

0:04

Hello, everyone. Welcome.

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I'm Kathryn Marker at the State Education Assistance Authority, and we're here today to talk about the ESA plus program, so we're just getting started, and we're expecting a full house today. So I'm going to wait a few minutes before the content.

0:23

Hope you can see the screen, and I hope everyone's hearing me OK. If you should have trouble with audio during the webinar, there are some instructions in the chat.

0:35

There's a gray audio pane for audio where you can toggle back and forth between the default which is your computer's audio,

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and then the phone, if you prefer to call in

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So, take a minute, and perhaps you'll see the handout, which we have just put in. It's a copy of today's presentation.

0:57

It's available via the PowerPoint, and then a PDF of that PowerPoint. So, either version, if one works better for you than the other, they're both there.

1:07

So, essentially, you'll have a little manual with notes, in the PowerPoint.

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We're glad for you to take that with you and use it. It is just a presentation,

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it's not formal documents, so we'll beg your grace if there's, you know, a typo or a small error in there. But that's our presentation today with our notes, and we're glad to talk with you, and also glad to share that with you.

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I see everyone coming in. That's wonderful. We are expecting quite a lot of people today, which is, again, a good thing.

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And I wanted to point out that we welcome your questions. So there is the question pane, a chance for you to electronically put in your questions. We're not going to be able to answer those live today. We just don't have enough staff

2:00

or to pull everyone away from the other work to have the crew that it would need to answer all your questions

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within the hour we have designated today, but we are planning to put together a FAQ and we will gladly share that with you, Hopefully, within a week or so. We don't want to take too long with that.

2:22

So, at this point, it's been a couple of minutes. I've sort of stalled to get us started. Let me say hello again. We have not everyone who's registered, but we have a good percentage of the folks we were expecting. So hello, again.

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I'm Kathryn Marker. I'm at the State Education Assistance Authority, and I'm the director of the division that, among other work, does the K 12 programs, including the opportunity scholarship.

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And until to date, we have done the disability grant and the education savings account, the ESA.

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We've invited you here today to talk about the transition to the ESA plus.

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So our target audience are those of you who have some experience with the programs who have a disabilities grant award, or an ESA award, or possibly both.

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If you're brand new to the program and really don't know either of those two programs, this isn't the ideal presentation for you.

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You are welcome to stay, but be aware that we're going to talk in terms of a transition.

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And so, we're targeting our materials and our presentation to those folks who have been in the programs and are going to transition to the new.

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I'm not alone here today, thank goodness. I've got a good team.

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You may know Tiffany Jatta who's the Program Manager for the disability programs. And Michele Fountain, who has been working primarily with ESA and is knowledgeable about Class Wallet, and the interactions that we have with that platform.

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So, the three of us are going to present to you today, and I hope that you'll find it useful.

4:00

Again, put in your questions if you have them. There's a handout section there where you should be able to download the PowerPoint that we're using today. That's the only handout that's there. There's two versions of it, PowerPoint and PDF.

4:13

So, without further ado, let me go ahead and get started.

4:26

Before we start with ESA plus, I wanted you to have a chance to see a little bit about what else is going on. It'll help you, perhaps, have some compassion for our staff in this busy time. So there were additional new students in all three Programs, Opportunity Scholarship and the existing Disabilities Grant and ESA. There was funding for the current year. And anytime you're doing large numbers of new awards with onboarding in the middle of the year it's tough. So our staff have prioritized making these additional awards and onboarding these new students for the current year, which puts us a little behind in terms of next year.

5:07

Also, just wanted to give you a high level overview of the eligibility and other changes for the opportunity scholarship, partly, so, you know, again, what else is going on at the program, and partly, some of you may have Opportunity Scholarship awards as well.

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You know, if you're not aware, opportunity is the income based program and does not require disability documentation, and students can receive opportunity and ESA plus together, if students are eligible for both.

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So, the changes for opportunity include the prior public school requirement, There were several changes to it. It still exists for opportunity.

5:46

It does not exist for new students coming into ESA plus. there is no prior public school requirement for this new ESA plus program, but that requirement remains for opportunity, and the details changed a little bit.

