

THE IEP ADVOCATE, INC.

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*Helping Families of Children with Special Needs Get the Services
They Need From the Public School System*

How To Sign Up For The McKay Scholarship A Step-by-Step Guide by Pam Lindemann

Note: Below is a brief summary of the requirements and guidelines of the McKay Scholarship program. For complete information, visit the official website at www.FloridaSchoolChoice.org.

STEP 1 – Qualification: A child qualifies for the McKay Scholarship if...

1. They have attended school for the entire school year. Specifically, they must have attended at least one day during the FTE count in the month of October and February. The FTE count is when the Florida State Department of Education counts the number of children in the public school system. It is usually, but not always, held during the first two weeks of October and the first two weeks of February. In order to be counted, your child must be in school at least one day during this period.
2. Your child has a valid Individualized Education Plan (IEP) at the time you withdraw your child from the public school system and enroll him in a McKay approved private school (or other public school) to participate in the McKay Scholarship program.

*Important: The IEP that is in place at the time you withdraw your child from public school and enroll him in a private school is the IEP that will be used to determine the scholarship funding amount.

STEP 2 – Filing “Intent” Online:

To register your intent to use the McKay Scholarship, go to www.FloridaSchoolChoice.org. Click on “McKay Scholarships.” In the left hand column, under “Links for Parents,” click on “Apply for a McKay Scholarship.” Follow the instructions.

Once you have submitted the completed application, the Florida State Department of Education is notified. They contact your school district and the school district has approximately 30 days within which to tell the state your child’s matrix score. The school district must send you a letter informing you of the dollar amount of your child’s McKay Scholarship.

After filing intent, you must follow-up with the school choice you have selected. *Filing intent does not guarantee the eligibility and enrollment of a student.*

*Important: To use the McKay Scholarship for school starting in August, you must register your intent to use the McKay before July 3.

STEP 3 – Enrolling The Child In A Private School:

To utilize the **McKay Private School Choice Option**, you must select a participating private school that will accommodate your student. It is your responsibility to contact the private school with any specific questions regarding tuition, curriculum, procedure, policy, transportation, and regulation. A directory of private schools participating in the *McKay Scholarship Program* is available by county on the www.FloridaSchoolChoice.org website.

Upon agreement of enrollment between the parent and private school, it is the private school's responsibility to register and enroll the student into the system.

***Important:** Do NOT withdraw your child from public school until your child is enrolled in the private school first or you will not qualify for the scholarship. Make sure your child is enrolled in the private school and THEN withdraw them from public school.

STEP 4 – Deadlines:

There are four times during the school year within which a parent can choose to use McKay and pull their child out of public school and put them into a private school. They are:

- File by **July 3** for **September 1** payment - 100% of scholarship amount
- File by **September 2** for **November 1** payment - 75% of scholarship amount
- File by **December 3** for **February 1** payment - 50% of scholarship amount
- File by **January 31** for **April 1** payment - 25% of scholarship amount

Additional Information to Know:

- There is no penalty if you go online to register to use McKay and then change your mind and decide to keep your child in public school.
- There is no penalty if you use the McKay scholarship for a full year, or part of the year, and then decide to put your child back in public school.
- Special note to parents of children who are in Pre-K and who will be starting kindergarten in the fall: In order to qualify for the full McKay Scholarship funding amount, your child must have what is called a “kindergarten IEP.” This means a new IEP must be written for kindergarten to replace the IEP that provided services while your child was in pre-k. A pre-k IEP does NOT qualify for the full McKay Scholarship amount.
- You can change private schools from year to year, without penalty, as long as they are McKay approved.

Pam Lindemann is an advocate and helps parents whose children are struggling in the public school system. Call her at 407-342-9836 or TheIEPadvocate@hotmail.com or visit her website at TheIEPadvocate.com.