

Issue Brief: John M. McKay Scholarship Program for Students with Disabilities

Background

Established as a pilot program in 1999, and subsequently expanded statewide, the program provides eligible students the opportunity to attend a participating private school or transfer to another public school. Eligible students include students who have been issued an Individualized Education Plan (IEP), a 504 Accommodation Plan that is effective for more than 6 months, or received specialized instructional services under the Voluntary Prekindergarten Education Program. Students must also have been enrolled and reported for funding by a Florida school district the year prior to applying for a scholarship.

The scholarship amount is calculated as the Base Student Allocation multiplied by the appropriate cost factor for the student multiplied by the district cost differential. In addition, eligible students with disabilities are entitled to a share of the Exceptional Student Guaranteed Allocation. During the 2012-13 school year, the most recent complete year of funding, calculated maximum scholarship amount for IEP students enrolled ranged from \$4,395 to \$19,105, with an average amount of \$7,019. The average amount for students with a 504 Plan was \$3,977. The scholarship amount is deducted from the school district's total funding entitlement under the Florida Education Finance Program and is disbursed, quarterly, to the parents of participating students.

During the 2012-2013 school year, \$168.9 million was paid in scholarships for 26,611 participating students. Of the participating students, 50% were funded at Matrix Level 251, 24% at Matrix Level 252; 11% at Matrix Level 253; 7% at Matrix Level 254, 2% at Matrix Level 255, and 6% were 504 Plan students. These students were served in 1,163 private schools, 64% of which were religious schools.

The scholarship remains in effect until the student returns to a public school, graduates from high school, or reaches the age of 22, whichever occurs first.

Relevant Florida Statutes and Rules

[Section 1002.39, F.S.](#) – McKay Scholarship Program

[Rule 6A-6.0970, F.A.C.](#) – McKay Scholarship Program

[Section 1002.421, F.S.](#) – Accountability of Participating Private Schools

[Rule 6A-6.03315, F.A.C.](#) – Private School Scholarship Compliance