5:58

The Opportunity Scholarship, an income based program, the income guidelines changed. The award amount for opportunity scholarship also changed. So the Opportunity Scholarship application will open as usual February first.

6:09

And again, this doesn't affect you directly as renewals, but for your friends, or any siblings that you may want to apply as new students, the ESA plus application will open March the first this year as an implementation accommodation. We had to have an open March the first instead of what we would have preferred, on February first.

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So if your students have benefited from D grants and ESA funds. You are going to renew for your students into this new program.

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That will happen in late January, by early February, you'll have the opportunity, once funds have disbursed on behalf of your students, so you are not going to need to apply as a new student via that new student application.

7:01

So, again, current year awards, just to make sure we're oriented. There was additional funding allocated for both disability grants and ESA for the current year, the year we're in now.

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Eligible students who had submitted, who were on applications submitted back in February, March of 21, who hadn't been able to receive awards due to the limits of funding.

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Those students have been offered awards that

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start with the spring 22 semester. Now, if you're a parent of one of those students, we're glad you're here, and we're considering you now a current student.

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But, we recognize that you've got a learning curve ahead of you where you're trying to understand the existing program in order to finish out the year for your spring award.

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But, then, you've also, of course, got to prep a little bit so that you feel comfortable with the changes as you transition into ESA Plus.

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So, we recognize that, and thank you for your patience and your willingness to stick with the program processes.

8:01

So, you know, many of you know that for the last few years, there's been such unmet need.

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And there were hundreds of students unable to be served by the programs and the frustration was ongoing.

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So, we're really excited about the legislature's changes and their allocation and looking forward to serving all these students.

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The big news is that the disabilities grant and the current ESA will merge, the programs are going to consolidate, and they will become one program.

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And that program is education student accounts, and ESA plus for short.

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So individually, the disabilities grant and the current ESA will cease to exist after the current school year.

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We're going to finish out this year with our two programs side-by-side

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as always. Students who have received funding in those two programs separately will renew into the new program.

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So, a disabilities grant Family will not renew into disabilities grant,

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they will renew, and next year's award that they've renewed into is ESA Plus. The award amounts are consistent, and we're going to talk more about this later, but the award amounts are consistent for the most part with the existing programs.

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So we will have a slide about that. We'll discuss that. Only one application is going to open in spring 2022, in March of this year, and it will be for families of students with disabilities one program, it'll be the ESA plus.

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In future years, we would expect our two programs, Opportunity scholarship and ESA plus to open on February first. This year they're offset, opportunity continues on its schedule.

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ESA Plus has a slight delay due to the legislation that passed in November, which needs a little lead time for the application. It will open March the first.

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So, just in terms of ongoing good news. The legislature has also provided additional funding for the second year of the budget biennium, which is 22, 23. So for your friends, or perhaps siblings, the increased funding is going to allow for additional new awards.

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And there's also increased funding sort of mapped out for subsequent years. So the picture is a lot more positive for the growth of the programs and for serving the families in the years to come.

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So hope you'll see with us that there are so many advantages, the biggest one that we see is a streamlined nature of this program.

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So students with disabilities, there's already a lot of navigating, you know, the IEP process when you were at the public school, you know, your arrangements for home-school or enrollment for a private school. And then the state was previously offering you two programs to consider to weigh one against the other, or perhaps to have both.

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How exciting it is to have one program with one set of processes, we have the same qualifying expenses as before. So that has not changed for the cost of tuition and fees.

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And then, therapeutic providers, tutors, curriculum for home-school families.

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The award amounts certainly didn't go down. Your award amount, depending on the situation, will either stay the same or be slightly increased. More about that in a minute, another exciting slide.

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And there's no more out of pocket costs for you, disability grants families, and

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you've often had to wait for your reimbursement, and that's frustrating to be out of pocket.

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And then that additional funding is also very exciting.

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Gonna pause here for a minute on the agenda that, we're about to head into the, to the heart of our presentation today and let's just make sure everybody is situated. If you joined us a little bit later I want to point out some of the things.

