Florida Choice Scholarships

UNIQUE ABILITIES SCHOLARSHIP FAMILY HANDBOOK

(FES-UA)

Step Up For Students®

SUMMARY OF CHANGES

for the 2025-26 Academic Year

INTRODUCTION

The 2025-2026 Unique Abilities Scholarship Family Handbook has been redesigned based on parent feedback collected through survey and public comment virtual sessions conducted in the spring of 2025. The handbook looks different than in previous years, with a new format that helps families, especially those newer to the program, better understand the process by following the full family journey from applying, enrolling, funding, and spending.

How to Apply

Added:

- Renewal students who miss the application deadline will be treated as new applicants.

Entering Your Information

Added:

- Residential internet bill as acceptable POR document

Uploading Required Documentation

Added:

- Residential Internet Bill as a form of proof of Florida residency
- A section highlighting different categories of families in Active-Duty
- A section highlighting Law Enforcement Officer Status
- A section highlighting Adoption Status
- A section highlighting Foster Status

Students In Private School

Added:

- 2025-2026 School Year Enrollment Deadline Dates chart (7/30 update)

Public School Enrollment Prohibition

Added:

- Standard Withdrawal Form for Students Entering K-12 Scholarships (Form IEPC-SWF).
- Early Steps Extended Option as part of the Florida Public School system.

Removed:

- References to the Florida School For Competitive Academics, as it no longer exists.

How To Get Your Scholarship Funds

- Separated Private School Students and Home Education Students, as the process for receiving scholarship funds depends on whether the student is enrolled in a private school or participating in a home education program.

Funding Amount

Added:

- The funding amount, based on the student's grade level and county of residence as entered by the parent or guardian on the application, will be determined by Quarter 1 funding

Matrix Level of Services

Clarified:

- The process in which student matrix level of services are assigned or revised.

Funding Schedule

Added:

- The chart outlines when scholarship funds are deposited into student's scholarship accounts.

Funding Proration

Added

- Students awarded a scholarship by September 30, 2025 will receive 100% of the total funding amount for that school year

Funding Rollover and Balance Limits

Added

- Florida law prohibits depositing additional funds into a student's scholarship account if the scholarship account balance exceeds $50,000.

Accrued Interest

Added:

- Interest accrual period and deposit date chart.

Eligible Expenses

Added:

- Link to eligible post-secondary institution, including those participating in the National Council for State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements (NC-SARA).
- Link to FLDOE's eligible postsecondary institution web page.

Clarified

- Renamed "standardized testing fees" to "testing and academic services", as multiple evaluation and assessment types fall under this category including entrance exams, industry certification, and career assessments which would not be considered standardized tests.

How to Use Direct Billing

Added:

- Step by step instructions on full-time private school direct billing.
- Step by step instructions on part-time private school direct billing.
- Step by step instructions on full-time or part-time pre-kindergarten direct billing.

Transferring Among Private Schools

Added:

- Quarterly Dates Chart.

Florida 529 College Savings Plan

Clarified:

- Account type must be a Uniform Transfers to Minors Act (UTMA) or Uniform Gifts to Minors Act (UGMA) account.

Reimbursement Timeline

Added:

- Parents and guardians should allow up to sixty (60) days for reimbursement requests to be reviewed and processed after all required documentation has been submitted.
- Reimbursement eligible purchase and reimbursement request window table.

Eligible Reimbursements Before Scholarship Year Begins

Added:

- Dual enrollment classes.
- Post-secondary institution tuition and fees.
- Information about fees that are eligible to be paid to a private school or HEIP program before the school year begins.

Supporting Documentation for Eligible Use of Scholarship Funds

Added:

- Parents and guardians can apply for reimbursement for services up to four months in advance.

Proof of Payment For Private School Tuition Using Tuition Management Systems

Added:

- Information for private school tuition using tuition management systems.

Supporting Documentation for Proof of Payment

Clarified:

- The last four digits of a credit card or debit card can serve as proof of purchase

Internet Resources (Including Mobile Hot Spots and Streaming Services)

Added:

- Requirements for documentation when submitting internet reimbursement requests.

Physical Education (P.E.)

Removed:

- Requirement for student name and instructor name to appear on invoices or receipts.

Documentation of Credentials

Added:

- Credentials part-time tutoring and choice navigator services must be provided in English.
- A full LinkedIn profile may be used to verify provider employment history

Fees For Specialized After-School Education Programs or Specialized Summer Education Programs

Clarified:

- Specialized summer education programs, including overnight and day educational camps, require pre-authorization.
- If the camp is not designed specifically for students with special or unique needs, the pre-authorization request must include a letter from a therapist or doctor describing how the camp will benefit your student's needs.
- Please note that camp lodging and food costs are not eligible for reimbursement.

Shipping Guidelines

Added:

- MyScholarShop orders must be shipped to the Florida mailing address listed on the student's scholarship account.
- Reimbursed purchases must ship to a Florida address or P.O Box.
- All shipping types, including import/export duty, expedited, and overnight fees are eligible uses of scholarship funds and are reimbursable.
- Parents/guardians who are active-duty members of the United States Armed Forces and received permanent change of station orders to this state or, at the time of renewal, whose home of record or state of legal residence is Florida are exempt from this and may have items shipped outside of Florida.

Pre-Authorization Requests

Added:

- Parents and guardians should allow up to sixty (60) days for pre-authorization requests to be reviewed and processed after all required documentation has been submitted.
- Deadline to submit pre-authorization requests of May 29, 2026

Additional Purchasing Provisions:

Removed:

- The Educational Benefit Form requirement, as the Pre-Authorization Form already includes a request for clarification about the educational benefit of the item(s).

Maintenance Agreements/Warranties for Eligible Devices

Added:

- Maintenance agreements for eligible devices purchased with FES-UA funds are eligible FES-UA expenses. Maintenance agreements/warranties are service agreements with a device manufacturer or vendor to support regular service on that device.

Leaving the Scholarship Program

Added:

- Step-by-step instructions for families who want to decline the scholarship.

Actions That May Lead To A Loss of The Scholarship

Added:

- Parents and guardians must approve each quarterly payment to their students' school and may not designate any organization or individual to approve the payment on their behalf. Parents and guardians who fail to approve quarterly payments for the eligible private school where their student is enrolled may forfeit their scholarship.

Appendix A

Added:

- Citation links to disability definitions
- Clarification of High-Risk Child statutory requirements

Appendix B

Added:

- Authorized Use of Scholarship Funds Chart

MyScholarShop

Removed:

- MSS Status definitions, as they will be changing