholarship account, the parent of the qualified student must sign an agreement to do all of the following:

1. Use a portion of the Arizona empowerment scholarship account monies allocated annually to provide an education for the qualified student in at least the subjects of reading, grammar, mathematics, social studies and science, unless the Arizona empowerment scholarship account is allocated monies according to a transfer schedule other than quarterly transfers pursuant to section 15-2403, subsection F.

2. Not enroll the qualified student in a school district or charter school and release the school district from all obligations to educate the qualified student. This paragraph does not relieve the school district or charter school that the qualified student previously attended from the obligation to conduct an evaluation pursuant to section 15-766.

3. Not accept a scholarship from a school tuition organization pursuant to title 43 concurrently with an Arizona empowerment scholarship account for the qualified student in the same year a parent signs the agreement pursuant to this section.

4. Use monies deposited in the qualified student's Arizona empowerment scholarship account only for the following expenses of the qualified student:

(a) Tuition or fees at a qualified school.

(b) Textbooks required by a qualified school.

(c) If the qualified student meets any of the criteria specified in section 15-2401, paragraph 7, subdivision (a), item (i), (ii) or (iii) as determined by a school district or by an independent third party pursuant to section 15-2403, subsection I, the qualified student may use the following additional services:

(i) Educational therapies from a licensed or accredited practitioner or provider, including and up to any amount not covered by insurance if the expense is partially paid by a health insurance policy for the qualified student.

(ii) A licensed or accredited paraprofessional or educational aide.

(iii) Tuition for vocational and life skills education approved by the department.

(iv) Associated goods and services that include educational and psychological evaluations, assistive technology rentals and braille translation goods and services approved by the department.

(d) Tutoring or teaching services provided by an individual or facility accredited by a state, regional or national accrediting organization.

(e) Curricula and supplementary materials.

(f) Tuition or fees for a nonpublic online learning program.

(g) Fees for a nationally standardized norm-referenced achievement test, an advanced placement examination or any exams related to college or university admission.

(h) Tuition or fees at an eligible postsecondary institution.

(i) Textbooks required by an eligible postsecondary institution.

(j) Fees to manage the Arizona empowerment scholarship account.

(k) Services provided by a public school, including individual classes and extracurricular programs.

(l) Insurance or surety bond payments.

(m) Uniforms purchased from or through a qualified school.

(n) If the qualified student meets the criteria specified in section 15-2401, paragraph 7, subdivision (a), item (i), (ii) or (iii) and if the qualified student is in the second year prior to the final year of a contract executed pursuant to this article, costs associated with an annual education plan conducted by an independent evaluation team. The department shall prescribe minimum qualifications for independent evaluation teams pursuant to this subdivision and factors that teams must use to determine whether the qualified student shall be eligible to continue to receive monies pursuant to this article through the school year in which the qualified student reaches twenty-two years of age. An independent evaluation team that provides an annual education plan pursuant to this subdivision shall submit a written report that summarizes the results of the evaluation to the parent of the qualified student and to the department on or before July 31. The written report submitted by the independent evaluation team is valid for one year. If the department determines that the qualified student meets the eligibility criteria prescribed in the annual education plan, the qualified student is eligible to continue to receive monies pursuant to this article until the qualified student reaches twenty-two years of age, subject to annual review. A parent may appeal the department's decision pursuant to title 41, chapter 6, article 10. As an addendum to a qualified student's final-year contract, the department shall provide the following written information to the parent of the qualified student:

- (i) That the qualified student will not be eligible to continue to receive monies pursuant to this article unless the results of an annual education plan conducted pursuant to this subdivision demonstrate that the qualified student meets the eligibility criteria prescribed in the annual education plan.
- (ii) That the parent is entitled to obtain an annual education plan pursuant to this subdivision to determine whether the qualified student meets the eligibility criteria prescribed in the annual education plan.
- (iii) A list of independent evaluation teams that meet the minimum qualifications prescribed by the department pursuant to this subdivision.

5. Not file an affidavit of intent to homeschool pursuant to section 15-802, subsection B, paragraph 2 or 3.

6. Not use monies deposited in the qualified student's account for any of the following:

- (a) Computer hardware or other technological devices, except as otherwise allowed under paragraph 4, subdivision (c) of this subsection.
- (b) Transportation of the pupil.
- (c) Consumable educational supplies, including paper, pens or markers.

C. In exchange for the parent's agreement pursuant to subsection B of this section, the department shall transfer from the monies that would otherwise be allocated to a recipient's prior school district, or if the child is currently eligible to attend kindergarten, the monies that the department determines would otherwise be allocated to a recipient's expected school district of attendance, to the treasurer for deposit into an Arizona empowerment scholarship account an amount that is equivalent to ninety percent of the sum of the base support level and additional assistance prescribed in sections 15-185 and 15-943 for that particular student if that student were attending a charter school.

D. The department of education empowerment scholarship account fund is established consisting of monies appropriated by the legislature. The department shall administer the fund. Monies in the fund are subject to legislative appropriation. Monies in the fund shall be used for the department's costs in administering Arizona empowerment scholarship accounts under this chapter. Monies in the fund are exempt from the provisions of section 35-190 relating to lapsing of appropriations. If the number of Arizona empowerment scholarship accounts significantly increases after fiscal year 2020-2021, the department may request an increase in the amount appropriated to the fund in any subsequent fiscal year in the budget estimate submitted pursuant to section 35-113. The department shall list monies in the fund as a separate line item in its budget estimate.

E. The state treasurer empowerment scholarship account fund is established consisting of monies appropriated by the legislature. The state treasurer shall administer the fund. Monies in the fund shall be used for the state treasurer's costs in administering the Arizona empowerment scholarship accounts under this chapter. If the number of Arizona empowerment scholarship accounts significantly increases after fiscal year

2020-2021, the state treasurer may request an increase in the amount appropriated to the fund in any subsequent fiscal year in the budget estimate submitted pursuant to section 35-113. Monies in the fund are subject to legislative appropriation. Monies in the fund are exempt from the provisions of section 35-190 relating to lapsing of appropriations. The state treasurer shall list monies in the fund as a separate line item in its budget estimate.

F. A parent must renew the qualified student's Arizona empowerment scholarship account on an annual basis.

G. Notwithstanding any changes to the student's multidisciplinary evaluation team plan, a student who has previously qualified for an Arizona empowerment scholarship account remains eligible to apply for renewal until the student finishes high school.