11:57

There is a copy of the slides, you can download them as a handout.

12:04

You can also count on seeing the recording of this webinar in a few days. So, if you registered for this webinar, then you will receive a follow-up e-mail either way.

12:17

So if you know someone who registered but did not attend, they, too, get a follow up e-mail, both of those, whether the folks attended or not have a link to the recording.

12:26

So that'll come 24 hours later.

12:27

So, tomorrow, at 12 o'clock you should get an e-mail from Go To Webinar that includes some follow-up information and a link to the recording.

12:36

So that'll be helpful for you. It will also be posted on our website one day next week.

12:41

So if for some reason the webinar, the e-mail follow up, you don't get it, or you miss it, you can count on seeing it on our website.

12:51

There is a particular website, if one of my colleagues, if you guys could put that in the chat. The sort of a landing page for our legislative changes, that's where the registration for our webinars is.

13:05

And it's also where up to date information about the changes. So take a minute and find that on the website.

13:17

The website, of course, needs an overhaul because it addresses two programs. We can't just delete all that information because we have families who will finish out the semester, finish out the year in those programs. So, we're going to keep a lot of that information on there during this transition.

13:34

And we're going to try to make it clear for new families what to do, it's going to be a bit of a confusing time, so we ask your patience.

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And, again, there is a particular portion of our website that we'll get in the chat before we end today, to make sure you know right where to go. If you get to the website, click on Updates, and that's where it is. Then, you'll know, that's where you can find up to the minute information about the changes, and, you know, you're at the place that's for 22, 23, and the changes.

14:08

And some of the other pages

14:11

again, retain the information for the existing programs because they still need to operate until we finish the current school year.

14:25

All right, so I'm going to pause for a minute and I'm about to turn it over to Tiffany. And so these slides will go one at a time through these chunks of the material.

14:37

Tiffany is going to give you a quick overview, one slide. Just how does this work?

14:41

So you can get the big picture.

14:43

There are some changes to the options for part-time enrollment if you enroll your student part-time at the school.

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The award amounts, that's very important, the limits to the account, there are some limits. For those of you that are only in disabilities grant, you probably are making more of an adjustment. When we talk about an account, what does that mean? So hang in there.

15:08

Those of you who have been accessing ESA funds through your electronic account. I know you know what we mean when we talk about an electronic account.

15:16

But we'll discuss that, a little bit about Class Wallet.

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But today isn't really a training.

15:21

We just wanted to give you an idea of what to expect.

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So don't feel like this is your only moment to figure it all out. This spring, and early this summer we'll get serious about making sure you're ready for managing your students' funds for this fall.

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Then we'll finish with timelines.

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So the current year, we're all in this together, right?

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For the second semester of the current year, we need to follow our existing processes with our two programs separately. And then we'll talk a little bit about the timelines for the upcoming year.

15:57

Again, if you're out there as a family of a prospective new student,

16:04

the material we're presenting, the information we're presenting is really targeted to our current families, and I would encourage you to stick around if you'd like, but we're having another webinar in two weeks that is more targeted to new families, families who aren't familiar with the existing programs.

16:22

So at this point, I will pause and allow Tiffany to take the microphone if you're ready, Tiffany, and we'll do these slides together.

16:34

OK, I am. Thank you so much, Kathryn.

16:39

OK, and again, good afternoon, everyone. So we're going to dive right into, as Kathryn mentioned, the heart of the presentation. Just a quick high level overview of what will be coming with the new ESA plus program.

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So the expenses of the ESA program are going to remain pretty consistent as they have been with the current disabilities grant and ESA programs that are currently operating.

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Families will all use an electronic account, and you'll be able to transfer funds or other qualified expenses

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to providers.

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Or you can make purchases. Now, for the current year, the disabilities grant reimbursement process as current families know it is going to end.

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So after the spring 2022 semester reimbursement, will no longer exist.

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Schools won't have to access Class Wallet anymore, as part of payments for required tuition and fees.

