

Grants for Children with Disabilities

FAQ

The grant program is established by North Carolina General Statute 115C-112.5. It is administered by the North Carolina State Education Assistance Authority (the SEAA).

Contact information for the SEAA:

Phone: 1-855-330-3955 (toll-free)

Email: DGrants@ncseaa.edu

Fax: 919-248-4687

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Eligibility

The following criteria must **all** be met for a family to receive a grant. The child must:

- Be a child with a disability
- Receive special education at least 75 days of the semester for reimbursement of related services or special education
- Be enrolled in an approved eligible school or home school
- Be enrolled for at least 75 days for the semester for which the parent seeks reimbursement for tuition
- Be at least 5 by August 31st, but younger than 22
- Not be in a nonpublic school at public expense
- Not receive public school services while using the grant
- Not have a high school diploma
- Never have been enrolled full-time at a postsecondary institution (college or technical school)

In addition to the above, the student must:

- Have been previously approved to receive the grant
OR
- Have been enrolled in a North Carolina public school for the previous semester
OR
- Be eligible for enrollment in kindergarten or first grade in a North Carolina public school

Are children in preschool eligible for a grant?

No.

My child is already enrolled in nonpublic school or home school. Am I eligible for a grant for the tuition?

No, unless you are renewing the grant. For initial eligibility, students must either (1) have been enrolled in public school the entire semester prior to the semester for which the parent is applying for the grant, or (2) be enrolling in kindergarten or first grade.

I withdrew my child from public school before the end of the semester. Am I going to be eligible for the grant?

It depends. The student must have been enrolled in public school the entire semester prior to using the grant. If a student was enrolled for fewer than 75 school days, this condition is not met.

My child will attend a nonpublic school, but will also receive speech and language services from our local public school. Can we receive the grant for the nonpublic school tuition?

No. A family cannot receive both the grant and public school services such as occupational or speech therapy.

Can my child receive this grant if we home school?

Yes, if the home school is identified by the [North Carolina Division of Nonpublic Education](#) and the student meets all of the remaining eligibility criteria. There are three reimbursable categories for home school families: [Special Education](#), [Related Services](#), and [Educational Technology](#).

Can my child receive a grant to pay for tuition if we home school?

No. Students attending home schools are eligible only for reimbursement of special education instruction, related services, and educational technology. Use the preapproval process prior to incurring these expenses.

We are using this grant to pay for tuition at an eligible nonpublic school, but our expense is less than the full amount of the grant. Can we be reimbursed for other expenses?

Yes. Use the preapproval process. The [preapproval process](#) is explained in a later section.

Can my child receive a grant to pay tuition at a public school?

Yes. If you enroll your child in a North Carolina out-of-district public school in order to receive special education services which are unavailable at your assigned school, you may be eligible for the grant to pay the tuition. You would not, however, be able to use the grant for other purposes.

Does my child’s nonpublic school have to be located in North Carolina?

Yes. Nonpublic schools must also be identified by the [North Carolina Division of Nonpublic Education](#), which maintains [directories](#) of the nonpublic schools.

Is the nonpublic school required to provide all of the services my child needs and currently gets through the public school?

No. Nonpublic schools are not required to provide any specific services or curriculum. You should discuss your child’s needs with the nonpublic schools you are considering before enrolling your child. See these [recommendations](#) for parents.

What is a “disability”? How do I prove my child has a disability?

Disability is defined in the North Carolina General Statutes. You can read the definition [here](#). In order for the SEAA to determine your child’s eligibility for a grant, you must submit an Individualized Education Program (IEP) from the public school system which recommends special education and / or related services.

What is “special education”?

Special education is defined in the statute. You can read the definition [here](#).

What are “related services”?

Related services are defined in the statute. You can read the definition [here](#).

Determination of a Disability

Is every disabled child a “child with a disability”?

No. A “child with a disability” means a child who requires special education and related services because of his or her disability. The determination of who is a “child with a disability” is made by the public school system in the form of an Individualized Education Program (IEP).

What is an Individualized Education Program (IEP)?

Individualized Education Program, or IEP, is defined in the North Carolina General Statutes. You can read the definition [here](#).

