



Iowa's Students First Act ESA Program

Accredited Nonpublic School FAQs

How can I access a copy of the nonpublic school training webinar?

A recording of the presentation and the slide deck are posted to the Department of Education's [Students First Act ESA webpage](#) under the [Information for Accredited Nonpublic Schools section](#).

Contact the Odyssey Support Team with questions about the application process via email at help.ia@withodyssey.com.

How can I access a copy of the parent/guardian training webinar?

A recording of the presentation and the slide deck are posted to the Department of Education's [Students First Act ESA webpage](#) under the [Information for Families section](#).

Contact the Odyssey Support team with questions relating to the application process via email at help.ia@withodyssey.com.

Is there a cost for schools to register or use the Odyssey system?

There is no cost to Iowa accredited nonpublic schools to use the Odyssey system.

Is the application per child or per household?

Parents/guardians need only create one account for Iowa's Students First Act ESA program. Multiple students may be added onto their application.

When do school registrations open? Will schools receive communication beforehand?

On June 15, 2023, the school administrator of each Iowa accredited nonpublic school will receive an email from Odyssey with a registration link.

Is there a way for schools to see who has applied, or is applying, in order to guide families through the process so they don't miss the deadline?

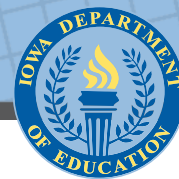
Not at this time.

If tuition is less than the ESA funds, who determines the amount that needs to be sent to the school?

Schools determine their tuition and fees for each participating student. Through the Odyssey platform, parents may authorize payment to the school up to the available dollar amount in their student's ESA.

Does the accredited nonpublic school need to provide an invoice or statement to Odyssey before payment is sent?

No. Once student tuition and fees amounts are entered, the school clicks the "Generate Invoice" button, thus submitting the request to the parent for approval then the State of Iowa for payment.



Can there be more than one school contact?

Yes. Once the nonpublic school administrator registers the school, additional users (e.g., registrar, billing) can be added through the Odyssey system.

What will schools need to provide to families for proof they are enrolled?

Verification of student enrollment to parents/guardians is an individualized school process outside of the Odyssey system. The Odyssey system can only be used for invoicing after the enrollment process is complete.

How much funding will a student receive?

Parents/guardians who choose to enroll their eligible children in an Iowa accredited nonpublic school will receive an amount equal to the per student funding allocated to public school districts for the same budget school year for each eligible child. The per student funding for the 2023-24 school year will be \$7,635. Half of the funds (\$3,817.50) will be available to pay tuition and eligible expenses that occur during the Fall 2023 semester and the remaining half will be available for the Spring 2024 semester.

Can ESA funds be used to pay for costs to attend an online nonpublic school?

Yes, if the student is enrolled at least 75% of full time and the school is an Iowa accredited online nonpublic school.

Do the accredited nonpublic schools have to be in Iowa?

Yes. Iowa's Students First ESA program participants can only use ESA funds to pay for costs to attend an Iowa accredited nonpublic school.

If a student attends an accredited nonpublic school and they receive tuition assistance from a School Tuition Organization (STO), are they eligible for this ESA program?

Yes. There is no impact on ESA eligibility with regards to receipt of tuition assistance program funds, multi-student discounts or scholarships.

Can the ESA program pay tuition for preschool?

No. ESA funds can only be used for students in kindergarten through 12th grade.

Do schools submit an invoice at the beginning of the year for the entire year or just the 1st semester?

Schools will input tuition and fee amounts for each student, each semester.

If a student was approved for an ESA, and tuition was paid to the school, but then the student does not attend, what happens to the funds that were already paid to the school? How do we send it back to the ESA?

Students that do not attend an Iowa accredited nonpublic school are not eligible for an ESA. Payments for invoices submitted by the nonpublic school for students that did not attend the nonpublic school are required to be refunded to the ESA. Schools will initiate a refund through the Odyssey dashboard. In certain cases, schools may be required to complete additional steps in order to finalize the refund. Odyssey will provide technical assistance tutorials within its help center for technical school processes in the Odyssey system.



If ESA funds were used to pay tuition for a student that withdrew mid-semester, are ESA funds required to be refunded to the ESA, even on a prorated basis?

The state does not determine whether an obligation exists with the parent in the case of a student who started the semester and later withdrew. Refunds for the semester are based on the school's contract with the parent. If an amount is deemed due, any amount that was paid using ESA funds must be refunded back to the ESA.

If a student attended in the fall, but did not return for spring, is a refund due to the ESA?

If the student attended during fall semester, ESA funds can be used to pay all eligible expenses incurred for fall semester.

If the student did not attend during spring semester, ESA funds will be frozen as of the end date of the prior semester. Any spring semester payments that were made to the nonpublic school would be required to be returned to the ESA.

The funds will remain in the student's ESA until a time they are either eligible to use the funds or the funds are required to be returned to the State due to graduation or the student turns 20.

Can a family pay pre-registration fees for the following year from an ESA in the current year?

Yes; ESA funds can be used to pay eligible tuition and fees at Iowa accredited nonpublic schools as billed through the Odyssey system.