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So that's, that's a big positive with the change with the new ESA plus program coming on. SEAA will disperse those funds directly to schools in the same way we currently do with the opportunity scholarship and also similarly to the way the disabilities grant funds are processed for payments that are disbursed to schools.

18:05

In My Portal, the parent account holder will electronically endorse these payments to schools each semester.

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And we want to note, if a school is also a provider of educational therapies or tutoring services, families will be able to transfer those funds to the school via Class Wallet to the school, as a provider.

18:37

OK, now we're going to talk a little bit about the part-time enrollment feature available with ESA plus.

18:46

Now, the previous ESA, as it stands now, has a limitation of part-time enrollment to

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schools that exclusively serve students with disabilities. That limitation is going to be removed with the ESA plus program

19:05

As long as a part-time student is enrolled in a participating private school

19:12

there is the option or the availability to receive a halftime award if the student is also attending a public school part-time.

19:26

Another change that's going to be forthcoming with the ESA plus program will be the age.

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Students who turn four on or before April 16th in the spring before the scholarship is going to be used, may be eligible.

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The student must be certified by a school administrator as ready to enroll in kindergarten.

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All students who applying for the ESA plus program should come in with an eligibility determination

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that's issued within the last three years from a North Carolina public school IEP.

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So for the ESA plus program, there will be no provisional award available for young students without an IEP.

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All students must come into this program with the eligibility determination in hand.

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So, now let's shift gears for a moment and talk about the documentation that's needed.

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For current students in the program, if your student needs to document continuing eligibility, at this time, you should have already received an e-mail with instructions on how to proceed to submit that new documentation. You can check you notifications, in your My Portal account, if you're not sure.

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And, again, as a reminder, continuing eligibility documentation is required every three years.

21:16

OK, so let's just take a minute to talk about the ESA plus award amounts.

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Currently, a lot of the families on the call may have one award, from either program.

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Or you may have both awards.

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If you have one award in the new program, you should expect to receive a \$9000 annual ESA plus payment.

21:47

So that's a plus. It's a little bit more money with the ESA plus program.

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For families that have both awards, you should expect to receive a \$17,000 ESA plus award.

22:05

And we just want to kind of give everyone a and a heads up right now.

22:12

We are in the process of auditing the records for the IEP documentation, to just make sure all the student's records and the areas of eligibility are designated correctly in our system.

22:29

You don't need to do anything. So don't panic.

22:31

There's nothing you need to do or provide or submit at this time, unless your student is due to have new documentation of continuing eligibility submitted. And again, you should have received an e-mail about that. And that notification should be in your My Portal record.

22:50

If you have a disabilities grant or ESA and you did not apply for the other program

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we will be evaluating the current IEP document on file, just to make sure we have the student correctly tied to the correct award amount going into the 22, 23 school year.

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Now let's talk a moment about how the ESA plus will make payments to schools.

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As was mentioned earlier, schools that participate in the ESA plus program will be receiving a direct disbursement from SEAA on behalf of the student.

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And just to give you an idea of the payment flow, schools certify the student once a year at the beginning of the school year, typically in August.

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After the schools certify the students, then the schools and the parents endorse each semester, once for fall, once for spring.

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And the endorsement is just saying that the school and the parent are confirming that the amount of the award that is going to be released to the school is correct.

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So just make sure, before you endorse that you take a good look at that number and make sure that it is correct.

24:25

And then the payments are sent to the schools each semester once the parent endorses.

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Now we also want you to know that schools registered with the North Carolina Division of non public education, or the DNPE, but who decided they don't want to participate in the K 12 programs at all,

24:47

oftentimes enroll and will be enrolling ESA plus students. Now these parents will be able to seek reimbursement for the cost of the tuition and fees.

25:01

That's going to be pretty much, the only time reimbursement will be available for this new program going forward.

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Then we'd also like to note that we do have parents, and students at these schools, some of these schools decide to participate in opportunity, and they may decide not to participate in the ESA plus program.

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In those cases, the parent cannot be reimbursed for tuition and fees.

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So the school can't be on one side of the fence.

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Not only so, they can't say they want to participate in opportunity, but for whatever reason, they don't want to participate in ESA plus.

