

Information Provided Compliments of:



A Guide to Understand What I Need to Know About The McKay Scholarship

Does your child have a difficult time in school? Is public school not meeting your child's needs? Do you feel like your child is falling through the cracks? Does your child have a learning or physical disability and need extra attention? Is your child having a hard time passing the FCAT? Do you wish you could send your child to private school but know that you could never afford it? Well, in 1999 a scholarship program was implemented that may allow your child to go to private school.

What is The John M. McKay Scholarship?

The John M. McKay Scholarship for Students with Disabilities Program was established for students with an intellectual disability; a speech impairment; a language impairment; a hearing impairment, including deafness; a visual impairment, including blindness; a dual sensory impairment; an orthopedic impairment; another health impairment; an emotional or behavioral disability; a specific learning disability, including, but not limited to, dyslexia, dyscalculia, or developmental aphasia; a traumatic brain injury; a developmental delay; or autism spectrum disorder. The Program allows the student to go to another

public school or it provides a scholarship for the student to attend a McKay approved private school.

Does my child qualify to get the free money?

To be eligible for the McKay Scholarship, a student must be in public school for a full year and your child must have an Individual Educational Plan (IEP) or be on a 504 Plan. This is further defined as:

- Having been enrolled and reported for funding in a Florida public school during the preceding October and February Florida Education Finance Program surveys (Grades K-12); or
- Having been a pre-kindergarten student who was enrolled and reported for funding in a Florida public school during the preceding October and February Florida Education Finance Program surveys and was at least 4 years old; or
- Having been a pre-kindergarten student who was reported as having received Specialized Instructional Services by the Office of Early Learning and was at least 4 years old; or
- Having attended the Florida School for the Deaf and Blind during the preceding October and February student membership surveys (Grades K-12).

Students can remain in the McKay Scholarship Program until they return to public school, graduate from high school, or turn 22 years of age, whichever comes first.

What if I make too much money?

That is the beauty of the McKay Scholarship. It is not at all income based. You can be a millionaire or be at the poverty level and if your child meets the qualifications listed above, the money is yours to choose an approved McKay school for your child, either private or other public school. It's as easy as signing up today to see if your child qualifies!

How do I know what an IEP is or a 504 Plan is or if my child even has one?

You may have never heard this terminology used when talking to the school about your child, but that does not mean that your child does not already have

an IEP. Is your child being pulled out of classes for extra help? Is your child receiving special therapies such as Speech, Occupational or Physical Therapy at school? Is your child in a classroom for special needs students? Does your child receive special accommodations at school for conditions such as dyslexia or ADHD? Does your child go to a different class for one or more subjects? Is your child not on grade level in a subject? If so, your child may already have an IEP. Check with the guidance counselor at your child's school to find out. If not but you feel that your child is in need of these services, contact the guidance counselor to see about getting an IEP for your child. Note that this process can take several months to complete so you will want to get started right away. The IEP must be in effect for a minimum of 6 months before you can take advantage of the McKay Scholarship Program.

Who pays for it and where does the free money come from?

The McKay Scholarship is paid for by state funds. When your child goes to public school, the school is allotted funds for each student. When you take advantage of the McKay Scholarship, you can take your funding for public school to an approved McKay private school or other public school to get your child the assistance he/she needs. Four times a year, a check will be mailed to the private school where you have enrolled your child. You will be required to endorse the check so the private school can deposit your scholarship funds.

How do I get the free money?

Go to the Florida School Choice website at www.floridaschoolchoice.org. Click on [McKay Scholarships](#) and then [Apply for a McKay Scholarship](#). You can enter the information for your child and the system will search for him/her. After applying and if it is determined your child is eligible, your child will be assigned a matrix number such as 504, 251, 252, 253, 254, or 255. This matrix number determines the amount of funding your child will receive to attend another school of your choice. Funding rates vary based on the county where the IEP or 504 Plan was initially set in place and what grade the student is in. Once approved, you will be notified of the matrix level and the funding amount.