H. If a parent does not renew the qualified student's Arizona empowerment scholarship account for a period of three academic years, the department shall notify the parent that the qualified student's account will be closed in sixty calendar days. The notification must be sent through certified mail, email and telephone, if applicable. The parent has sixty calendar days to renew the qualified student's Arizona empowerment scholarship account. If the parent chooses not to renew or does not respond in sixty calendar days, the department shall close the account and any remaining monies shall be returned to the state.

I. A signed agreement under this section constitutes school attendance required by section 15-802.

J. A qualified school or a provider of services purchased pursuant to subsection B, paragraph 4 of this section may not share, refund or rebate any Arizona empowerment scholarship account monies with the parent or qualified student in any manner.

K. Notwithstanding subsection H of this section, on the qualified student's graduation from a postsecondary institution or after any period of four consecutive years after high school graduation in which the student is not enrolled in an eligible postsecondary institution, but not before this time as long as the account holder continues using a portion of account monies for eligible expenses each year and is in good standing, the qualified student's Arizona empowerment scholarship account shall be closed and any remaining monies shall be returned to the state.

L. Monies received pursuant to this article do not constitute taxable income to the parent of the qualified student.

§ 15-2403. Arizona empowerment scholarship accounts; administration; appeals; audit; rules; policy handbook

A. The treasurer may contract with private financial management firms to manage Arizona empowerment scholarship accounts.

B. The department shall conduct or contract for annual audits of Arizona empowerment scholarship accounts to ensure compliance with section 15-2402, subsection B, paragraph 4. The department shall also conduct or contract for random, quarterly and annual audits of Arizona empowerment scholarship accounts as needed to ensure compliance with section 15-2402, subsection B, paragraph 4.

C. The department may remove any parent or qualified student from eligibility for an Arizona empowerment scholarship account if the parent or qualified student fails to comply with the terms of the contract or applicable laws, rules or orders or knowingly misuses monies or knowingly fails to comply with the terms of the contract with intent to defraud and shall notify the treasurer. The department shall notify the treasurer to suspend the account of a parent or qualified student and shall notify the parent or qualified student in writing that the account has been suspended and that no further transactions will be allowed or disbursements made. The notification shall specify the reason for the suspension and state that the parent or qualified student has ten days, not including weekends, to respond and take corrective action. If the parent or qualified student refuses or fails to contact the department, furnish any information or make any report that may be required for reinstatement within the ten-day period, the department may remove the parent or qualified student pursuant to this subsection.

D. A parent may appeal to the state board of education any administrative decision the department makes pursuant to this article, including determinations of allowable expenses, removal from the program or enrollment eligibility. The department shall notify the parent in writing that the parent may appeal any administrative decision under this article and the process by which the parent may appeal at the same time

the department notifies the parent of an administrative decision under this article. The state board of education shall establish an appeals process, and the department shall post this information on the department's website in the same location as the policy handbook developed pursuant to subsection J of this section.

E. The state board of education may refer cases of substantial misuse of monies to the attorney general for the purpose of collection or for the purpose of a criminal investigation if the state board of education obtains evidence of fraudulent use of an account.

F. The department shall make quarterly transfers of the amount calculated pursuant to section 15-2402, subsection C to the treasurer for deposit in the Arizona empowerment scholarship account of each qualified student, except the department may make transfers according to another transfer schedule if the department determines a transfer schedule other than quarterly transfers is necessary to operate the Arizona empowerment scholarship account.

G. The department shall accept applications between July 1 and June 30 of each year. The department shall enroll and issue an award letter to eligible applicants within thirty days after receipt of a completed application and all required documentation. On or before May 30 of each year, the department shall furnish to the joint legislative budget committee an estimate of the amount required to fund Arizona empowerment scholarship accounts for the following fiscal year. The department shall include in its budget request for the following fiscal year the amount estimated pursuant to section 15-2402, subsection C for each qualified student.

H. The state board of education may adopt rules and policies necessary to administer Arizona empowerment scholarship accounts, including rules and policies:

1. For establishing an appeals process pursuant to subsection D of this section.
2. For conducting or contracting for examinations of the use of account monies.
3. For conducting or contracting for random, quarterly and annual reviews of accounts.
4. For establishing or contracting for the establishment of an online anonymous fraud reporting service.
5. For establishing an anonymous telephone hotline for fraud reporting.
6. That require a surety bond or insurance for account holders.

I. The department shall contract with an independent third party for the purposes of determining whether a qualified student is eligible to receive educational therapies or services pursuant to section 15-2402, subsection B, paragraph 4, subdivision (c).

J. On or before July 1 of each year, the department shall develop an applicant and participant handbook that includes information relating to policies and processes of Arizona empowerment scholarship accounts. The policy handbook shall comply with the rules adopted by the state board of education pursuant to this section. The department shall post the handbook on its website.

K. Except for cases in which the attorney general determines that a parent or account holder has committed fraud, any expenditure from an Arizona empowerment scholarship account for a purchase that is deemed ineligible pursuant to section 15-2402 and that is subsequently repaid by the parent or account holder shall be credited back to the Arizona empowerment scholarship account balance within thirty days after the receipt of payment.

L. If, in response to an appeal of an administrative decision made by the department, the state board of education issues a stay of an Arizona empowerment scholarship account suspension pursuant to rules adopted by the board, the department may not withhold funding or contract renewal for the account holder on account of the appealed administrative decision during the stay unless directed by the board to do so.

#### § 15-2404. State control over nonpublic schools; prohibition; application

A. This chapter does not permit any government agency to exercise control or supervision over any nonpublic school or homeschool.

B. A qualified school that accepts a payment from a parent pursuant to this chapter is not an agent of the state or federal government.

