Transcript

**ESA+ Students at Schools Not Paid Directly by SEAA**

June 22, 2022

0:06

Afternoon, everyone.

0:11

Thank you for taking your lunch time to spend a few minutes with us on this presentation. I'm Tiffany Jatta.

0:22

I see people are still coming into the room.

0:27

Give it about another minute, indeed, we will come back and get started.

1:13

Good afternoon.

1:14

Again, welcome, everyone, to our third session of our ESA Plus Wednesday webinar series. This session, we're going to be talking about ESA Plus students at schools not paid directly by SEAA.

1:30

Again, I'm Tiffany Jatta, I'm the program manager for the ESA Plus program, and today I have with me, my colleagues, Michele, Amber, and Mykayla, and also our Program Director, Kathryn Marker.

1:44

The presentation will last about 30 minutes, and at the end, there'll be time for questions and answers.

1:51

We do ask that you try to limit it your questions just to this specific presentation.

1:57

We've got a lot of good content over the course of the next several weeks, June, through the end of July. If you have any other questions about any other topics not directly related to what we're talking about today, or if your question is more detailed, please feel free to e-mail us, and one of our team would definitely assist you.

2:22

As you see, the participants are muted.

2:24

You can put a question in the question box, and our team will answer.

2:31

And we've also got handouts for you today, a copy of the presentation slides, as well as the PowerPoint presentation that you can print off later or save for reference.

2:45

So, again, I'm Tiffany Jatta. My colleague Michele is actually going to talk to you a little bit about this specific scenario, students at schools not paid directly by SEAA. What does it entail and how your student could benefit from funds?

3:01

So, no further ado. I'm going to turn it over to Michele.

3:08

(Michele) Thanks, Tiffany.

3:09

Before we go on to the first content slide, just a few reminders, the Education Student Accounts for Children with Disabilities program was established by North Carolina Law in 2021.

3:27

We call this program ESA Plus.

3:31

As a reminder, ESA Plus helps families afford non public schools.

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This particular session will help families of ESA Plus students at schools which do not receive a direct payment from SEAA and how they can understand how their student can benefit from award funds.

3:53

Tiffany, you can go to the next slide, please.

4:02

OK, so, what do we mean when we're talking about a school that does not receive a direct payment from SEAA?

4:14

These are schools that have opted not to participate in any of the SEAA, K 12 scholarship and grant programs, but they are registered as a private school with the state's Division of Non Public education.

4:32

Staff sometimes refers to these schools as DNPE-only schools because they are only registered with the State.

4:48

OK, so for students that are enrolled at these schools that are not paid directly by SEAA, they can still participate in the ESA Plus program.

5:04

These families will pay the school out of pocket, for tuition and fees, each semester.

5:12

Then they can get reimbursed at the end of the semester.

5:17

Families can get reimbursed up to their student’s maximum semester amount, so that would be for a $9000 award. That would be $4500 per semester.

5:31

For students receiving the higher amount award for 17,000, that maximum reimbursement amount per semester would be 8500.

5:46

Please remember that reimbursement is limited to tuition and fees only.

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The ESA Plus program does not reimburse families for other qualified expenses that they may pay for out of pocket.

6:07

Before we get to the details a little bit about the tuition reimbursement process, the when, how, and what, Kathryn, I know you wanted to jump in to share some important information with our families.

6:26

(Kathryn) Right, thank you. This is Kathryn Marker, and I had asked Michele for just a minute out of the presentation today, to just make a couple of reminders to everyone. We want to make sure if you signed up to hear this webinar, that you understand who we are directing the information to. First, I would say that, as a reminder, the ESA Plus program does not serve students in public school.

6:52

So if a student is in public school full-time, this program does not have any benefits to offer.

6:58

So, when we talk about tuition reimbursement, we're talking about attending a particular type of school. As Michele said, registered with the Division of non public Education, DNPE. But, which has chosen not to accept a direct payment from the state, in terms of the K12 programs.

7:18

So, that's a very specific scenario that we're talking about.

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And I also wanted to re-iterate what she said on the last slide, and that is that your ESA Plus funds may be used for other qualified expenses, but you can't expect to be reimbursed for payments you've made for therapy or purchases of anything.

7:39

So, for example, your school, your DNPE only school, if the tuition is less than your award amount, you may be able to spend the remaining funds, like any other ESA student, on other qualified expenses like therapy or tutoring, for technology. But you would need to follow the normal purchase process through the ClassWallet platform, you would not be able to purchase things and then be reimbursed.

8:07

Our conversation today about reimbursement is limited to tuition and fees, and the other thing I wanted to mention about that is, it depends on your school decision.

8:16

It's not a family's choice as to whether or not to have the tuition be paid directly to school. Or whether the families reimburse, that's not a family decision.