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It's all or nothing if you want to have the benefit of having direct payment sent to the school for tuition and fees for your student.

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I think I can go to the next slide, please.

26:05

And again, we just want to re-iterate the account limits.

26:09

Students who will receive a \$9000 award won't be able to accumulate any funds year after year in the new ESA plus program, so that is similar to the current disabilities grant, where it's a, if the student, doesn't benefit from tuition and fees, and or qualified expenses with all the money that money comes back to the program.

26:37

Now, the students who will be receiving a \$17,000 award, will be able to roll over a maximum of \$4500 each year.

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And the lifetime maximum that a student can accumulate over the course of the program in their ESA plus account at any time if they receive the \$17,000 award, can be no more than \$30,000.

27:12

Now for this transition year, our current ESA students that are renewing into the ESA program will have their existing funds roll over, but after the 22, 23 school year none of these funds would be able to rollover for the 23, 24 school year.

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So, you'll want to keep that in mind as we transition from the programs as they currently exist, into the new ESA program.

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And this is just for the students that will be receiving the \$9000 ESA plus award.

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For students that will be receiving the \$17,000 award, they will renew into the ESA plus with the current funds and they will roll over.

28:06

And then at the end of the 22, 23 school year, only \$4500 can roll over.

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And now, Michele is going to talk a little bit with you about Class Wallet.

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Thank you, Tiffany.

28:32

While SEAA will administer the ESA plus program, Class Wallet will maintain the electronic debit account for payment processing and product purchasing on behalf of the ESA plus program.

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Do note that Class Wallet is a separate company that partners with SEAA, in order to provide the online platform for ESA plus families to access their available award funds to do two things.

29:10

The first is to pay approved providers for qualified services such as educational therapies and tutoring.

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The second thing parents will do in Class Wallet is purchase qualified products, such as curricula, textbooks, and educational technology via the Class Wallet marketplace.

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This slide shows the steps to follow when paying an approved service provider on Class Wallet.

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As a reminder, in order for ESA plus families to use available award funds to pay a provider of tutoring, educational therapies, and or transportation services, the provider must be registered with and approved by SEAA.

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If the provider is not on the list, you find on Class Wallet while trying to pay them, contact the provider and ask if they are registered to participate in the ESA plus program.

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You can also check the list of approved providers posted on the SEAA website to make sure that your provider has completed the registration process.

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To pay an approved provider, ESA plus families will log into Class Wallet to upload an invoice or a bill issued to them by the provider.

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After submitting their invoice and payment request, ESA plus staff will review the request.

31:11

So our next slide talks about purchasing products on Class Wallet.

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On the screen, these are going to be the steps that families will follow when directly purchasing curricula, textbooks, and educational technology with ESA plus funds in Class Wallet.

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Families will access the Class Wallet marketplace to shop for qualified products from vendors such as Amazon, School Specialty, Lakeshore Learning, and Scholastic.

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After submitting an order, please allow at least 3 to 5 business days for ESA plus staff to review it.

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If an order is rejected, keep in mind that you should look at the comments for that order to see why the order was rejected.

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If you're not sure, you are encouraged to contact us at ESA at ESA@ncseaa.edu.

32:16

Class Wallet cannot help you regarding an order which was rejected by ESA plus staff.

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If the provider payment request and invoice are approved by SEAA's ESA plus program staff Class Wallet will process it.

32:44

Once that happens, a provider will receive the payment as an electronic transfer to their bank account.

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And families and providers will need to please allow at least five business days for this to happen.

33:08

Thank you, Michele, I appreciate that. You're welcome. Yes. I hope all of you families out there are going to hang in there.

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We know it's a lot of information.

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We did hope that those of you who were new to ESA, perhaps you received one of those recent awards in December.

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We hoped that this presentation would help you this semester, because the process that we're describing for ESA plus is what you need this semester as you onboard to your ESA award for spring semester.

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So, we were trying to provide you, coincidentally, with the information you need, quickly, because you're going to be using your ESA award the semester that you just received. And I know, it's new to you.