What do I do if my child does not have an IEP?

Students must have an IEP from the public school the student attends or from the student's local education agency (LEA) (often called "school district"). Contact your child's public school to request an evaluation for an IEP.

My child has an IEP from a nonpublic school. Is that acceptable?

No. The IEP must come from a North Carolina public school. Even if you are renewing the grant, and thus have been attending a nonpublic school, you will need to contact the local public school and request an evaluation for an IEP. See the [recommendations](#) for help.

My child does not have an IEP, but has a 504 plan due to a disability. Can we qualify for a grant?

No. The student must have an IEP to be eligible for a grant.

How often does my child need to be re-evaluated by the public school for an IEP?

The student must be re-evaluated at least every three years to maintain eligibility for the grant. For example, to be eligible for reimbursement of fall 2014 expenses, the evaluation must have been done after September 1, 2011. To be eligible for reimbursement of spring 2015 expenses, the evaluation must have been done after January 1, 2012.

Does the public school have to complete the entire IEP process?

The SEAA will accept *either* a full copy of the signed IEP (the form labeled DEC4) developed by the public school system, *or* a copy of the signed Eligibility Determination Form (the form labeled DEC3 with the supporting worksheets) from the public school system if the IEP has not been written.

Where can I learn more about getting an IEP for my child?

The North Carolina Department of Public Instruction provides valuable information on the [Exceptional Children](#) section of their website.

Reimbursable Expenses: Tuition

Which nonpublic schools are eligible?

To be an eligible nonpublic school for the purposes of this grant, the school must be identified by the [North Carolina Division of Nonpublic Education](#). You can access the DNPE's school [directories](#) to see current lists of eligible schools.

Is the nonpublic school obligated to follow the IDEA Act?

No. Children who are placed in a nonpublic school by their parents do not have a right to receive the special education and related services that they would receive if enrolled in the public schools. A private school does not have a legal obligation to provide special education and related services for students who are children with disabilities. Parents are encouraged to select the nonpublic school carefully and

discuss the child's needs prior to enrollment. Consult these [recommendations](#) about working with the nonpublic school.

Can I ask the nonpublic school to set up a payment plan?

You and the nonpublic school must agree to the method of payment. The school may, but is not obligated to, wait for payment or set up a payment plan. Reimbursement to the parent occurs at the conclusion of each semester.

I home school my child. Can I use the grant for tuition?

No. Tuition reimbursement will not be provided for home school students.

I want to transfer my child to a nonpublic school after the beginning of the semester. Can I qualify for a grant to pay the tuition?

Yes, if the student will attend the nonpublic school for at least 75 school days during the semester and the student meets all of the remaining eligibility criteria.

Some of my child's school days are a half-day. Do they count towards the required 75 days of enrollment?

Yes.

My child's school closed before the semester ended. Is there an exception to the 75 day enrollment requirement?

No. If your child enrolls in another approved nonpublic school, you may still be eligible for the grant.

Can my child attend an eligible nonpublic school part of the semester and then attend a home school the rest of the semester?

The student must attend the eligible school for at least 75 school days to qualify for tuition reimbursement. A family cannot combine nonpublic school attendance and home school attendance to reach 75 days.

My child changed schools during the semester. Can the days of enrollment at each school be added together to meet the 75 day enrollment requirement?

Yes. A family can combine nonpublic school attendance from two schools, if both schools are approved nonpublic schools.

If I send my child to a half-day nonpublic school, and to public school the other half, can I be reimbursed for the nonpublic school expenses?

No.

My child cannot return to the nonpublic school as a result of the disability. Is there an exception to the 75 day enrollment requirement for this situation?

No, but you may still be eligible for the grant if your child enrolls in another approved nonpublic school and your child meets all of the other requirements of the program.

My child is frequently ill. If my child is home sick, does the sick day count towards the required 75 days of enrollment?

Yes.

Reimbursable Expenses: Special Education

Explain the 75 day requirement.

The child must be receiving special education instruction (provided at an eligible school or by a home school parent) at least 75 days of the semester. If the child is receiving special education instruction from a school or a parent every day, the grant can be used for special education, related services, and educational technology expenses.

