



PARENT EMPOWERMENT

FAQ: WHAT ACCOUNTABILITY DO ESAs OFFER?

KEY POINTS

- ESAs empower parents with a central role in accountability.
- Participating schools will be accredited and issue norm-referenced tests.
- ESAs may only be used for qualified educational expenses.

HELPING CHILDREN IN SCHOOL DISTRICTS

San Antonio shows that accountability to parents results in better schools for all children. In 2014, 12% of San Antonio children received a non-ISD education; by 2021, it was over 20%. With more choices for parents, SAISD became more responsive to families by implementing:

- a portfolio of schools based on parent input;
- merit pay for teachers; &
- open enrollment policies.

As a result, from 2017 to 2022, SAISD increased its rating from an F to a B and increased the number of students in A- and B-schools by 27,000 children. Accountability to parents helps all kids.

INTRODUCTION

ESAs will empower parents and ensure accountability to parents and taxpayers.

ACADEMIC QUALITY

ESAs may be used for qualified educational expenses. Any accredited school or college can opt-in to serve ESA students.

K-12 schools will administer a norm- or criterion-referenced assessment each year and report results to the parents and the program. Accredited private schools already issue norm-referenced tests annually.

Tutoring may be provided to participating students by active or retired teachers. Therapy may be provided by licensed professionals.

An annual report would be published by independent researchers at a Texas college to evaluate the program's academic and financial impact.

FISCAL ACCOUNTABILITY

ESAs are digital wallets, held by the program administrator, that give parents the power to customize their child's education. No taxpayer dollars are held in the participant's personal bank account.

At a parent's direction, an accredited school will be paid directly from the student's ESA. Parents may also pay out-of-pocket for educational materials from a list of qualified educational expenses and then apply for reimbursement from the student's ESA.

Program spending would be audited and spending on non-educational items must be repaid and would result in the suspension of the ESA. Educators cannot rebate or refund ESA funds to participants. ESA participants cannot pay family members with ESA funds. The local district attorney will be notified of fraudulent use.



TEXAS PUBLIC POLICY FOUNDATION

FAQ: WHAT LEGAL PROTECTIONS DO ESAs OFFER?

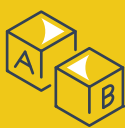
KEY POINTS

- ESAs are opt-in. There is no requirement to participate.
- Strong legal protections will ensure parents & teachers can make the best decisions for children.
- There shall be no limit on the exercise of institutional and religious values.

FREEDOMS PROTECTED BY LAW:



Creed



Practices



Performance Standards



Curriculum



Admissions Policies



Employment Policies



Assessments

INTRODUCTION

Students benefit when parents and educators collaborate and ESAs must offer strong legal protections to ensure that parents can make the best decisions for their child while teachers are free to offer the instructional supports they know are best. Legal protections will secure education freedom for future generations.

EDUCATION FREEDOM

Any accredited school or college can opt-in to serve ESA students. Texas families can also opt-in and apply for an ESA. The program is 100% opt-in. There is no requirement to participate.

The independence of participants will be protected by the ESA law. As it relates to ESAs, schools and homeschooling families will have these legal protections:

- There shall be no legal requirement to modify their creed, practices, admissions policies, curriculum, performance standards, employment policies, or assessments.
- There shall be no limit on the exercise of religious or institutional values, and no obligation to act contrary to these values can be imposed.
- No federal funds can be used for the program, preventing any federal strings from being attached.

If families or schools bring a legal challenge to any program rule because it violates these legal protections, the burden of proof is on the program administrator to prove that the rule:

- does not violate the legal protections or impose an undue burden on families or schools, and
- is the least restrictive way to operate the program.