## Appendix B: ESA Rules

**LINK:** [Arizona Administrative Code](#)

*Opened September 26, 2021; Changes Approved - December 13, 2021*

R7-2-1501. Definitions

In this Article, unless the context otherwise specifies:

1. “Administratively complete” means an ESA application that contains all components required by statute or this Article.
2. “Board” means the State Board of Education.
3. “Curriculum” means a course of study for content areas or grade levels, including any supplemental materials required or recommended by the curriculum, approved by the Department.
4. “Department” means the Arizona Department of Education.
5. “Eligible postsecondary institution” means a community college as defined in A.R.S. § 15- 1401, a university under the jurisdiction of the Arizona Board of Regents, or an accredited private postsecondary institution.
6. “Empowerment scholarship account” or “ESA” means an account administered by the Department and funded by the state to provide options for the education of qualified students pursuant to A.R.S. § 15-2401 et seq.
7. “Hearing Officer” means a non-partial representative with either at least three years of verified experience in the practice of law or at least one year of verified experience in conducting hearings, who oversees hearings pursuant to this Article.
8. “Misuse of funds” means the use of ESA funds on goods or services not permitted by A.R.S. § 15-2402, this Article or the Department pursuant to R7-2-1507.
9. “Parent” means a resident of this state who is the parent, stepparent, legal guardian, or account holder of a qualified student.
10. “Program” means the Empowerment Scholarship Account Program.
11. “Qualified school” means a nongovernmental primary or secondary school or a preschool for pupils with disabilities that is located in this state or, for qualified students who reside within the boundaries of an Indian reservation in this state, and that is located in an adjacent state and that is within two miles of the border of the state in which the qualified student resides, and that does not discriminate on the basis of race, color or national origin.
12. “Qualified student” means a resident of this state who:
  - a. Is any of the following:
    - i. Identified as having a disability under section 504 of the rehabilitation act of 1973 (29 United States Code section 794);
    - ii. Identified by a school district or by an independent third party pursuant to A.R.S. § 15-2403(I) as a child with a disability as defined in A.R.S. § 15-731 or § 15-761;
    - iii. A child with a disability who is eligible to receive services from a school district under A.R.S. § 15-763;
    - iv. Attending a school or school district that was assigned a letter grade of D or F pursuant to A.R.S. § 15-241 for the most recent year in which letter grades were assigned or is currently eligible to attend kindergarten and who resides within the attendance boundary of a school that was assigned a letter grade of D or F pursuant to A.R.S. § 15-241 for the most recent year in which letter grades were assigned. A child who

meets the requirements of this item and who meets the income eligibility requirements for free and reduced-price lunches under the National School Lunch and Child Nutrition Acts (42 v. United State Code Sections 1751 through 1793) is not subject to R7-2-501(12)(b);

- v. A previous recipient of a scholarship issued pursuant to A.R.S. § 15-891 or this Section, unless the qualified student's parent has been removed from eligibility in the Program for failure to comply pursuant to A.R.S. § 15-2403(C);
  - vi. A child of a parent who is a member of the armed forces of the United States and who is on active duty or was killed in the line of duty. A child who meets the requirements of this subsection is not subject to R7-2-1501(12)(b);
  - vii. A child who is a ward of the juvenile court and who is residing with a prospective permanent placement pursuant to A.R.S. § 8-862 and the case plan is adoption or permanent guardianship;
  - viii. A child who was a ward of the juvenile court and who achieved permanency through adoption or permanent guardianship;
  - ix. A child who is the sibling of a current or previous ESA recipient or of an eligible qualified student who accepts the terms of and enrolls in an ESA;
  - x. A child who resides within the boundaries of an Indian reservation in this state as determined by the Department or a tribal government; or
  - xi. A child of a parent who is legally blind or deaf or hard of hearing as defined in A.R.S. § 36-1941.
- b. And, except as provided in R7-2-1501(12)(a)(iv) and R7-2-1501(12)(a)(vi), who meets any of the following requirements:
- i. Attended a governmental primary or secondary school as a full-time student as defined in A.R.S. § 15-901 for at least 45 days of the current or prior fiscal year and who transferred from a governmental primary or secondary school under a contract to participate in an ESA. Kindergarten students who are enrolled in Arizona online instruction must receive 200 hours of logged instruction to be eligible pursuant to this subsection. First, second and third grade students who are enrolled in Arizona online instruction must receive 400 hours of logged instruction to be eligible pursuant to this subsection. Fourth, fifth and sixth grade students who are enrolled in Arizona online instruction must receive 500 hours of logged instruction to be eligible pursuant to this subsection. Seventh and eighth grade students who are enrolled in Arizona online instruction must receive 550 hours of logged instruction to be eligible pursuant to this subsection. High school students who are enrolled in Arizona online instruction must receive 500 hours of logged instruction to be eligible pursuant to this subsection. For the purposes of this subsection, students may accumulate days of enrollment and hours of instruction in the current or prior fiscal year, or a combination thereof;
  - ii. Previously participated in an ESA;
  - iii. Received a scholarship under A.R.S. § 43-1505 and who continues to attend a qualified school if the student attended a governmental primary or secondary school as a full-time student as defined in A.R.S. § 15-901 for at least 90 days of the prior fiscal year or one full semester before attending a qualified school;
  - iv. Was eligible for an Arizona scholarship for pupils with disabilities and received monies from a school tuition organization pursuant to A.R.S. § 43-1505 or received an Arizona scholarship for pupils with disabilities but did not receive monies from a school tuition organization pursuant to A.R.S. § 43-1505 and who continues to attend a qualified school if the student attended a governmental primary or secondary school as a full-time student as defined in A.R.S. § 15-901 for at least 90 days of the prior fiscal year or one full semester prior to

attending a qualified school;

v. Has not previously attended a governmental primary or secondary school but is currently eligible to enroll in a kindergarten program in a school district or charter school in this state or attended a program for preschool children with disabilities; or

vi. Has not previously attended a governmental primary or secondary school but is currently eligible to enroll in a program for preschool children with disabilities in this state.

13. "Substantively complete" means an ESA application that meets all substantive criteria required by statute or this Article.

14. "Supplemental materials" referenced in A.R.S. § 15-2401(2), means relevant materials directly related to the course of study for which they are being used that introduce content and instructional strategies or that enhance, complement, enrich, extend or support the curriculum.

15. "Treasurer" means the Office of the State Treasurer.

16. Unless otherwise specifically defined herein, all defined terms shall have the same meaning as those ascribed to them in the A.R.S., Title 41.

#### R7-2-1502. General Provisions

A. This Section is adopted pursuant to A.R.S. § 15-2403.

B. The Department and the Treasurer shall administer and provide general supervision and oversight of the Program pursuant to A.R.S. § 15-2401 et seq and this Article.

C. The Department and the Board shall include intermediate Saturday, Sundays, and legal holidays when computing days under this Article. If the final day of a deadline established pursuant to this Article falls on a Saturday, Sunday or legal holiday, the next business day is the final day of the deadline.