8:25

The school has made that decision by registering with DNPE, but then choosing not to accept a direct payment by not participating in the K 12 programs. So, just to clarify, we don't want anyone paying tuition and fees, and then coming up the end and saying,oOh, I'd like to be reimbursed. And well that's not an option.

8:46

If the school takes a direct disbursement, the school takes a direct disbursement and we pay the school on behalf of the student.

8:53

So if you're not sure, and you're thinking about your school choice, if you don't even have it down to the exact school where your student will attend, if you're new, I would talk to your school.

9:05

So bring this up to the school and say, you know, I understand there are these options, where do you stand? What’s your position?  And the school can tell and you can also e-mail us and talk to us. We can help you. If you're saying, well, I'm looking at the school, and I want to register, but I'm having this problem where I'm unsure. That will avoid getting down to the wire, the first of September, and somehow you're in a situation you didn't expect.

9:30

The last thing I'll mention, and then Michele's going to get going with some of these details.

9:34

The last thing I'll mention is that the ESA money for a student who attends a DNPE only school, so if you're student’s attending one of the schools that does not accept payment from SEAA, our intent is to put your funding in ClassWallet.

9:52

So you have a $9000 award or $4500 semester deposited into Class Wallet.

9:58

If you spend that money on other things, then you won't have money for the tuition at the end. So it would be up to you, the family, to strategically plan how you wanted to use your $4500.

10:12

That would be your semester payment And if your tuition is $4500, well, then you don't have any money to spend on these other qualified expenses.

10:23

If you know what your tuition is going to b, in December, you're gonna say, “Oh, here's my receipt, I'd like to be reimbursed and you know that it's less than 4500.” Well, then you know that you can spend the difference in the semester on other qualified expenses.

10:38

But it would be up to you, the parent, to make sure you end up at the end of the semester with the money to be reimbursed.

10:44

So if you have any questions about that sort of strategic planning, you would want to let us know.

10:50

But if you have paid upfront for your tuition and fees, then we deposit the money for your Class Wallet account, for your year semester scholarship funding, It would be up to you to co-ordinate and make sure that you are planning to have the money for that tuition reimbursement at the end. So, I hope that makes sense.

11:10

And we just want to make sure you have all the information that you need to kind of plan your year and think about your option. But there are some details around how the tuition reimbursement works and when it happens. So, Michele, I'll turn it back to you because that information is important, too.

11:28

(Michele) Thanks so much, Kathryn. I really appreciate your remarks. They were really important to include today.

11:41

Thanks, Tiffany.

11:43

Alright, so if you're going to be requesting tuition reimbursement, you do need to know that this process will occur at the end of each semester.

11:59

There is a general timeline that is on the slide.

12:03

So this is generally kind of what we anticipate.

12:09

That the ESA Plus tuition receipts, you will submit the receipts, and I'll tell you how, and kind of what happens after, after this slide.

12:25

But that's how you're going to request the reimbursement.

12:29

So, typically, generally, we're saying December, for fall tuition, May for spring tuition, But please note that these exact dates are subject to change, and they could differ from year to year, but we will make sure that we let our families know that, kind of keep them updated on when this happens, when this is going to occur.

13:00

OK, so how does this tuition reimbursement work when you have a student that is attending a school that does not receive a direct payment from SEAA?

13:10

You may have heard if you're a returning family, you may be familiar with or if you're a brand new family, you may not be but Class Wallet. So, families will be submitting receipts via Class Wallet.

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Please note that SEAA administers the ESA Plus program on behalf of the state of North Carolina. Class Wallet, they are a third party vendor that provides the electronic processing for reimbursement on behalf of the ESA Plus program.

13:45

Families, who have a student enrolled in a school, not paid directly by SEAA will submit their tuition receipts to the Class Wallet website.

14:02

OK, so kind of just a little bit of a timeline of how this is going to work. Of course, you see just, these are just the basic steps.

14:12

Of course, families will be getting more detailed information as the semester goes on, so that you'll know what to do. Those are just kind of the basic steps.

14:24

At the end of each semester, the ESA Plus program will notify families when they can submit their tuition and fee receipts for these schools that are not paid directly by SEAA.

14:39

Then families are going to upload their tuition receipts to request the reimbursement on the Class Wallet website.

14:46

If the ESA staff approves the reimbursement, the payment will be sent electronically to the parent's bank account, which families link to their Class Wallet account. More about that information in details later this semester.

15:09

So, receipts. What needs to be on of receipt? So, schools not directly pay by SEAA will issue the ESA Plus family a receipt for each semester tuition payment.

15:24

There is not a set template for tuition receipts, so each school's receipt may look differently.

15:31

However, tuition receipts must contain all of the required information that you see on the screen, in order to be reviewed for approval.

15:41

And on the right hand side of this slide, of course, you see an example of what a receipt could look like, but the most important thing to remember is that it does have to contain the required information.

