

Georgia Special Needs Scholarship Program
For Students Continuing in the Program 2020 – 2021 School Year

This document is for a parent/guardian whose child(ren) participated in the Georgia Special Needs Scholarship (GSNS) Program during the 2019 – 2020 school year and completed the school year in an authorized private school. A parent/guardian should bookmark the web page at <http://www.gadoe.org/External-Affairs-and-Policy/Policy/Pages/Special-Needs-Scholarship-Program.aspx> (click Additional Resources). The web page for the program is the primary method used to share information regarding the GSNS Program, and a parent/guardian is responsible for reading the information provided.

IMPORTANT: Due to funding, a student that attended an authorized private school for the 2019- 2020 school year but did not complete the year at an authorized private school is ineligible to participate in the GSNS Program for the 2020 – 2021 school year. The only way a student can re-qualify for the Georgia Special Needs Scholarship Program is to again meet the program requirements outlined in the law. A student can regain eligibility for the 2021 – 2022 school year if a student is enrolled and reported by a public school system or school systems for funding purposes during the October 2020 AND March 2021 full-time equivalent (FTE) program counts during the 2020 - 2021 school year. In addition, the student must be reported as a special needs student served by an active IEP through the FTE reporting system.

PARENTS/GUARDIANS ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR RE-ENROLLING THEIR CHILDREN IN AUTHORIZED PRIVATE SCHOOLS

The calculator with new award amounts for the 2020 - 2021 school year will be available in July 2020. A parent/guardian will need to enter the last public school a student attended, not the private school the student attends to have the calculator work correctly.

A parent/guardian whose student is continuing enrollment in the same authorized private school for the 2020 – 2021 school year must follow the procedures in place at the private school. A parent/guardian is required to provide a private school with a copy of the new 2020 – 2021 scholarship award sheet for the student. This notifies a private school that a student is still eligible for the GSNS Program and what his/her award amount will be for the new school year. The award sheet is the only document needed by a parent/guardian for proof of a student's continued eligibility for the GSNS Program.

A parent/guardian enrolling a student in a new authorized private school for the 2020 – 2021 school year will need to contact the private school directly about its admissions procedures. The scholarship can only be used at a private school authorized to participate in the GSNS Program.

The list of authorized private schools with contact information is posted on the GSNS Program web page and will be updated through August 2020.

Authorized private schools have access to an electronic system which they use to report eligible students enrolled at their schools to the GaDOE. Each school year authorized private schools report enrolled students, so the GaDOE knows which students are participating in the private school choice option and where they are enrolled. Without notification of a student's continued eligibility, the private school will not report the student as enrolled in the GSNS Program to the GaDOE. This will affect the scholarship payments for a student and could affect his/her eligibility for the GSNS Program.

At any point during the school year, a parent/guardian can transfer a GSNS student to another authorized private school to continue participating in the GSNS Program. Refer to the Transfer Information document posted on the web page for more information regarding transferring a student.

Understanding Special Needs Scholarship Award Amounts for Continuing Students

Scholarship award amounts are not fixed from school year to school year. Scholarship awards for returning GSNS students are calculated using the data from the last year a student was in a Georgia public school. The data is entered into the state public education funding formula that applies to the new school year. As with all state-funded programs, scholarships actually paid are dependent on appropriations made by the Georgia General Assembly.

IMPORTANT: A parent/guardian must obtain written copies of any contracts/agreements entered with an authorized private school (e.g., tuition reimbursement, fee schedules). The tuition and fee documents should clearly explain how the private school charges for tuition and fees and how payments are accepted. Tuition information must also explain how the private school handles the processing of tuition for GSNS students.

Under the GSNS Program, if tuition and fees charged by a private school are higher than the scholarship award, a parent/guardian is responsible for paying the additional tuition. Most authorized private schools participating in the GSNS Program charge tuition and fees that are more than the amount of a student's scholarship. GSNS funds cannot be used to pay for the following:

- Transportation
- Before or after school care
- Meals

- Tutoring
- Field trip fees
- Athletic fees
- School supplies
- Summer school/camp programs
- Other fees as determined by the GaDOE.

MAINTAINING ELIGIBILITY

Important: A student must complete the 2020 - 2021 school year at an authorized private school to continue in the private school choice option for the 2021 - 2022 school year. Due to funding, a student that attends an authorized private school for the 2020 - 2021 school year but does not complete the year at an authorized private school is ineligible to participate in the GSNS Program for the 2021 – 2022 school year. The only way a student can re-qualify for the Georgia Special Needs Scholarship Program is to again meet the program requirements outlined in the law.

A student may continue to participate in the GSNS Program as long as:

- Student remains a resident of Georgia; and
- Student's parent/guardian remain residents of Georgia; and
- Student has continual enrollment and attendance in a private school participating in the GSNS Program; and
- Parent/guardian complies with GSNS Program law and rule.

An IEP does not need to be kept current to continue a student's participation in the GSNS Program.

Promotion or retention of a student does not affect eligibility for the GSNS Program.

Eligibility for the GSNS Program ends if:

- A student leaves an authorized private school and does not re-enroll in another authorized private school. OR
- A student graduates from high school. OR
- A student turns 22 years old by September 1st and has not yet graduated from high school.