D. Unless otherwise specified, the Department shall serve a notice or decision that removes a parent from the Program, through personal delivery, first class mail, or certified mail to the parent's last address with the Department, and also by any other method or methods that are reasonably determined to give actual notice to the parent, including electronic mail, text message, phone call, or through an online portal. Each parent shall provide the Department with the parent's mailing address, home address, phone number and email and shall inform the Department of any change of mailing address, home address, phone number or email within 30 days of the change. For all other communications that do not contain notice of removal from the Program, the Board and the Department may communicate through any method or methods, including first class mail, certified mail, electronic mail, text message, phone call or through an online portal.

E. A document is filed with the Board or the Department on the date it is received by the Board or the Department, as established by the Board's or the Department's date stamp on the face of the document. A notice or decision containing an appealable action issued by the Board or the Department pursuant to this Article is served on a party as follows:

1. On the date it is personally served,
2. Five days after it is mailed by first class mail, or
3. On the date of the return receipt if it is mailed by certified mail.

#### R7-2-1503. Department Responsibilities

The Department shall:

1. On or before March 1 of each year, provide the Board with a handbook, developed in consultation with parents of children on the Program, that includes information relating to policies and processes of ESAs and complies with A.R.S. § 15-2401 et seq and this Article. The Board shall adopt the handbook on or before

May 1 of each year. The Board shall limit substantive changes to the handbook to once every three years. The Board may approve changes to the handbook more frequently than every three years to conform and comply with changes to statute or this Article or at the Board's discretion. The handbook shall be posted on the Department's website and distributed to parents and shall clearly identify changes from the prior version, and include the date and time the new handbook was changed;

2. Establish a dedicated call center for exclusive use for the ESA Program that works in conjunction with the Exceptional Student Services division of the Department or its successor division. Subject to review and approval by the Board, the Department may contract with a third party to operate the call center;
3. Implement customer service performance management policies, procedures, and metrics;
4. Provide training to parents who use the private financial management firm contracted to assist with financial management of the program;
5. Provide a quarterly report to the Board on the ESA Program, including:
  - a. The number of students in the program disaggregated by eligibility, grade level and the school district or charter school associated with each student;
  - b. The annual award amount associated with each student;
  - c. The number of ESA applications received, approved and denied in the preceding quarter, including the justification for the denied applications;
  - d. The number of applications processed within 30 days of receipt and the number of administratively incomplete applications;
  - e. A summary of any parent input or feedback collected pursuant to R7-2-1503(6) and how the Department is responding to concerns submitted as part of the process;
  - f. Information on the private financial management firm contracted to assist with financial management of the Program, including:
    - i. The number and eligibility type of accounts utilizing the firm,
    - ii. The number of providers and vendors on the firm's platform,
    - iii. Communications and training provided to parents,
    - iv. Concerns from parents submitted to the Department, the Treasurer and the private financial management firm and how the Department, Treasurer and private financial management firm are addressing the concerns, and
  - g. Information regarding appeals filed with the Board that were resolved prior to a hearing.
  - h. Any other information the Board requests.
6. Establish and provide to the Board a process to collect parent input and feedback regarding the Program.

R7-2-1504. Application and Account Activation

- A. The Department shall accept applications to participate in the Program between July 1 and June 30 of each year.
- B. The Department shall provide information for prospective applicants on eligibility.
- C. The Department shall enroll and issue an award letter to eligible applicants within 30 days after receipt of a completed application and all required documentation. The award letter shall include information on how to activate the account and the amount of ESA funding the student will receive.
- D. Within 30 days of issuing the award letter, the Department shall issue the contract to eligible applicants.



E. Prior to issuing a notice of a denied application, the Department shall provide notice describing the administrative or substantive incompleteness of the application and provide the applicant 30 days to provide the missing documentation or information. The Department shall include the justification for the denial and, if the application was substantively incomplete, the Department shall include the applicant's right to appeal.

F. Pursuant to R7-2-1511, a person who has had an application denied due to being substantively incomplete may file a written request for a hearing within 30 days after being served the notice of denial. Administratively incomplete applications are not appealable.

G. If the Board finds in favor of a parent who appealed a denied application, the Department shall expedite the contract and funding to the parent to the extent possible.

#### R7-2-1505. Contract Between Parent and Department

A. To enroll a qualified student in an ESA, a parent of the qualified student shall sign a contract with the Department. The parent:

1. Shall use a portion of the ESA monies allocated annually to provide an education for the qualified student in at least the subjects of reading, grammar, mathematics, social studies and science, unless the ESA is allocated monies according to a transfer schedule other than quarterly transfers pursuant to A.R.S. § 15-2403(F). This subsection does not require a parent to spend a portion of ESA monies on each subject every quarter;
2. Shall not enroll the qualified student in a school district or charter school, and shall release the school district from all obligations to educate the qualified student. This subsection does not:
  - a. Relieve the school district or charter school that the qualified student previously attended from the obligation to conduct an evaluation pursuant to A.R.S. § 15-766, or
  - b. Require a qualified student to withdraw from a school district or charter school in order to apply for an ESA.
3. Shall not accept a scholarship from a school tuition organization pursuant to A.R.S., Title 43 concurrently with an ESA for the qualified student in the same year a parent signs the contract pursuant to this Section;
4. Shall use the monies deposited in the qualified student's ESA only for the expenses listed in A.R.S. § 15-2402(B)(4);
5. Shall not file an affidavit of intent to homeschool pursuant to A.R.S. § 15-802(B)(2) or (3);
6. Shall not use monies deposited in the qualified student's account for any of the following:
  - a. Computer hardware or other technological devices, except as provided in R7- 2-1505(B);
  - b. Transportation of the pupil; or
  - c. Consumable educational supplies, including papers, pens or markers.
7. Shall submit expenses and documentation as required in R7-2-1508.
- B. If a qualified student meets any of the criteria specified in A.R.S. § 15-2401(7)(a)(i), (ii), or (iii), as determined by a school district or by an independent third party under A.R.S. § 15- 2403(l), the qualified student may use the following additional services:
  1. Educational therapies from a licensed or accredited practitioner or provider including and up to any amount not covered by insurance if the expense is partially paid by a health insurance policy for the qualified students,
  2. A licensed or accredited paraprofessional or educational aide,
  3. Tuition for vocational and life skills education approved by the department, and

4. Associated goods and services that include, but are not limited to, educational and psychological evaluations, assistive technology rentals and braille translation goods and services approved by the Department. Associated goods as described in this subsection may include computer hardware or technological devices that assist in accessing educational materials or services and that are associated with the qualified student's needs. Parents that are seeking to use Program funds for an associated good or service pursuant to this subsection shall provide to the Department the special education course of study, service or educational need that the good or service is associated with or may provide the Department with the most current individualized education program, evaluation, or a letter from a qualified service provider. Parents are not advised to contact their districts seeking to update or change their students' individualized education programs or request special education reevaluations in order to make ESA purchases.

