

Individual Education Account Information Sheet

Voucher Option for Education of Students with Disabilities

Overview

The “Individualized Education Act”, adopted by the General Assembly in 2015 per Public Chapter 431, creates the Individualized Education Account Program and related accounts (IEA) for eligible students with disabilities to use for educational purposes. The program provides options for parents and students to choose the education opportunities that best meet their own unique needs through access to public education funds.

Current Status

The first IEAs will be awarded in the 2016-17 school year after the development and adoption of implementation rules, policies and procedures. Instructions for enrollment in the IEA program will be posted in spring 2016 at: www.tn.gov/education/section/iea



Specific Requirements to be Eligible

An “eligible student” must be a Tennessee resident who:

1. Has an individualized education program (IEP) in effect at the time of request for participation in the program; **and**
2. Meet at least **one** of the following requirements:
 - was previously enrolled in a TN public school during the two semesters immediately preceding the semester in which the student receives an IEA; **or**
 - is attending a TN public school for the first time; **or**
 - received an IEA in the previous year.

The law further defines an “eligible student” as a student identified with any of the following disabilities:

- autism
- deaf-blindness
- hearing impairments
- intellectual disability
- orthopedic impairments
- traumatic brain injury
- visual impairments

If my child is already in private school, can I participate in the IEA Program?

No. A child must be enrolled in a Tennessee public school for at least two semesters preceding the request or be enrolling in a Tennessee public school for the first time.

Eligible or Not Eligible: That is the Question

- a homeschooled student **would not** be eligible unless they enroll in public school for specified amount of time;
- a homebound student with an IEP that receives BEP funds **would be** eligible;
- a preschool student going to kindergarten who has an IEP **would be** eligible;
- a student moving to Tennessee from another state with an IEP **would be** eligible

Rules will be adopted by the State Board of Education that will clarify things such as which semesters will be counted for eligibility purposes and many other questions that families and school personnel currently have. This document is for informational purposes only. Refer to the Individualized Education Act and the TNDOE IEA Program webpage for additional information.

What a Parent Promises To Do

In order to participate in the program, parents must sign an agreement:

- not to enroll the student in a public school
- waive all IDEA rights and benefits
- release the local education agency (LEA) from all obligations to educate the student. This has the same effect as a refusal to consent to the receipt of services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).
- provide an education in at least the subjects of reading, grammar, mathematics, social studies and science
- ensure students in grades 3—8 participate in required assessments
- use the funds from the IEA for education related expenses defined on TNDOE website and submit receipts of all IEA funds expended to the TDOE every quarter

Key Factors to Consider

1. There will be specific guidelines regarding which schools and services will be covered by IEA funds.
2. Parents are encouraged to consider schools that provide inclusive educational settings that educate students with disabilities and students without disabilities together.
3. There is no obligation for the private school to modify the curriculum or provide additional supports or related services.
4. A parent may use IEA funds to contract with a public school/district to provide services to their child.
5. Payments are made quarterly to the IEA; may mean out of pocket up front expenses for the family.

Families may want to put anticipated costs into an “IEA Cost Estimator” to get a realistic picture of how the IEA would work for their child. For example:

How much funding will be available for my child, if eligible?

Currently, the amount averages approximately \$6,600 per year. The funds will be deposited into the student’s IEA on a quarterly basis.

Average cost of private school tuition in TN	\$ 8,799
Occupational Therapy - 1 hour/week (36 weeks)	3,600
Private Tutoring - 2 hours/week (36 weeks)	1,152
1-on-1 aide for full school day	14,040
TOTAL	\$27,591
IEA Amount	<u>-6,600</u>
Parent Responsibility	<u>\$20,991</u>

For More Information and to Keep Informed

The Individualized Education Accounts (IEA) Program webpage on the TDOE website:

www.tn.gov/education/section/iea

Answers to frequently asked questions: www.tn.gov/education/topic/iea-faq

The webpages will be updated as new information about the program becomes available.

Any questions about the IEA program can be sent to: iea.questions@tn.gov



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