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Empowerment Scholarship Account

ESA TODAY

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Coming Soon: Online Expense Reporting

The Arizona Department of Education is excited to announce the coming launch of our new online Expense Reporting System! The portal to the online Expense Reporting System will be made available in the coming months for account holders to begin electronically submitting Quarter 2 expense reports. Paper expense reports will continue to be submitted until the online system is launched.

This system will provide an easier and more efficient reporting method for applicants. ESA Account Holders will have the opportunity to create their own personalized accounts to submit and track expense report submissions for multiple children. You will also have the ability to monitor the status of your report and track past and future reports. Additionally, account holders will have the ability to save in progress expense reports and return to the system later to add to, edit or submit the reports.

The Department will notify applicants when the system is launched, as well as provide online and in-person training, to ensure the transition is successful. Applicants without internet access should contact a Program Specialist to discuss alternative options that work for their situation. Stay tuned for further details!

Year-Round Applications

Did you know that ESA now accepts applications year-round? Applicants will receive a determination letter within 45 days of submitting a completed application. If the application is incomplete, a request for information will be sent, listing any additional required documentation.

If approved, a contract will be issued to the applicant. The signed contract and required documents must be received by the ESA Program before funding can begin. Funding will begin in the quarter following that in which the contract is received and fully executed by the applicant and ADE. For example, if a contract is fully executed in Quarter 1, the applicant will begin receiving funding at the start of Quarter 2. Applicants should be prepared to withdraw their student from public school, if applicable, upon receipt of their funding disbursement.



“What you do today
can improve all your
tomorrows.”

~ Ralph Marston



Contact Information

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Knowledge is Power

The 2016-17 school year is in full swing and with the new year comes changes to the Empowerment Scholarship Account program. As part of our own growth and customer outreach efforts, we're excited to launch the first Empowerment Scholarship Account Quarterly Newsletter. The newsletter is designed to help our customers be effective in the management of their Empowerment Scholarship Accounts.

Each year the state statutes are up-

dated, requiring an ongoing analysis of new regulation and its impact on Empowerment Scholarship Accounts. What do these changes mean for you and your students? **Let us help you!**

We signed you up for our newsletter with the hope that you will find value in its content. Please share your feedback and suggestions for improvement. If you decide that the newsletter is not for you, simply [email \(esa@azed.gov\)](mailto:esa@azed.gov) or write us with a request to unsubscribe.

Contacting ESA

ESA Staff can be contacted at esa@azed.gov or on our ESA hotline at 602-364-1969. To ensure we are providing superior customer service, any ESA Program Specialist is able to offer assistance to any applicant. Also, to better protect the privacy of your student, Program Specialists will require verification of your identity prior to providing account information.

Due to the continued growth of the program, staff is often assisting applicants on the phone. For expedited service, we encourage you to visit the ESA website at www.azed.gov/esa for updates and program information.

We are continuously working to improve our customer service. Please share your feedback and suggestions for improvement through our new feedback system (ESAFeedback@azed.gov).

Important Policy Updates

- In an effort to streamline processes and minimize the delay of services to your child, the ESA Program has established the following policy updates to improve the service we provide:
 - ⇒ The ESA Program no longer requires you to submit curriculum for pre-approvals. Please review [A.R.S. § 15-2401\(2\)](#) and [A.R.S. § 15-2402\(B\)\(1\)](#) for additional guidance. When purchasing curriculum, parents should refer to a three-part curriculum test. Visit the Tip of the Week section of the ESA webpage for additional information regarding this policy update and detailed information on the three-part curriculum test (www.azed.gov/esa/2016/08/12/curriculum/).
 - ⇒ Credential pre-approvals for therapists, tutors, and paraprofessionals are no longer required. Please review [A.R.S. § 15-2402\(4\)](#) for additional guidance on what ESA funds can be spent on for a qualified student. Parents will be accountable for ensuring that the service provider complies with statutes by confirming they have the appropriate credentials for their services and that they are educational. Additional information regarding this policy update can be found on the ESA Program web page under Tips of the week (www.azed.gov/esa/2016/08/12/credentials-policy-change/).
- Great News! Student uniforms are now a covered expense. Per [A.R.S. § 15-2402\(4\)\(n\)](#), uniforms must be purchased through or from a qualified school; purchases made through an outside vendor, such as Walmart or Target, are not approved. Uniform expenditures cannot exceed \$800 per school year ([Empowerment Scholarship Handbook Section 2.2.4](#)).
- Late tuition or registration fees accrued due to a delay in funds being added to a card are also accepted expenses. ESA does not pay late fees if the Applicant made late payments or received late funding due to a late expense report submission ([Empowerment Scholarship Handbook Section 4.3](#)).

Empowerment Scholarship Handbook

Just in time for the 2016-17 school year the Empowerment Scholarship Account Program updated the ESA Parent Handbook for participants in the program. The purpose of the ESA handbook is to establish and supply official instruction concerning policies, procedures, and implementation of the ESA program. The [Empowerment Scholarship Account: A Guide to Utilizing Your Empowerment Scholarship Account](#) is available on the website and contains detailed information regarding the program. Please note that policies are subject to change any time during the contract year. The Department will notify applicants of any change(s) and effective dates. We encourage you to stay informed by monitoring the ESA Website (www.azed.gov/esa) and subscribing to the tips of the week (www.azed.gov/esa/category/tips/).

Important Dates

Expense Report Due Dates

- Quarter 1 (July 1-Sep 30) : September 20
- Quarter 2 (Oct 1-Dec 31) : December 20
- Quarter 3 (Jan 1-Mar 31) : March 20
- Quarter 4 (Apr 1-Jun 30) : June 20

Funding Dates

- Quarter 1: July 15-July 30
- Quarter 2: October 15-October 30
- Quarter 3: January 15-January 30
- Quarter 4: April 15-April 30

Tips for Success

Empowerment Scholarship Account Program participants must abide by their annually signed contract in order to remain in the program. Terms of the contract include the following:

- Student cannot be enrolled in a public school (including charters and public online schools)
- Student cannot be enrolled in a summer public school program (including charters and public online schools)
- Student cannot receive any School Tuition Organization (STO) scholarships or any tax credit scholarships during the school year in which they are receiving or applying for an ESA
- Participants must submit quarterly expense reports, with uploaded receipts, by the given deadline
- Participants must adhere to approved expenditures
- Participants must spend a portion of the quarterly funds every quarter and at least 25% of their annual award per year