

Parental School Choice FAQ

Texas Education Freedom Accounts – TEFA

Please call Bill Hinz or Lee Gaines if you have any questions.

Registration for Schools will begin on December 9, 2025 for the 2026-2027 school year.

Registration/qualifying for families/students will begin on February 4, 2026, with either a 30 day or 45 day window. That will be decided soon.

From the Comptroller's Office: "Two major dates for rollout have also been finalized. Eligible accredited private schools, and vendors currently participating in the Parent-Directed Special Education Services will be invited to join the program through Odyssey's portal on Dec. 9, 2025. An open vendor application will shortly follow. The online application for Texas families will open Feb. 4, 2026, well in advance of the 2026-27 school year."

Three Final Rules Forums: **December 4** 9:00 – 11:00 AM at Houston Christian University, Mabee Theater, 7502 Fondren Road, Houston, TX

One in Austin and one in Ft. Worth after December, most likely in January.

How do families qualify for the TEFA (Parental School Choice) program?

Families will need to qualify for the TEFA (Parental School Choice) program through the Comptroller's Office. The Texas District/TPSA will have all those links for you to share with your current/future families. **We believe this will begin in February, 2026.**

Once it is open there will be a 30-day window for families to complete their application for the TEFA (Parental School Choice) program.

(b) To apply for participation in the program, the child's parent must submit a comptroller-approved application to the designated certified educational assistance organization during the application period. The application must be accompanied by:

(1) proof that the child is a citizen or national of the United States or was lawfully admitted into the United States, in a format acceptable to the comptroller, such as a certified copy of one of the following for the child: **a birth certificate issued in the United States or one of its territories**, a certificate of naturalization, a certificate of citizenship, a Consular Report of Birth Abroad, a United States passport, or a Permanent Resident Card;

(2) **proof of the child's current residency in this state as established by one of the following** documents specified under Education Code, §29.355(a-1): a utility bill, lease or mortgage statement, driver's license or state identification card, voter registration card, letter from a government agency in the United States, or notarized affidavit of residency;

(3) proof of total annual income, such as an Internal Revenue Service transcript of a federal tax return;

(4) an agreement and certification under penalty of perjury by the participating parent that they will:

(A) only request the payment of program money for approved education-related expenses under Education Code, §29.359;

➤ **Special ESA Website: Comptroller's Office – State of Texas**

<https://comptroller.texas.gov/programs/education/esa/>

This will be updated regularly by the Comptroller's Office. Check out the Comptroller's office list of frequently asked questions, which will be updated regularly as the program develops. Please call Bill Hinz or Lee Gaines if you have any questions about the Comptroller's FAQ.

The Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts will oversee the program to ensure funds are used properly. **Odyssey** was selected as the certified educational assistance organization (CEAO) that will help with administration of the program under the Comptroller's oversight.

➤ **Special ESA Website: Texas Private School Association (TPSA)**

<https://texasprivateschools.org/families/school-choice/>

This will be updated regularly by TPSA. Check out TPSA list of Q & A Questions – Answers which will be updated regularly as the program develops. Please call Bill Hinz or Lee Gaines if you have any questions about the TPSA Q & A.

How can we stay informed about the latest Parental School Choice news in Texas?

In addition to the Comptroller's website and the TPSA website all Schools that are members of Texas Private School Association, TPSA, receive an email update on School Choice, Educational Savings Accounts, ESAs each Thursday from Laura Colangelo, Executive Director of TPSA. These provide very helpful information. Most of our Schools are members of TPSA. Either check with the TPSA website for information about membership or contact Bill Hinz or Lee Gaines.

How can our school participate in Parental School Choice?

Schools will need to Register (for Parental School Choice) to participate.

When will our Schools be able to Register?

It will be done electronically in December.

LSAC Accredited schools can Register.

PK-3 and PK-4 children that qualify for free public school education will qualify.

[Texas Rising Star (with a 3- or 4-star rating) or NAEYC accredited are also eligible]

Do we need to do anything now to be approved?

Three requirements: 1) Must be a TEPSAC recognized Accredited School, all LSAC schools qualify, 2) **You must have a Financial Review or Audit completed**, and 3) You must give a Norm-referenced test, such as: Iowa, Stanford, MAPS, CLT, PSAT, SAT in grades 3 – 12.

When can families start the School's Admission process?

Many schools will begin the Admission Process already in November and December. Families will possibly not be notified by the Comptroller's office until a few weeks after the 30-day application window. This notification may occur in March. Once a student qualifies, they are good through 12th grade. AND all siblings also automatically qualify (they will have to register.)

Will our school be able to continue with our current acceptance policies?

Each school will be able to use their enrollment processes. Each school will be able to have their normal discipline procedures, up to and including expulsion of students.

Can a school require a family to apply for the TEFA/ESA program before requesting financial aid?

Each school will be able to use their enrollment processes. So, a school can make it a policy that families must first apply for ESA program before requesting financial aid from the school. That is a good best practice.

What is in Senate Bill 2?

- Approximately \$10,800 per student.
- Private schools that participate must be TEPSAC recognized Accredited Schools. All LSAC schools qualify.
- Strong religious liberty and private school autonomy language.
- Currently enrolled private school students are eligible.
- **Four categories of prioritization for applicants:**
 1. Special needs students and economically disadvantaged students up to \$160,750 (500% of Federal Poverty Guidelines for a family of four include both currently enrolled public and private school students. (Must have a current IEP) Special needs students are eligible for more funding – up to \$30,000 per year, per child. If one student in a family qualifies as a special needs student, all siblings automatically qualify in category 1. **[Once a student qualifies for the ESA program, he/she qualifies through the 12th grade. All the siblings also qualify through the 12th grade]**
 2. Children from families making up to \$64,300 for a family of four.
Currently enrolled private school students are eligible.
 3. Children from families making between \$64,300 to \$160,750.
Currently enrolled private school students are eligible.
 4. Everyone else depending on available funds. Students who are switching to private schools will go ahead of currently enrolled private school students (in this category only).
- Schools will receive the first 25% by July 1 directly from the Comptroller's office for each ESA student enrolled. 50% by October 1, and the final 25% by April 1.

To qualify for Category 1 what should we do first?

For any special needs students in your school currently; **they must have an approved IEP** in order to qualify for Category 1. (However, we are NOT required to follow the IEP.)

What are some special needs our current students might have?

Autism deaf-blindness emotional disturbance hearing impairment
intellectual disability multiple disabilities orthopedic impairment
other health impairment specific learning disability speech or language impairment
traumatic brain injury visual impairment.

How do parents request an IEP?

Currently this must be done in the public school where they reside. Parents of the child must request this from their local school district. For those who do not have an IEP but wish to use Category, Special Needs testing will need to be completed.

The Comptroller's Office may possibly give some other avenues for students to be able to be classified as a special needs student in the rules making process.