Who can provide special education instruction that is reimbursable by the grant?

Special education providers must have a current North Carolina teaching license or its equivalent (for example: the provider is a licensed teacher from another state or the provider has a degree in special education). Use the preapproval process, where you will be asked to provide the credentials of the service provider. You may be required to provide proof of credentials after review of the preapproval form.

Can a special education provider be a member of the student's immediate family?

No. Grant funds cannot be used to pay a student's immediate family or a member of the student's household for services. Nor can grant funds be used to pay a member of the home school family or household if two families form a home school.

I home school my child, but my child needs additional special education instruction. Can a school provide this instruction?

Grant funds can be used for special education instruction at an eligible nonpublic school. If the school is not an eligible nonpublic school, the grant can only be used for supplemental instruction, not for the child's main instruction. For example, a family who home schools their child could use the grant to pay for the child to take an algebra class at an eligible nonpublic school.

See questions about [tuition](#) for more information about eligible nonpublic schools and earlier questions in this category about required credentials for special education providers. Tuition reimbursement is not provided for home school students.

Does my child have to receive the special education services which the grant is paying for every day?

No, but the child must be receiving special education instruction for at least 75 days of the semester (provided at an eligible nonpublic school or by a home school parent).

Can the grant be used for curriculum?

Yes.

Can the grant be used for online educational services?

If the online services are for a school, see the requirements in the [tuition](#) section.

If the online services are for special education instruction, see earlier questions in this section regarding special education instruction.

Can the grant be used for testing materials?

Yes.

Reimbursable Expenses: Related Services

What are “related services”?

Related services are defined in the IDEA act. You can read the definition [here](#).

Who can provide related services that are reimbursable by the grant?

Related services providers must have current state-approved or state-recognized qualifications. Use the preapproval process to make sure the expenses are reimbursable.

Can a related services provider be a member of the applicant’s immediate family?

No. Grant funds cannot be used to pay a student’s immediate family or a member of the student’s household for services. Nor can grant funds be used to pay a member of the home school family or household if two families form a nonpublic home school.

Explain the 75 day requirement.

The child must be receiving special education instruction (provided at an eligible nonpublic school or by a home school parent) at least 75 days of the semester. If the child is receiving special education instruction for at least 75 days of the semester, the grant can be used for special education, related services, and educational technology expenses.

Does my child have to receive the related services which the grant is paying for every day?

No, but the child must be receiving special education instruction for at least 75 days of the semester (provided at an eligible nonpublic school or by a home school parent).

Can I be reimbursed for transportation expenses?

It depends. The transportation service must be necessary for your child to benefit from special education. Grant funds cannot be used to pay transportation expenses incurred for your convenience or personal preferences. Use the preapproval process before you incur these expenses.

Reimbursable Expenses: Educational Technology

What technology purchases are reimbursable?

- 1) Assistive technology which is used for educational purposes for a child with a disability.
- 2) Educational technology (hardware and software) which is used for educational purposes for a child with a disability.

Click here for a list of [assistive and educational technology](#).

Can I choose what technology my child needs?

Yes. However, families are encouraged to research carefully before purchasing technology. Consult these [recommendations](#) about assessing your child’s needs and choosing technology.

Are there limits to the number of purchases that can be made?

The grant cannot be used to purchase the same category of item again within three years. The total grant amount, for all reimbursable expenses, is \$3,000 per semester.

Are there limits to the cost of an item?

Grant funds will reimburse families for reasonable expenses. Using the preapproval process will ensure that the purchase is reimbursable.

Can I buy used technology?

Yes. Use the preapproval process to ensure reimbursement.

Application and Preapproval Process

How do I apply for a grant?

Complete the application online. Go to www.ncseaa.edu and click on the tab that says K-12.

When do I apply?

The application will be available May 1 for grants for the following academic year. Approvals are conditional. Funds are disbursed at the end of the fall semester and again at the end of the spring semester.

What information do I need to apply?

You must indicate on the application the type of special education or related services that the student will receive the following semester. You will also need to submit a copy of the student's IEP in order for the SEAA to award the grant.

