



**MISSISSIPPI
DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION**

Ensuring a bright future for every child

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NEWS RELEASE

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MDE Announces Lottery for Special Needs Scholarship Program Applications

JACKSON, Miss. – The Mississippi Department of Education (MDE) announced plans today for a lottery on July 14 to award 58 Education Scholarship Accounts (ESA) for the 2017-18 school year.

Established by the Equal Opportunity for Students with Special Needs Act of 2015, the ESA program provides scholarships to parents of students with disabilities who want to remove their child from a public school to seek educational services elsewhere. ESA recipients are eligible to be reimbursed up to \$6,494 in 2017-18 for the cost of private educational services.

The law provides for 435 ESA accounts for the 2017-18 school year. As of June 30, 377 ESAs have been awarded to students returning from the 2016-17 school year. Therefore, 58 additional ESAs are available for 2017-18. There are currently 257 applications on the waiting list for 2017-18. The law requires the MDE to hold a lottery to award ESAs when the demand exceeds the supply.

All eligible applications received for the 2017-18 school year that have not yet been awarded will be included in the lottery. Only complete, eligible applications received by July 14 will qualify for the lottery.

To participate in the ESA program:

- the applicant must be a Mississippi resident;
- the student must have had an active Individualized Education Program (IEP) within five years of the date of application; and
- the parent must sign an agreement to adhere to the rules of participation.

Parents who are accepted into the program will be reimbursed quarterly after submission of a reimbursement request with proper documentation of expenses incurred. Funds can also be paid quarterly directly to an educational service provider if approved by the parent.

For more information, visit www.mdek12.org/OSE/ESA or call the MDE Office of Special Education at 601-359-3498.