16:12

So, a little bit about just reminders about school choice.

16:17

Before the school year begins, please check to see that the correct school choice is listed on your student's record in My Portal.

16:25

Families can update the student's school choice in My Portal themselves until August the first.

16:34

Families still can make changes to their student's school choice for the fall semester.

16:39

After August first, all you need to do is to please e-mail ESA Plus to request the school choice change.

16:49

The final deadline to note, in which to notify the ESA Plus program about where your student is enrolled for the fall semester is October the first.

17:01

That is the final deadline.

17:05

If your student does transfer after the school year begins, e-mail ESA Plus as soon as possible. Because we do have some processes and things that we need to do, that you may need to do.

17:18

And we, of course, always want to have everything up to date, because if your school, if your student's school choice is not updated in a timely manner, processes can be severely delayed.

17:40

And this slide is just a little bit of a reminder for all of our families. So I just wanted to put it here, of course.

17:50

Funds rolling over from year to year, we've had some questions about that.

18:01

Please note, so this is for the ESA Plus program for the 22 23 school year.

18:09

Students that do not who do not benefit from any of the ESA Plus funds in a year cannot renew.

18:16

The ESA Plus program assumes that students whose families spend none of the ESA funds will not need future funding.

18:27

So if you don't use funds at all, your student cannot renew for the next year.

18:45

And this is our last slide. Basically, as you can see, it's just our contact information. Please note, you can always find information including forms and resources, about My Portal, about qualified expenses, about school choice and Class Wallet on our website, www.ncseaa.edu.

19:11

You are also encouraged to reach out to us. We have our toll free number there on the screen.

19:19

We also have our e-mail address, as well, and of course, we do have throughout the summer as mentioned earlier, we will continue our series of ESA Plus Family Webinars, and that information is, of course, found on our website. And there's a link there, and it's the events section, and then there's different topics.

19:53

If you do sign up, you can attend live. If you can't attend you will receive, if you if you register ahead of time, you will receive a link right away for the recording.

20:11

Then, later on, we will have the slides and copies of the recordings later available for families to view.

20:23

So, Tiffany, that is all I have as far as content for this topic.

20:32

(Tiffany) Alright, thank you, Michele. Are there any questions that the team sees that we can answer?

20:41

(Mykayla) The main e-mail we have right now is asking what to do listing your school within the MyPortal system, because it's not listed. Because, of course, it's going to be a DNPE school..

21:02

They want to know what to do.

21:06

(Tiffany) OK, if the parent has already e-mailed, we ask that you be patient. If you've e-mailed us the name of the school, we do have to check to make sure, first of all, that they are, in fact, registered with the Division of Non Public Education.

21:22

Once we confirm that, there are some steps internally behind the scenes that we have to do to get that school to appear in your student's record.

21:32

But it will be done.

21:40

(Kathryn) A reminder to everyone out there who's thinking about this option is that you can't choose a DNPE only school. It's not listed as a choice, because they don't participate in the programs. However, we can put manually put that school in your student's record.

21:58

So, when Michele was talking about choosing a school, if you choose, or if you change to a school that does not accept a direct payment, you have to e-mail the staff to have them manually add that school to your student's record.

22:13

And as Tiffany said, there’s a little more to it than just that. And if it's a school we're not familiar with, then we're having to reach out to DNPE only because it's required by statute that the school be what North Carolina considers legally operating. And that is DNPE registered.

22:32

It does take a minute but it's not possible to go into MyPortal and select a DNPE only school.

22:40

(Tiffany) Right, so we do ask for your patience with that. Off the top of my head, we do have some established DNPE only schools. I think our team still has to go in and add that as a choice, but we can certainly do that.

22:54

I know, Summit, Carolina Day School, Forsyth County Day School, those are the main ones that I know.

23:04

Several of our current families already attend those schools.

23:09

If that's your choice, definitely e-mail us, and we can go ahead and get it added into your record.

23:16

But for any others that are not as familiar we just have to confirm that they’re registered with North Carolina. And we'll definitely get it added for you.

23:32

Are there any other questions that we can address?

23:36

Team?

23:37

(Kathryn) There's a question about a school that accepts the Opportunity, but not the ESA. So I would encourage that person to reach out to us.

23:45

So if you feel like you have a kind of an unusual situation where the school sort of seems to be participating, but not really, that's a little trickier, so reach out to us, and let's talk. We do have schools that don't understand what the ESA Plus program is, and so sometimes a little outreach and a little PR we can straighten that out.

24:19

(Tiffany) Absolutely.

24:23

Any other questions we can answer for the group today?

24:36

Alright, if not, we thank you for joining.

24:40

As always, if you have more specific help that you need, please feel free to e-mail us. We'll be happy to answer your question and get you situated. If there's nothing else, thank you for your time today and enjoy the rest of your day.