What should I do if I am waiting for my local school district to evaluate my child for the IEP?

Go ahead and complete the application. Submit it without the IEP. Your application will be considered in the order it was received, although you will need to submit the IEP to be awarded the grant.

What if I don't know yet which nonpublic school my child will attend?

Go ahead and complete the application. Indicate on the form that the school is unknown. Submit it without the name of the school. Your application will be considered in the order it was received, although you will need to provide the name of the nonpublic school to be awarded the grant.

Who can complete the application for a grant?

A parent must complete the application. You can read the definition of who qualifies as a parent [here](#).

I am the child's grandparent. Can I fill out the application for my grandchild?

Yes, if you are acting in the place of a natural or adoptive parent and the child lives with you. You can read the definition of parent [here](#).

How will the SEAA communicate with me about the grant?

You will be contacted via email. Information about the status of the application, the preapproval process, or the reimbursement process will be on the Grants for Children with Disabilities Portal.

How do I access this portal?

You will receive an email with a web link directing you to the portal. If you do not receive this email, or cannot find it, you may contact the SEAA by phone, answer the security questions (your city of birth and your elementary school), and receive the information again.

What else do I need to know about the Grants for Children with Disabilities Portal?

In the email you receive directing you to the portal will be a unique SEAA ID for your child. You will need this unique SEAA ID and other basic information (such as your child's birthdate). If you have more than one child in this program, you will need to access each child's portal. Note that the grant applicant on file will be the only authorized person to access the information in the portal.

Explain the preapproval process.

For expenses other than tuition at a nonpublic school, you should submit a form requesting preapproval for the expense prior to incurring the expense. Although reimbursement will still occur at the end of each semester, and you will submit a receipt or other documentation at that time, you can use the preapproval process to be assured that your expense will be reimbursed.

You will access this preapproval form through the portal, complete the form electronically, and submit it through the portal. If you have more than one expense, you should request the preapproval on the same form. Although a response to a request for preapproval may take longer initially, it is expected that a response will routinely take a week.

The preapproval process is strongly recommended. It is in your best interest to know that you will be reimbursed before spending money.

Who should complete a preapproval process?

- If a student will attend an eligible nonpublic school, and the grant will be used for tuition, the family **does not need** to submit a preapproval form.
- If a student will attend an out-of-district public school for which payment of tuition is required, the family **should** submit a preapproval form.
- For all other expenses (special education instruction, related services, and educational technology) the family **should** submit a preapproval form.

Where is the preapproval form?

The preapproval process will be completed through the Grants for Children with Disabilities Portal.

For fall 2014, the preapproval form was not available when I incurred my expenses. What should I do?

Submit a preapproval form as soon as possible so you can determine whether or not the expense is reimbursable. If the expense is reimbursable, not submitting a preapproval form prior to incurring the expense will not prevent you from being reimbursed.

Award Process

How and when will I find out if my child is conditionally approved to receive a grant?

Families will be notified within 3 to 4 weeks via email. The grant approval information is also available on the Grants for Children with Disabilities Portal.

Is there a priority for how the grants are awarded?

Priority is given to prior recipients and then to new applicants on a first-come, first-served basis.

What does “conditionally approved” mean?

The SEAA acknowledges that you are eligible for the grant, and that you are guaranteed funding as long as you submit acceptable documentation showing the expenses that you incurred by the SEAA deadline.

Does the SEAA send me a check?

No. You will complete an Electronic Funds Transfer form which the SEAA will provide for you. The SEAA deposits the funds directly into your bank account.

How much money is the grant?

The parent or guardian is reimbursed for his or her actual expenses up to a maximum of \$3,000.00 per semester per child.

Who gets the grant money?

The parent who completes the application will receive the grant funds.

When is the grant awarded?

Parents are notified about the award within 3-4 weeks after submitting an application. If an applicant is awarded the grant, the award is conditional pending submission of documentation of expenses. Parents will be reimbursed at the end of the fall semester (receiving funds beginning in January) and / or at the end of the spring semester (receiving funds beginning in June).