R7-2-1506. Contract Renewal

A. A parent is eligible to renew an ESA if:

1. Pursuant to R7-2-1508, the parent submitted expenses and documentation or submitted quarterly attestations;
2. If required, the Department approved expenses pursuant to R7-2-1508;
3. The parent spent monies to provide an education in at least reading, grammar, mathematics, social studies, and science for the contract year pursuant to R7-2-1505(A)(1); and
4. The parent does not owe the Department monies for disallowed expenses. A parent remains eligible to renew an ESA if the parent has an unresolved appeal regarding a disallowed expense.

B. A student with a disability as defined in A.R.S. § 15-2401(7)(a)(i), (ii), or (iii), as determined by a school district or by an independent third party under A.R.S. § 15-2403(l), may continue on the Program until the end of the school year in which the student reaches the age of 22, if the student or the parent provides documentation to the Department that demonstrates the student has not finished high school.

C. A parent shall renew ESAs on an annual basis as follows:

1. The Department shall provide renewal contracts on or before May 1 to each parent who meets R7-2-1506(A) of this Section;
2. Each parent shall submit the renewal contract to the Department on or before June 30; and
3. Within 30 days of receipt, the Department shall notify each parent of the renewal of the contract. The Department may provide notification through an online portal.

D. If a parent does not submit a renewal contract pursuant to R7-2-1506(C), the Department shall temporarily close the account and cease funding to the ESA until the parent submits the appropriate signed renewal contract. During the temporary closure, funding shall remain in the account until the parent signs the appropriate renewal contract in a format provided by the Department or the Department closes the ESA pursuant to R7-2-1506(E).

E. After an ESA has been temporarily closed for non-renewal pursuant to R7-2-1506(D), a parent may submit the appropriate signed renewal contract in a format provided by the Department to reactivate the ESA. If a parent does not submit a renewal contract for a period of three academic years, the Department shall provide notice through certified mail, email and telephone, if applicable, that the ESA will be closed. To renew the ESA, the parent shall submit a renewal contract within 60 days of receipt of the notification. If the parent does not submit a renewal contract within 60 days, the Department shall close the ESA and return any remaining monies in the ESA to the state general fund. Notwithstanding R7-2-1506(C)(1) and (2), a parent may submit the appropriate signed renewal contract between July 1 and June 30 for the purposes of this

subsection.

F. Notwithstanding R7-2-1506(E), on the qualified student's graduation from a postsecondary institution or after any period of four consecutive years after high school graduation in which the student is not enrolled in an eligible postsecondary institution, but not before this time as long as the accountholder continues using a portion of account monies for eligible expenses each year and is in good standing, the qualified student's Arizona empowerment scholarship account shall be closed and any remaining monies shall be returned to the state general fund.

G. Pursuant to R7-2-1511, a parent whose contract was not renewed by the Department may file a written request for a hearing within 30 days after being served the notice of the non-renewal.

H. At the written request of a parent, the Department shall extend the renewal contract timeframe for up to 30 days from the deadline prescribed in this Section if the parent demonstrates hardship, including an act of God or similar circumstance that prevented the parent from responding by the deadline.

R7-2-1507. Use of Funds

A. The Department shall establish and maintain a database of approved expenses and disallowed expenses for the current and upcoming fiscal years pursuant to A.R.S. § 15-2401 et seq, and this Article. The Department shall make the database available to parents online and disaggregate the approved expenses by eligibility category.

B. The Department shall establish a process to review an expense before making an administrative decision to deny the expense. The Department shall provide a copy of the process to the Board and include the process in the handbook adopted pursuant to R7-2-1503.

C. The Department shall not request repayment for an expense it has approved for a specific ESA. The Department shall treat similar expenditures by similarly situated account holders in the same manner. This Section does not create authorization for an account holder to expend funds in a manner not permitted by statute.

D. Pursuant to R7-2-1511, a parent who has had an expense disallowed by the Department may file a written request for a hearing within 30 days after being served the notice of the disallowed expense.

R7-2-1508. Review of Expenses

A. The Department may conduct or contract for random or annual audits as needed to ensure monies are used only for expenses that were approved or allowed at the time the expense was made. The Department shall use record retention requirements that were in place at the time the expense was made to determine compliance. The Department may only audit account activity from the last two fiscal years, including the current fiscal year.

B. The Department shall provide annual notice to each parent of when and how the Department will conduct reviews of expenses and audits. The notice may be provided in the handbook adopted pursuant to R7-2-1503. Notwithstanding any other Section, the Department may review expenses less frequently using a risk-based approach, if the Department provides notice to parents and the Board pursuant to this section.

C. Parents shall submit expenses that shall include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. Invoices for each vendor, individual or product;
2. Invoices for private schools, which shall include the following:
  - a. The name of the qualified student,
  - b. The name of the private school,
  - c. The transaction date,

