

Carson Smith Scholarship Program

General Overview

The Carson Smith Special Needs Scholarship Program (CSS) is a parent choice model for Utah residents that provides tuition assistance for eligible special needs students enrolled in eligible private schools. The scholarship is for students who would qualify for special education and related services in public schools, preschool through 12th grade (3-21 years of age), whose parents choose an eligible private school. Together, Local Education Agencies (LEAs), CSS eligible private schools, and parents determine special education eligibility through a process guided by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), the same requirements for special education services in public schools.

Student Eligibility Requirements

To be eligible for a scholarship, the student must meet all of the following requirements:

1. The student's custodial parent or legal guardian must reside within the State of Utah.
2. The student must have one or more of the following disabilities:
 - a. Autism
 - b. Deafblindness
 - c. Developmental Delay (applicable to children between 3-8 years of age)
 - d. Emotional Disturbance
 - e. Hard of Hearing/Deafness
 - f. Intellectual Disability
 - g. Multiple Disabilities
 - h. Orthopedic Impairment
 - i. Other Health Impairment
 - j. Specific Learning Disability
 - k. Speech/Language Impairment
 - l. Traumatic Brain Injury
 - m. Visual Impairment (including blindness)
3. The student must be at least three years of age before September 2 of the current school year and less than 19 years of age on the last day of the school year or, if the student has not graduated from high school, less than 22 years of age on the last day of the school year (refer to IDEA and Utah State Board of Education Special Education Rules).
4. The student must meet one of these two conditions:
 - a. The student was enrolled in a Utah public school in the previous school year, had a current IEP during the school year, and has been admitted to an eligible private school; or
 - b. The student has enrolled in, or has been admitted to an eligible private school designated as a "School that has Previously Served Students with Disabilities" and an assessment team, consisting of representatives from the private school, local education agency, or public schools, and parents (Utah Code Sec. 53A-1a- 704(7)) has determined that the student would qualify to receive special education and related services if enrolled in a public school.

5. A Carson Smith Scholarship application must be completed and submitted as directed in the instructions on the application.

Conditions of Understanding and Issues of Acceptance

When a Special Needs Scholarship is accepted, the following expectations are understood:

1. An eligible student **must be enrolled in an eligible private school** (See Eligible Private School List).
2. Private schools become eligible by meeting school eligibility requirements (refer to website for more information).
3. The parent **assumes full financial responsibility** for the education of the student.
4. Acceptance of the Special Needs Scholarship has the same effect as a parental refusal to consent to Special Education services. The **“refusal to consent to Special Education and Related Services” is clearly understood and accepted** (refer to IDEA or state Special Education Rules for information).
5. The scholarship **may or may not pay** the full tuition and fees at the eligible private school.
6. Any **remaining tuition and fees** after the scholarship has been paid are the responsibility of the parent.
7. A student who receives the special needs scholarship may **not participate in a dual enrollment** program in a public school, including participating in extracurricular activities. Recipients are eligible for the Statewide Online Education Program (SOEP).
8. A parent agrees to provide information as needed to **process payments** and to verify continuing student eligibility.
9. The **amount of a special needs scholarship** awarded to an eligible student depends on the level of specialized instruction and related services the student would receive if enrolled in a public school. This is determined by the student’s IEP from the previous school year or the assessment team (see above).
10. The Special Needs Scholarship Program is funded by annual appropriations by the Utah Legislature. **Scholarships are not guaranteed and are subject to the availability of funds.**
11. The scholarship amount **may not exceed** the tuition and fees charged to parents by a private school.
12. Scholarship **payments are paid quarterly**, written to the parent or guardian of the student, must be endorsed by the parent or guardian, and signed over to the school (refer to Parent Application Instructions).
13. A scholarship remains available for **three years**, provided the student continues to meet eligibility requirements and continues to be enrolled in an eligible private school.

The scholarship may be extended in **three-year increments** if an assessment team determines the student continues to meet eligibility requirements. For more information regarding renewal of the scholarship, contact the private school.