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However, we didn't want to try to give all of the information that other families may not need until fall.

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So it was a little bit tricky for us to navigate.

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So I hope we have replied to the need for the current families who need ESA information and helpful to them right away, without overwhelming families who really don't need this information until the fall.

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So, we will certainly have more specific and additional training later this spring and early summer. So you shouldn't think that you have to figure out Class Wallet immediately when you don't. If you're one of those families who doesn't need to worry about it until fall.

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We're going to talk a little bit about the timelines, First, the timelines for the current year. So it's, again, it's January.

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We're halfway through the 2021, 22 school year, we have two programs side-by-side, and many of you are new to one of those two programs. And so, we're trying to prioritize helping you as much as we can. But we also need to beg for your patience because it's inevitable that some of

these processes will take a little longer than we would like. There's just a lot of adjustments to new students for the current year, and many plans for the changes that are coming next year.

35:30

But if you are in the disabilities grant program, we continue to reimburse this year.

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Your fall semester is going to be reimbursed now, starting in the next couple of days, if you're new to the disabilities grant program, and the reimbursement process is new to you, we did not present in this webinar today about reimbursement, knowing that it was not going to continue after this year.

35:58

There are, however, good trainings, and there's a webinar, and you can either read the slides or watch the webinar training about reimbursement.

36:08

And maybe Michele or Tiffany can put that in the chat, because I'm sure there are families listening to us now who are new to disabilities grant. And the idea of reimbursement is something they have to grapple with.

36:20

Now, even though it doesn't continue once the programs merge for the fall, but we have good materials about how reimbursement works, and you can find those online, but the reimbursement for fall this past fall is starting in the next day or so, so you would submit receipts for your expenses from the fall.

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Those families who are getting reimbursed for fall are families who are probably familiar with the program.

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So if you're got your recent award, what you have to worry about is keeping your receipts so that your award for spring, you're ready in June for the reimbursement.

37:03

But, there is good material online about reimbursement, and, again, you don't submit anything. If you're new to disabilities grant, you don't submit anything until June.

37:14

Your disabilities grant award, If it was brand new and you just received it for Spring 2022, then your first interaction and your only interaction with reimbursement is in June for the spring expenses.

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So, as you can see, that type of process isn't ideal for many families, to

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make their purchases and have their expenses and carry those costs from January to June to wait for reimbursement.

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So, we're grateful that the legislature made the changes.

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We think that you'll be able to manage the program and your expenses better when you don't have to wait to be reimbursed.

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But for this first semester, if you're new to the program, if you're brand new and just got an award, then hang with us, and keep your receipts this semester this time.

38:03

Look to our reimbursement process in June for your first interaction.

38:08

So ESA families, we're still on a quarterly payment schedule for this year, so we'll still talk about quarter three, which is going out now. The funding is being deposited into your Class Wallet account.

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Again, either now or in the next few days.

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And then quarter four.

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So that's at the beginning of April

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you would have your last quarter of the ESA funding.

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So in a sense, the new program starts about July first.

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You know, the new fiscal year roughly. The Spring 2022 school payments continue, as they have in the past. Since you're new, this is what in the past, means. Disabilities grant,

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the schools receive their spring payments directly from SEAA. We disburse to schools on behalf of students.

39:02

If you're an ESA parent, you're transferring funds from Class Wallet to pay the tuition and fees to your school.

39:10

So, we know that many of you have both a disabilities grant and an ESA award.

39:16

Which we're glad that both programs can serve. We know how confusing that can be, especially if, as I'm sure some of you are new to both at the same time.

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Hang in there.

39:29

The payment goes to the school from us for disabilities grant and ESA. Parents control their funding, even to the schools this semester.

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This is the function that will change for ESA plus.

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The ESA plus program will function with school payments, like the disabilities grant does now.

39:53

Again, I must urge your patience with us at SEAA as we train ourselves, we change our materials, we prepare you and our external stakeholders. We're going to onboard and help our new students this year as quickly as we can. Hang in there with the reimbursement process. Hang in there with the funding coming to your ESA accounts. And we will get through this semester.