- d. Tuition or fee amounts, and
- e. Total charged to the card, and for reimbursements, proof of method of payment;
- 3. Invoices for tutors, paraprofessionals, service type or therapists which shall include:
  - a. Name of the qualified student,
  - b. The name of one of the following: the vendor, facility, therapist or tutor,
  - c. A description of the services,
  - d. The transaction date,
  - e. The rate amounts,
  - f. Any processing fees, and
  - g. Total charged to the card, and for reimbursements, proof of method of payment.
- D. For debit card transactions, a parent shall submit all debit card transaction expense receipts to the Department as follows:
  - 1. On or before September 30 for quarter one,
  - 2. On or before December 31 for quarter two,
  - 3. On or before March 31 for quarter three, and
  - 4. On or before June 30 for quarter four.
- E. The Department shall review and approve expenses and make its next quarterly disbursement of funds within 30 days of the deadlines prescribed in R7-2-1508(D).
- F. On receipt and approval of debit card transaction expense receipts or reimbursements, the Department shall notify the parent through electronic mail or through an online portal. The Department shall not withhold funds for a subsequent quarter if it fails to review expenses, debit card transaction expense receipts or reimbursements within 30 days of the deadline. A parent may submit corrected debit card transaction expense receipts any time prior to the quarterly submission deadline.
- G. If a parent fails to submit debit card transaction expense receipts, if required, by the deadlines prescribed in R7-2-1508(D) or submits incomplete debit card transaction expense receipts or reimbursements, the Department shall:
  - 1. Serve notice to the parent of the deficiencies,
  - 2. Provide the parent 10 days from the date of receipt of the notice to submit complete debit card transaction expense receipts or reimbursements, and
  - 3. Review debit card transaction expense reports receipts or reimbursements submitted pursuant to this subsection within five days of receipt from the parent.
- H. Following the 10 day period provided in R7-2-1508(G)(2), the Department may remove a parent from the Program for failing to submit required debit card transaction expense receipts or failing to correct the deficiencies of a debit card transaction expense receipt.
- I. Pursuant to R7-2-1511, a parent that has been removed from the Program may file a written request for a hearing within 30 days after being served the notice of removal. Except in cases in which the Board has found misuse of funds or fraud pursuant to R7-2-1509, the Department shall not withhold funding to one qualified student's ESA due to deficiencies in the expense reporting of a sibling's account.
- J. At the written request of a parent, the Department shall extend the deadlines prescribed in R7-2-1508(D) for up to 30 days from the deadlines prescribed in this Section if the parent demonstrates hardship, including an act of God or similar circumstance that prevented the parent from responding by the deadline.
- K. If a parent does not make any expenses in a quarter, the parent shall attest to that fact in a format

provided by the Department.

R7-2-1509. Misuse of Funds

A. Based on a finding that a parent knowingly misuses funds, the Department shall temporarily suspend the account and provide notice to the parent. The notice shall:

1. Include the reason for the temporary suspension and a detailed description of the disallowed expense; and
2. Provide the parent 10 days, not including weekends, to either:
  - a. Present documentation that demonstrates the expense is allowable or that the parent was victim to identity theft or fraud; or
  - b. Agree to repay the amount.

B. The Department shall review the documentation submitted pursuant to R7-2-1509(A)(2)(a) within five days of receipt to determine if the expense is allowable or if the parent was victim to identity theft or fraud. If the Department determines the expense is allowable or that the parent was victim to identity theft or fraud, the Department shall lift the temporary suspension, reinstate the account and make any disbursements that were withheld during the suspension.

C. If the Department determines the documentation fails to demonstrate the expense is allowable or that the parent was victim to identity theft or fraud, the Department shall provide notification to the parent that the amount must be repaid. The Department shall withhold the disbursement of any additional ESA funds until repayment is made. The Department may agree to a gradual repayment plans at the request of the parent and shall reinstate additional ESA funding once repayment has begun. The Department may remove a parent from the Program that fails to repay an amount or agree to a repayment plan.

D. Once a parent agrees to a gradual repayment plan or repays an amount pursuant to R7-2-1509(A)(2)(b) or R7-2-1509(C), the Department shall lift the temporary suspension, reinstate the account and make any disbursements that were withheld during the suspension as follows:

1. Within one day, if the repayment is made by cashier's check or money order;
2. Within seven days, if repayment is made by personal check.;

E. Except in cases which the Attorney General determines that a parent or accountholder has committed fraud, any expenditure from an Arizona Empowerment Scholarship Account for a purchase that is deemed ineligible pursuant to A.R.S. § 15-2402 and that is subsequently repaid by the parent or accountholder shall be credited back to the Arizona Empowerment Scholarship Account balance within 30 days after the receipt of payment.

F. Pursuant to R7-2-1511, a parent who has been removed from the Program pursuant to this Section may file a written request for a hearing within 30 days after being served the notice of removal.

G. The Department shall refer a case to the Board if a parent does not file an appeal pursuant to R7-2-1511 and either:

1. Fails to repay the amount of a disallowed expense, or
2. Fails to make a payment on a gradual repayment plan.

H. On a finding of misuse of monies, the Board may refer the case to the Attorney General who may bring an action to recover the monies. Upon obtaining evidence of fraudulent use of an account, the Board may refer the case to the Attorney General for the purpose of a criminal investigation.

I. A parent or qualified student is not eligible to enroll a qualified student in the ESA Program if that parent was an account holder on an account that was referred to the Attorney General for misuse of monies

unless the parent's expense was subsequently found to be allowable or the parent was the victim of identity theft or fraud.

J. If a parent commits fraud, the Department shall withhold funds from all accounts in the parent's name and close the accounts.

#### R7-2-1510. Corrective Action

A. Except for misuse of funds or failing to submit debit card transaction expense receipts pursuant to R7-2-1508, if the Department finds that a parent violated A.R.S. § 15-2401 et seq, this Article or the terms and conditions set forth by the Department in the contract signed by the parent, the Department shall:

1. Temporarily suspend the account;
2. Provide notice to the parent of the violation, including an explanation of the violation; and
3. Provide the parent 10 days to correct the violation.

B. The Department may remove a parent or qualified student from the Program for failing to correct a violation pursuant to this Section.

C. Pursuant to R7-2-1511, a parent or qualified student who has been removed from the Program pursuant to this Section may file a written request for a hearing within 30 days after being served the notice of removal.

#### R7-2-1511. Appeals

A. A parent may appeal to the Board any administrative decision the Department makes pursuant to Arizona Revised Statutes, Title 15, Chapter 19, Article 1, including determinations of allowable expenses, removal from the Program or enrollment eligibility.

B. Stay

1. Pending the resolution of an appeal during which an account is suspended, a parent may request a stay on the account suspension.

a. Included in the request for a hearing filed pursuant to R7-2-1511(F), a parent may file a request to the Board to stay an account suspension. Such request shall be in writing and shall address the matters stated in the Department's notice in R7-2-1511(E).

b. The Department may file a response to the parent's request to stay the suspension of the account. Such response shall be filed with the Board within five business days of receipt of the parent's request to stay the suspension. Such response shall be in writing and shall address the matters stated in the parent's request.

c. Within 10 business days after receipt of the Department's response, the executive director of the Board or his/her designee shall make a written determination to either:

i. Proceed with suspension of the account, or

ii. Stay all or part of the suspension of the account if there is a reasonable probability that the appeal will be upheld or that the stay is in the best interest of the State. If a stay is issued, the Department may not withhold funding or contract renewal for the account holder on account of the appealed administrative decision during the stay unless directed by the Board to do so.

d. The executive director or his/her designee shall provide the parent and the Department with a written copy of the stay determination including the basis for the determination.

