



**TRANSPORTATION STIPEND**  
**PARENT/GUARDIAN HANDBOOK**



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## Overview

Florida's Transportation Stipend provides eligible households \$750 to cover the cost of transporting their children to public schools of their choice.

Step Up For Students is a state-approved, eligible nonprofit Scholarship Funding Organization (SFO) that empowers families to pursue and engage in the most appropriate learning options for their children.

Step Up For Students is one of the SFOs that administers Florida's education choice programs, including the Transportation Stipend.

The Florida Legislature created the Transportation Stipend in 2024 to replace the Transportation Scholarships within the Family Empowerment Scholarship (FES) and Florida Tax Credit Scholarship (FTC) programs.

This handbook guides families through the process of qualifying for, applying for, and using the Transportation Stipend.

## Qualifying for a Transportation Stipend

Transportation Stipends are available to students enrolled in kindergarten through grade eight (8) in a Florida nonvirtual public school that is different from the school to which the student is assigned. Qualifying public schools may include:

- A magnet school or other school of choice operated by a school district
- A charter school
- A [developmental research school](#) operated by a state university
- A school participating in a school district's [open enrollment policy](#)

A household with more than one eligible student will only receive one stipend. A student may only be submitted under one household, and on one application. Students who are members of multiple households should be submitted on a single application.



## **Applying for a Transportation Stipend**

EMA, the Education Market Assistant, is the system Step Up For Students created to help parents and guardians manage every facet of their student's scholarship, starting with the online application.

### **Create an Account in EMA**

[This video](#) and [this guide](#) explain how to create a parent or guardian account in EMA. Using their login, parents and guardians can complete an online application and submit documentation required to confirm the student's enrollment in a qualifying Florida public school.

EMA allows parents and guardians to:

- Create a profile
- Apply for a Transportation Stipend or other scholarship programs
- Review and update contact information
- Change account passwords
- Check the status of a submitted application
- Upload and attach documents
- Save and print documents associated with a submitted application

A parent or guardian must use their phone number, physical address, and email address, and no one else's, in their profile.

### **Add Students to EMA**

Before applying for a stipend, parents or guardians must add all eligible students for whom they are applying to their account as explained in [this guide](#).

Students added to EMA during previous school years, even if for a different scholarship program, do not need to be added again. Parents and guardians should ensure their information is up to date.

### **Complete a Transportation Stipend Application**

Step Up For Students requires parents and guardians to submit a complete scholarship application each school year through their account in EMA, which can be accessed [here](#).

Step Up For Students and the Florida Department of Education (FLDOE) will determine if a student is eligible for a Transportation Stipend. The eligibility process may take several weeks, and the funding process may take several months. The first round of funding is expected in early 2025. When funds are distributed will depend on when students are found eligible. Parents and guardians will receive email notifications to the email address listed in their parent or guardian profile when there is an update in eligibility and funding status.



## Enrollment Verification Documentation Required

Parents and guardians must upload one of the following documents with the application to verify their student's enrollment at their current school:

- A copy of the student's public school progress report
- A copy of the student's public school report card
- A printout or screenshot from the student's online grade portal
- A letter from the student's school on school letterhead

Uploaded documents must include the student's name, school name, school address, school year, and current enrollment status.

## Application Processing Status Definitions

- **Submitted:** The application has been received and is under review.
- **On Hold:** The student's eligibility cannot be determined at this time. The parent or guardian may need to submit additional information or documentation.
- **Awarded:** The eligible student's household has been awarded a stipend.
- **Ineligible:** The student was found to be ineligible for the Transportation Stipend program and will not receive a stipend. A household may still receive a stipend if another student in the household is found eligible.
- **At Capacity:** All currently available program funds have been awarded to other students. See the [Program at Capacity](#) section for more information.

## Funding for the Transportation Stipend

Funding for the Transportation Stipend is provided by the State of Florida. The stipend amount is \$750 per eligible household for the 2024-25 school year.

Eligible households will receive a one-time payment in the form of a check, sent to the mailing address listed in the parent or guardian profile in EMA.

Program funding is limited. Once students are found eligible for a Transportation Stipend, the FLDOE will release stipend funds to Step Up For Students to be distributed in a single payment to qualified households by check.