40:17

And we're going to be, happily, in our new program before we know it.

40:24

So the next slide is about timelines for next year.

40:30

So in terms of 22, 23, the cycle for 22, 23 in a sense starts very soon.

40:38

Current students renew.

40:40

They renew for the next year if you receive funding in the disabilities grant or ESA,

40:47

you are a current student.

40:49

And you get to renew.

40:51

You will not apply if you are a parent of a current student. You will not apply via the new student application.

40:59

Unless you had, for example, a sibling, if you have a brand-new student. But just for your information, the new student application will open March the first. You may have friends, again, you may have a younger sibling who you want to apply for. If you talk to anyone about the new student application, or if you yourself are concerned about it, note that it will open March the first.

41:22

The priority deadline is April first, although the application will probably be open longer than that, but it would be to a new student's advantage to be, to have that application submitted in March.

41:38

Let me go back for a minute to the renewal process, because that's what matters to you, as parents of current students.

41:45

The renewal offer, our award to you for next year, is triggered by payment going out this year.

41:54

So If you were with us in the fall and your school was paid in the fall or your ESA, you know, when you used funds in the fall, that's fine. You're going to be offered a renewal. Of course, immediately, you had funds go out this year.

42:11

Those of you who are new, your renewal may be a little bit delayed because we have to pay your school. Disabilities grant, we pay your school, and that triggers the renewal offer to appear for you.

42:25

If you're ESA your funding sources to your account, and that triggers a renewal offer for you. Until that happens, the renewal doesn't appear.

42:35

And so, with awards that happen in the middle of the year, what can happen is the timing is a challenge.

42:41

If there's some reason that your school isn't paid as timely, as, you know, there are reasons for that doesn't mean anything's wrong, but if the school's not paid until late January, for example, for some reason, that renewal offer for that student won't be available until the payment goes to the school.

42:57

We just, again, it's a matter of patience and for you to know that if your student benefits from funds,

43:03

if your student enrolls in a school who gets money on behalf of the scholarship program, then your student is eligible for a renewal offer.

43:15

If you choose not to use the award for some reason, and you don't want to be involved in the program this year, you can't renew.

43:24

You would, in that case, that would be a situation with a new student.

43:28

So if you get the award, but for some reason you decide you're not ready to make the change, or it's not the right time for you, you want to come back in later, then the renewal is not the option for you. For those families who don't use the award,

43:41

the new student application is where you go.

43:45

So we talked a lot about this payment process, we talked about how the ESA plus program will pay schools directly on behalf of students.

43:55

That will be true for the ESA plus program, as well as opportunity scholarship, just like that.

44:01

That starts this fall.

44:04

If you're in the disabilities grant program, your switch from making purchases and waiting for reimbursement,

44:12

that will start this fall.

44:14

This fall, you will have access to an electronic account in Class Wallet where you can make online purchases and pay providers. That will start this fall 22 semester.

44:26

We do have more webinars, additional publicity, our website development, that's all in the works. So look for that, this winter, and then spring and summer.

44:39

One thing that you can tell friends and neighbors is that in two weeks, two weeks from today, we will offer this webinar, again, with a shift, to target our explanations to new families who aren't familiar with the existing programs. And who don't have transition challenges.

44:59

If you'd like, you're welcome to join then, too.

45:02

The link that we shared at the beginning of this webinar today, has the registration for January 28th on it.

45:12

You're welcome to join us then. Or you can share that with other people who might be interested, that we don't have a way of knowing are interested.

45:23

Just to recap your next steps: What do you need to worry about right now?

45:29

If you're in the disabilities grant program only, and you've not had any experience with ESA, concentrate on your reimbursement. You know, get your receipts submitted. Make sure your reimbursement is accurately and correctly given to you.

45:44

Plan to keep your receipts this spring.

45:47

Submit, of course, those receipts, early this summer, when the spring reimbursement process, just concentrate on that. There's plenty of time to learn to manage your Class Wallet account.

45:56

Don't worry about it, it's a very user friendly platform.