C. Notwithstanding any other Section, the Department may, with the agreement of the account holder on the resolution, informally resolve a disputed administrative action at any time without a formal appeal pursuant to this Article.

D. The Department, on its website and in the parent handbook, shall provide information on the Board's

appeals process.

E. The Department shall provide parents with written notice of an appealable action taken by the Department. Such written notice shall inform the parents of his/her right to request a hearing on the action and shall include the following:

1. The statute or rule that is alleged to have been violated or on which the action is based;
2. Identify, with reasonable particularity, the nature of any alleged violation or action;
3. Include a description of the parent's right to request a hearing on the appealable agency action; and
4. Include a description of the parent's right to request an informal settlement conference.

F. Within 30 days after being served with notice of an appealable action, a parent may file a request for a hearing. The notice must be in writing and shall state the following:

1. The identity of the party requesting the hearing,
2. The mailing address of the party requesting the hearing,
3. The agency that rendered the decision related to the appealable action,
4. Identification of the action being appealed,
5. A concise statement of the reasons for the request for hearing,
6. A copy of the administrative decision issued by the Department, and
7. Any other information or documentation requested by the Board applicable to the appeal process.

G. If good cause is submitted, the Board may accept a request for a hearing that is not filed in a timely manner. Such request must be made in writing and state the basis for not filing the request on time.

H. If a parent requests a hearing pursuant to R7-2-1511(F) and includes all of the items listed in R7-2-1511(F), the Board shall schedule a hearing.

I. The Board shall provide all parties with a written notice at least 20 days prior to the date set for the hearing. The notice shall include:

1. A statement of the time, place and nature of the hearing;
2. A statement of the legal authority and jurisdiction under which the hearing is to be held;
3. A reference to the particular sections of the statutes and rules involved; and
4. A short and plain statement of the matters asserted. If a party is unable to state the matters in detail at the time the notice is served, the initial notice may be limited to a statement of the issues involved.

Thereafter upon application a more definite and detailed statement shall be furnished.

J. All notices shall be served via personal delivery or certified mail, return receipt requested or by any other method reasonably calculated to effect actual notice on the agency and all parties to the action at each party's last address of record.

K. A hearing on the appealable action shall be held after a complete appeal is filed and may be advanced or delayed on the agreement of the parties or on a showing of good cause.

L. Informal Settlement Conference

1. A parent may request an informal settlement conference be held with the Department. The request shall be in writing and shall be filed with the Department, and a copy provided to the Board, no later than 10 days after the Board provides notice that the appeal is complete. The Department shall hold an informal settlement conference within seven days after receiving the request. The Department shall notify the Board of the result of the informal settlement conference within five days of the conclusion of the informal settlement conference or prior to the hearing date, whichever is first. The request for an informal settlement conference does not alter the date the hearing is to be held.

2. If an informal settlement conference is held, a person with the authority to act on behalf of the Department must represent the Department at the conference. The Department representative shall notify the parent in writing that statements, either written or oral, made at the conference, including a written document, created or expressed solely for the purpose of settlement negotiations are inadmissible in any subsequent administrative hearing.
- M. Informal disposition may be made by stipulation, agreed settlement, consent order or default.
- N. Hearing Process
  1. All hearings shall be conducted before a hearing officer pursuant to this Section.
  2. The parties to the appealable agency action have the right to be represented by legal counsel or to proceed without counsel, to submit evidence and to cross-examine witnesses.
  3. The Board shall schedule a prehearing conference on request of any party. Either party may waive appearance by filing the request in writing to the Board no later than five days before the prehearing conference. A prehearing conference may be held for the following purposes:
    - a. Clarify or limit procedural, legal or factual issues;
    - b. Consider amendments to any pleading;
    - c. Identify and exchange lists of witnesses and exhibits intended to be introduced at the hearing;
    - d. Obtain stipulations or rulings regarding testimony, exhibits, facts or law;
    - e. Schedule deadlines, hearing dates and locations if not previously set; or
    - f. Allow the parties opportunity to discuss settlement.
  4. The record in a contested case shall include:
    - a. All pleadings, motions and interlocutory rulings.
    - b. Evidence received or considered.
    - c. A statement of matters officially noticed.
    - d. Objections and offers of proof and rulings thereon.
    - e. Proposed findings of fact and conclusions of law and exceptions thereto.
    - f. Any decision, opinion, recommendation or report of the hearing officer.
    - g. All staff memoranda, other than privileged communications, or data submitted to the hearing officer in connection with its consideration of the case.
  5. Findings of fact shall be based exclusively on the evidence and on matters officially noticed.
  6. A participant of record shall not communicate, either directly or indirectly, with the Hearing Officer about any substantive issue in a pending matter unless:
    - a. All participants of record are present;
    - b. Communication is during a scheduled proceeding, where an absent participant of record fails to appeal after proper notice; or
    - c. Communication is by written motion with copies to all participants of record.
  7. The Hearing Officer may postpone, continue, or cancel a hearing for good cause upon the written request of either party. The participant of record must establish good cause for the written request.
  8. For good cause shown, the hearing officer may grant continuances and extensions of time for filing notices or other documents.
  9. The Hearing Officer may direct a party to submit additional memorandum or information within a reasonable period of time. The Hearing Officer shall grant the opposing party a reasonable period of time to respond to the additional memorandum or information.



10. Upon written request, any party may request an opportunity to compare a document copy with the original. The Hearing Officer may grant the request if the record establishes good cause.

O. Conduct of Hearing

1. All hearings shall be recorded. The Board shall secure either a court reporter or an electronic means of producing a clear and accurate record of the proceeding.

2. A hearing may be conducted in an informal manner and without adherence to the rules of evidence required in judicial proceedings. Neither the manner of conducting the hearing nor the failure to adhere to the rules of evidence required in judicial proceedings shall be grounds for reversing any administrative decision or order if the evidence supporting the decision or order is substantial, reliable and probative.