Documentation for Reimbursement

What kind of documentation of my expenses do I need to submit to receive a grant, and when do I submit them?

The documentation includes the receipts which show what you have paid for tuition or other expenses. Submit these receipts at the end of the semester in which you incurred the expense, and after you have paid the bills. Alternatively, for tuition, you may request a letter from the nonpublic school stating the amount of tuition charged for that semester.

For tuition, related services, or special education instruction services, the document must show:

- Student's name **and** the name of the parent or guardian paying the expense
- Name of school or service provider's name
- Dates of enrollment or service
- Amount of tuition expense and confirmation that the student was enrolled at least 75 days of the semester (receipt must show the semester(s) of enrollment – fall and/or spring)
(AND / OR)
- Amount of service expenses

For special education products or educational technology, the document must show:

- The name of the item
- The name of the retail outlet
- The amount paid
- The date purchased

Note that the parent or guardian named on the grant application must also be the responsible party for payment named on the receipt submitted for reimbursement.

How do I send the documentation of my qualifying expense to the SEAA?

You should submit your documents through the portal or email DGrants@ncseaa.edu with the document as an attachment. The portal is more secure than email. Faxing or mailing a hard copy will delay your reimbursement.

How do I submit my documents through the portal?

1. You need an electronic copy of the document. Scan the document, or when possible, ask your nonpublic school, service provider, or retailer to email you an electronic copy of the receipt.
2. Save the electronic documents on your computer and name them appropriately so you can find them again.
3. Go to the Grants for Children with Disabilities Portal as directed in the [Application and Preapproval Process](#) section.
4. Look for the Upload Files option. Click on that option and follow the directions. You will be able to browse your computer files to find the files you saved on your computer

What should I do if I do not have documentation for my qualifying expenses?

If you need assistance with your documentation, call the SEAA toll free at 1-855-330-3955, or send an email to DGrants@ncseaa.edu.

What is a Form W-9 and why does the SEAA need it?

The SEAA is required to report the amount of the grant to the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). Form W-9, which is [Federal Form W-9](#) (Request for Taxpayer Identification Number and Certification), provides a correct taxpayer identification number for reporting purposes.

Make sure that the parent or guardian named on the W-9 is the same parent or guardian who completed the grant application.

What is an EFT form and why does the SEAA need it?

The [Electronic Funds Transfer \(EFT\) Form](#) is provided by SEAA in order to deposit funds directly into your bank account. You must also include an imaged copy of your bank routing # and account (a voided copy of your check).

Make sure that the parent or guardian named on the EFT form is the same parent or guardian who completed the grant application.

What happens if I do not want to share private and confidential information with the SEAA?

Your failure to cooperate with verification of any information may result in loss of eligibility for a grant.

Renewing the Grant

Will our application receive priority consideration if the SEAA receives it after a first-time application?

Renewal applications will receive priority consideration over new applicants for the next school year as long as they are submitted by the established deadline, which is about one month after the renewal application becomes available. Watch for an email in late April.

How will continued eligibility be reviewed for renewal students?

Students must have a re-evaluation every three years to verify that they continue to require special education and / or related services. As long as SEAA has documentation from the public school that a student continues to require special education and / or related services, the student will remain eligible for the grant (for eligible expenses). See the [eligibility](#) section for information regarding first-time applicants.

Do I need to submit my child's IEP each year?

The student must be re-evaluated at least every three years to maintain eligibility for the grant. For example, to be eligible for reimbursement of fall 2014 expenses, the student's last evaluation must have been done after September 1, 2011. To be eligible for reimbursement of spring 2015 expenses, the student's last evaluation must have been done after January 1, 2012. If your student was evaluated within the last three years, you don't need to submit the IEP again.

Can I ask my nonpublic school staff to do the re-evaluation?

No. You'll need to contact your local public school and arrange for a re-evaluation. See the [recommendations](#) for help. Alternatively, you may choose to pay for an evaluation by a private provider and submit the results of the evaluation to the public school district in which your child's nonpublic school is located. They will review the results and either issue a Determination of Eligibility (DEC3) or write a full Individualized Education Program (IEP DEC4) for your child.