46:01

Fortunately, Michele has become an expert. She's able to direct the rest of our team on how to best interact with Class Wallet.

46:10

They've been a good partner in the work, but there's time for you to do that, you don't need to worry about it.

46:16

You'll be making the change in terms of how you make your purchases this fall. So it doesn't really need here in January, need to be something you worry about.

46:28

If you have an ESA or you have both a disabilities grant and ESA, say, as many of you do, then, look left, of course, about the reimbursement options for disabilities grant. If you have an ESA account already, it will continue in Class Wallet. You won't really have any change there.

46:47

You already know how to login to Class Wallet and manage your account and use it to pay providers.

46:52

That will all happen.

46:55

We're in charge of explaining these payment changes to the schools. We've had a couple of initial webinars.

47:00

We'll have more. For the most part, I think the schools are excited and glad for the changes.

47:07

It's simpler for them, They don't have to reconcile with multiple avenues.

47:13

You know, they will work with us, rather than in worrying about their Class Wallet account.

47:20

We think it's a positive, but change is always tricky, and people have built up processes around existing ways of doing things. We will take charge of that.

47:29

Then the current folks who don't have any experience with disabilities grant, if you're only in ESA, there's another reminder there about the payment process. And, again, I would urge you to just hang in there and wait to figure that out until later this spring or fall. You don't need to worry about it just yet.

47:48

Expect more information online. Additional webinars and trainings, especially, as I said in two weeks

47:55

we have one for brand-new people who are prospective new applicants. You're welcome to join that.

48:01

That's what the focus of the January 28th webinar will be, and expect more Class Wallet training. Again, it's user friendly and easy, it doesn't require an intense onboarding.

48:14

I would also mention that with ESA plus, if you anticipate that your funds 9000 or 17,000 if they're going to be entirely used for school costs, then you really won't interact with Class Wallet.

48:29

So, if you're going to a school where the costs are such that you need 100% of your ESA plus award to pay for the school's tuition and fees,

48:38

Class Wallet's not really important to you, Class Wallet facilitates the purchase of products for home-school families, for example, or payments to providers, whether they're tutors or therapists.

48:54

Last slide.

48:55

We're at the end. And we have some communication information for you.

49:00

I mentioned the webinar on the 28th. It's at the link that we initially posted on today's webinar.

49:07

And we urge families to review the materials, dive into some of the details as they become available.

49:13

And be patient with us. We're in the process of updating the website, so right now, the website does not, other than the initial page we put in, it's labeled updates,

49:23

our website is serving the current year.

49:27

It is not yet targeted to next year.

49:29

Be patient with us. We're updating them.

49:31

We're training ourselves, we're training stakeholders, schools, and we will offer more materials and trainings to you. Please, always contact us and be patient with us. If it takes a few days, it's worth it, because when you contact us, you're going to the source

49:47

with your questions about eligibility or timelines. There's our phone number.

49:52

Just a quick reminder, that our hours are from 8 to 6 Monday through Thursday for calls and from 8 to 5 on Friday. Over time, we will discontinue the D grants e-mail. By all means, it's still important

50:05

this year, disabilities grant is still a program until this summer, but I put the ESA e-mail on our slide to remind us that that's the e-mail that will carry forward through the new ESA Plus program. So the e-mail will not change. There's no plus in the e-mail.

50:27

I'm pausing here just to make sure that I haven't heard from my colleagues that there's anything that we should mention specifically on the broadcast.

50:37

You see there's some links there from the team, The update page, the reimbursement recording for you new disabilities grant folks. And for you new ESA folks, more information about Class Wallet that you might need.

50:51

Thank you so much for your forbearance with changes and new things.

50:58

We look forward to serving all of you families, and in the short term, we'll have an FAQ from your questions today that we'll prepare and post.

51:09

The recording for this webinar will be posted. You'll also get an e-mail with a link to it.

51:14

I hope all of those things will help you.

51:16

And that you'll hang in there in the next few months, as we have more information, and can better address any concerns that you might have.

51:29

Well, with that, I thank you very much for your attendance today, and look forward to working with you more in the next few months. Thank you.