3. The parties may submit proposed findings of fact and conclusions of law prior to the hearing. The hearing officer may require that the parties submit proposed findings of fact and conclusions of law prior to the hearing or at the close of evidence

4. All interested parties shall be ready and present with all witnesses and documents at the time and place specified in the notice of hearing and shall be prepared at such time to dispose of all issues and questions involved in the appeal. An interested party shall arrange for the presence of that party's witnesses at a hearing.

5. If a party fails to appear at a hearing, the hearing body may proceed with the presentation of the evidence of the appearing party.

6. The Hearing Officer conducting the hearing may close the hearing to other than interested parties to the extent necessary to protect the interests and rights of the interested parties, within the requirements of A.R.S. §§ 38-431.01, and 38-431.03.

7. The Hearing Officer may conduct all or part of the hearing by telephone other electronic means, as long as each party has an opportunity to participate in the entire proceeding as it takes place.

8. Conduct at any hearing that is disruptive or shows contempt for the proceeding shall be grounds for exclusion from further participation.

P. Evidence

1. All witnesses shall testify under oath or affirmation. The hearing officer shall administer oaths and affirmations.

2. The hearing officer shall afford interested parties an opportunity either to present oral or documentary evidence, or both, and to conduct such cross-examination as may be required for a full and fair disclosure of the facts. The hearing officer may limit the time of oral argument.

3. The hearing officer may choose to admit evidence, a witness' deposition, or a witness' affidavit and determine evidentiary weight of all submitted evidence. The party taking a witness' deposition or affidavit shall bear all deposition-related or affidavit-related costs. The hearing officer shall make rulings necessary to prevent argumentative, repetitive, or irrelevant questioning, to exclude evidence the hearing officer determines to be irrelevant, immaterial or unduly repetitious, and to expedite the examination to the extent consistent with the disclosure of all relevant testimony and information.

Q. Stipulations

Parties to any contested case may stipulate, in writing, agreement upon any matter involved in the proceeding. If approved by the hearing officer, agreement on matters of procedure shall be binding upon the parties to the stipulation. No substantive matter agreed to by the parties shall be binding upon the Board unless incorporated into the decision of the Board.

R. Final Administrative Decision

1. The hearing officer shall issue a written recommendation within 20 days after the hearing is concluded. The written recommendation shall contain a concise explanation of the reasons supporting the decision recommendation, including the findings of fact and conclusions of law.
2. The hearing officer shall serve a copy of the recommendation on the Board. On request of the Board, the hearing officer shall also transmit to the Board the record of the hearing as described in A.R.S. § 12-904.
3. At one of the following two regularly scheduled meetings of the Board after the hearing officer sends a copy of the recommendation to the Board, the Board may review the recommendation and accept, reject or modify it.
  - a. If the Board declines to review the hearing officer's recommendation, the Board shall serve a copy of the recommendation on all parties.
  - b. If the Board rejects or modifies the recommendation, the Board shall serve on all parties, a copy of the hearing officer's recommendation with the rejection or modification and a written justification setting forth the reasons for the rejection or modification of each finding of fact or conclusion of law.
4. The Board shall provide all parties with at least 20 days written notice of the date, time and location of the public meeting at which the Board will consider the hearing officer's recommendation.

S. Rehearing and review of decisions

1. A party may file a motion for rehearing or review within 10 days after service of the final administrative decision. The motion shall be in writing and state the basis upon which the rehearing or review is requested. The motion shall be filed with the Board and a copy provided to the opposing party. When a motion of rehearing is based on new evidence, the new evidence shall be served to the Board with the written motion.
2. The opposing party may file a response to the motion for rehearing within 15 days after the date the motion for rehearing is filed. The response shall be in writing and address the basis upon which the rehearing or review is requested. The motion shall be filed with the Board and a copy provide to the moving party.
3. A rehearing of a final administrative decision by the Board may be granted for any of the following causes materially affecting the moving party's rights:
  - a. Except as provided for in R7-2-1511(O)(2), irregularity in the administrative proceedings of the hearing, or abuse of discretion, whereby the moving party was deprived of a fair hearing;
  - b. Misconduct of the hearing officer; or
  - c. Newly discovered materials which could not with reasonable diligence have been discovered and produced at the hearing.
4. Service is complete on personal service or five days after the date the final administrative decision is mailed to the party's last known address.
5. After a hearing has been held and a final administrative decision has been entered a party is not required to file a motion for rehearing or review of the decision in order to exhaust the party's administrative remedies.

Section R7-2-1511 Appeals, becomes effective from and after January 1, 2022

# ESA Party Roles

## Arizona Department of Education

1535 W. Jefferson Street, Bin # 41 Phoenix, AZ 85007  
(602) 364 - 1969

### [Website](#)

- [HELPDESK](#) Administers and manages the daily operations of the ESA program: determining eligibility, determining allowed vs. disallowed expenses, and determination of ESA account termination. Issues administrative decisions related these decisions.
- Processes applications and issues contracts.
- Answers questions from stakeholders about the ESA program. Troubleshoots roadblocks that account holders experience when trying to get into the program, experience when accessing the program, or when trying to leave the program.
- Establishes standardized program protocols and processes that are consistent with Arizona State Statute (law) and Arizona Administrative Code (Rule). Seeks clarification from ADE legal counsel regarding any instances regarding potentially problematic Statutes and Rules that are considered contradictory, inconsistent, etc.
- Seeks and applies allowable program feedback from stakeholders to updates and changes in Statute, Rule, Handbook, and parties with which the program contracts, etc.
- Submits to the Board: quarterly reports, updates on the program, and accounts being referred to the Auditor General Collections and/or Fraud Department.

## Office of the Arizona State Treasurer [Website](#)

- As Arizona's banker, completes requests from the Department to fund and unload each individual ESA account.
- Collaborates with the Department regarding third-party contracts with vendors that service the ESA program.

## Arizona State Board of Education

1700 W. Washington Street Executive Tower, Suite 300 Phoenix, AZ 85007  
(602) 542 – 5057

### [Website](#)

- Email: [esafeedback@azsbe.az.gov](mailto:esafeedback@azsbe.az.gov) Receives and processes ESA Appeals of Department administrative decisions.
- Approves, writes and updates the ESA Rules by collaborating with the Department and stakeholders as changes to ESA laws are passed by the state Legislature, to include adoption of updates made to the ESA Parent Handbook due to Rule and Law changes.
- Provides the Department with clarifications regarding any Rule intent inquiries.
- Evaluates ESA account holder referrals made by the Department and sends referrals to the Attorney General's Office of Collections and/or Fraud.