For the 2024-25 school year, priority will be given to households with a student who received a Transportation Scholarship while participating in the FES or FTC programs during the 2023-24 school year. For the 2025-26 school year and thereafter, priority will be given to renewing households with an eligible student. Any remaining stipends will be provided on a first-come, first-served basis.

Parents and guardians will be notified via email when funds have been disbursed. Parents and guardians may also [log in](#) to EMA to view their student's status.



## Program at Capacity

Parents and guardians should submit the student's application as soon as possible once the application opens. The number of applications received by Step Up For Students may exceed program capacity. The number of Transportation Stipends available each school year is limited by the amount of funds the Florida Legislature appropriates to the program in its annual state budget.

## Multiple Scholarships

An eligible student may participate in the Transportation Stipend and the New Worlds Scholarship Accounts program at the same time. A student may not participate in the Transportation Stipend and any other Florida K-12 scholarship program at the same time.

## Declining a Stipend

If a parent or guardian no longer wishes to receive a Transportation Stipend after submitting a completed Transportation Stipend application, they must notify Step Up For Students immediately and [submit a completed stipend decline form](#). After a stipend is paid, it cannot be declined, and a student will not be eligible for another scholarship program.

## Authorized Uses of Transportation Stipend Funds

The Transportation Stipend is for transportation to a public school that is different from the student's assigned school. Families do not have to report itemized expenditures of Transportation Stipend funds.

## For More Information

- [Transportation Stipend Information](#)
- [Transportation Stipend Statute](#)
- [Transportation Stipend Parent/Guardian Handbook Feedback Form](#)
- [Stipend Decline Form](#)

## Parent and Guardian Rights and Responsibilities

For an eligible student to receive a stipend, the student's parent must:

- Submit an application to an SFO by the deadline established by the SFO;
- Provide the documentation necessary to verify the student's eligibility for the specified school year; and
- Be responsible for the payment of all transportation-related expenses in excess of the amount of the stipend

A parent, student, or provider of services may not bill any insurance company, Medicaid, or any other agency for the same services that are paid for using stipend funds.

The terms outlined in this handbook are subject to change.



## Data Confidentiality

The information available behind the parent and guardian login in EMA is personal and confidential.

A parent or guardian may not assign responsibility for submitting any application or required documentation to another user and must not provide anyone, including service providers or personnel at a school, access to a student's account by providing a username and password.

Doing so may result in loss of eligibility and funding, or financial or criminal penalties. Step Up For Students will not be responsible for changes or purchases made by anyone other than the account owner if the login information has been shared.

This policy is intended to prevent misuse of funds and protect the confidentiality of sensitive personal financial and educational information.

## Data Security

Step Up For Students will never ask a parent or guardian for the following information via email, phone call, or text message:

- Full account password or any part of it
- Full social security number (Step Up may ask for the last 4 digits for account verification)
- Credit card number or banking details
- Any personal identification numbers other than the PIN provided on the stipend application

Parents or guardians who receive any communication requesting this type of information or have received a suspicious email, must not respond to, or click on any links in that email. Instead, the suspicious activity should be immediately reported to Step Up For Students. See the [Contact Us](#) section for how to reach Step Up For Students.

## Maintaining Up-To-Date Contact Information

Parents and guardians should keep contact information current, especially their primary email address and mailing address. Step Up For Students will communicate important information related to a student's stipend primarily through email, and stipend checks will be sent to the mailing address listed in the parent or guardian's profile.

Parents and guardians should update email filters to accept messages from Step Up For Students so emails are not sent to spam or junk folders.

If there is a change of physical or mailing address, telephone number, cell phone number, or email address, the information must be updated in [EMA](#).


If a parent or guardian needs to change their name or the student's name in EMA, please complete the [Name Change Request Form](#).




## Contact Us

Step Up For Students wishes all scholarship students a productive and fun-filled 2024-25 school year.

There are three ways to reach Step Up For Students:

 Chat with a live agent at [StepUpForStudents.org](https://StepUpForStudents.org)

 Call (877) 735-7837

 Submit an inquiry through the [Contact Us](#) page

The Customer Engagement Center is generally open from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. EST. During peak periods, hours may be extended. For Customer Engagement Center hours, visit the [Contact Us](#) page on the Step Up For Students website