When do I have to apply?

The McKay Scholarship program has 2 types of deadlines: *intent filing deadline* and *enrollment deadline*. While you can file your intent and enroll throughout the calendar year, the dates will determine how much funding your child will receive in the current school year.

The *intent filing deadline* is the date you initially go on the Florida School Choice website and enter the information under the [Apply for a McKay Scholarship](#) section. There are intent deadlines that must be met in order to receive funding for each quarter of the school year. Once your intent is filed, you never have to file it again as long as you remain in the McKay Scholarship program. If you leave the program, your child will have to return to public school for a year and then you can file intent again. Intent deadlines for the 2013-14 school year are July 3rd, September 2nd, December 3rd, and January 31st.

Once you have filed your intent, the next important deadline is the *enrollment deadline*. You must select a private school and have your child enrolled on the private school's McKay website by the deadline for the quarter in order for the school to receive the quarterly McKay payment. If you do not meet the enrollment deadline, your child will NOT receive any McKay Scholarship funding until the following quarter. Unfortunately, the McKay Scholarship Program does not prorate any checks. The private school may require that the student's family cover this funding or may ask for the student to delay starting at their school until the next quarter. The enrollment deadlines for the 2013-14 school year are August 2nd, October 2nd, January 2nd, and March 2nd. If the student is enrolled in a McKay school by the above dates and he/she attends for at least 10 days in the payment period for that quarter, the private school will receive the funding on the quarterly disbursement dates of September 1st, November 1st, February 1st, and April 1st.

These deadlines are summed up in this chart:

The deadlines for intent filing, private school enrollment, and quarterly payments are set by Florida Statute. For the 2013-14 school year...				
If you filed intent by:	July 3	Sept. 2	Dec. 3	Jan. 31
Your child must be enrolled by:	Aug. 2	Oct. 2	Jan. 2	Mar. 2
For the school to receive payment on:	Sept. 1	Nov. 1	Feb. 1	April 1
Maximum scholarship amount for the rest of the school year:	100%	75%	50%	25%
Payment Period:	July 1 - Sept 30	Oct 1 - Dec 31	Jan 1 - Feb 28	March 1 - June 30

Can I just pick any private school for my child?

You cannot choose just any school for your child. In order to participate in the McKay Scholarship program, private schools must be approved by the Department of Education and meet the requirements to be a participating McKay Scholarship Program school. You can find a complete list of the McKay schools in your county by going to the Florida School Choice website at www.floridaschoolchoice.org and choosing Private School Directory at the bottom on the left hand side of the home page. There you will find a list of all schools by county, their address, contact information, religious or not, if the school is military, grades, students if all male or female, denomination if religious, accrediting agency if accredited, and what disabilities the school serves. **See our Guide of 35 questions to help you choose the right school for your child.**

McKay Scholarship vs. Step Up For Students (SUFS) Scholarship, which do I choose?

If your child qualifies for both the McKay Scholarship and the Step Up For Students Scholarship, you can only take advantage of one. The Step Up For Students Scholarship is based on financial need and you must requalify every year. The McKay Scholarship is solely based on your child having an IEP and attending public school for a year in the state of Florida. Once you have been accepted into the McKay Scholarship program, you will never have to reapply as long as your child remains in the program and does not return to public school. Therefore, you would choose the McKay Scholarship over the SUFS scholarship.

Where can I find the statute regarding the John M. McKay Scholarship Program?

Complete details on state statute 1002.39 - The John M. McKay Scholarships for Students with Disabilities Program are located at <http://www.flsenate.gov/laws/statutes/2012/1002.39>. Additional information is also available on the Department of Education website at www.floridaschoolchoice.org or you can call the School Choice office at 1-800-447-1636.

Information courtesy of The Broach School of Jacksonville, Inc. For more on the McKay Scholarship Program, please feel free to contact us at 1.904.637.0300.

