



Private School Vouchers, Education Savings Accounts, and Tax Incentive Programs

Implications and Considerations
for Students With Disabilities

Originally Published in 2017; Updated in 2024





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I. Overview and Explanation of Updates



All students with disabilities deserve an education that enables them to develop the skills and knowledge necessary for adult success. Public schools play a critical role for students with disabilities because of the legal protections, specialized services, and targeted supports provided. Public schools serve 90% of all students: 83% in traditional public schools and 7% in public charter schools¹.

The privatization movement of K-12 education in the United States is accelerating. More than half of U.S. states have implemented at least one private school choice program. States with universal or near-universal eligibility for private school vouchers or education savings accounts (ESAs) include: Alabama, Arizona, Arkansas, Florida, Indiana, Iowa, Louisiana, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Ohio, Utah, and West Virginia. In the 2024 election, school choice initiatives were on the ballot in Kentucky, Colorado, and Nebraska but failed in all three states.

Voucher, ESA, and tax incentive programs allow families to use public funds to cover private school tuition or other educational expenses. Eligibility for these programs is often based on family income or student disability status. Currently, there are 80 programs in place across 32 states, Washington D.C., and Puerto Rico, with some states offering more than one program. 20 states have established programs specifically targeting students with disabilities. While voucher, ESA, and tax incentive programs may seem to offer educational ‘choice,’ families of students with disabilities must consider three critical factors when evaluating these programs:

1. Loss of federal civil rights protections
2. Inadequate access to information
3. Added costs for families

¹ Pew Research Center. (2024, June 6). U.S. public, private and charter schools in 5 charts. Retrieved from <https://www.pewresearch.org>

The growing number of programs—with 80 now established nationwide—suggests a desire for greater choice and flexibility in education. However, their expansion diverts funding from public schools, leaving these schools with far fewer resources to serve students effectively. Additionally, voucher, ESA, and tax incentive programs often strip students with disabilities of critical civil rights protections and place a significant financial burden on families, who may also lack the information needed to make the most informed decision for their child.

The National Center for Learning Disabilities (NCLD) is active in the [National Coalition for Public Education](#) which supports public schools and opposes efforts at the federal level to funnel public money to private and religious schools through vouchers, tuition tax credits, education savings accounts, and portability.

This report was originally published in 2017 to highlight the implications and considerations for students with disabilities. In 2024, the report was updated to reflect the current landscape of programs across the United States – which has expanded since 2017. In addition to growing state efforts, federal efforts are also growing, as proposals like those in the conservative-backed "Project 2025" that propose shifting large amounts of federal funding to vouchers get more attention. For example, in 2024, the House Ways and Means Committee passed the Educational Choice for Children Act which is the furthest federal school choice legislation has advanced, despite [opposition](#) from disability advocates. Increased efforts to tear down federal funding and protections for students with disabilities must be met with strong opposition and calls for increased support for public education and continued emphasis on civil rights protections.



II. Types of Programs and Landscape

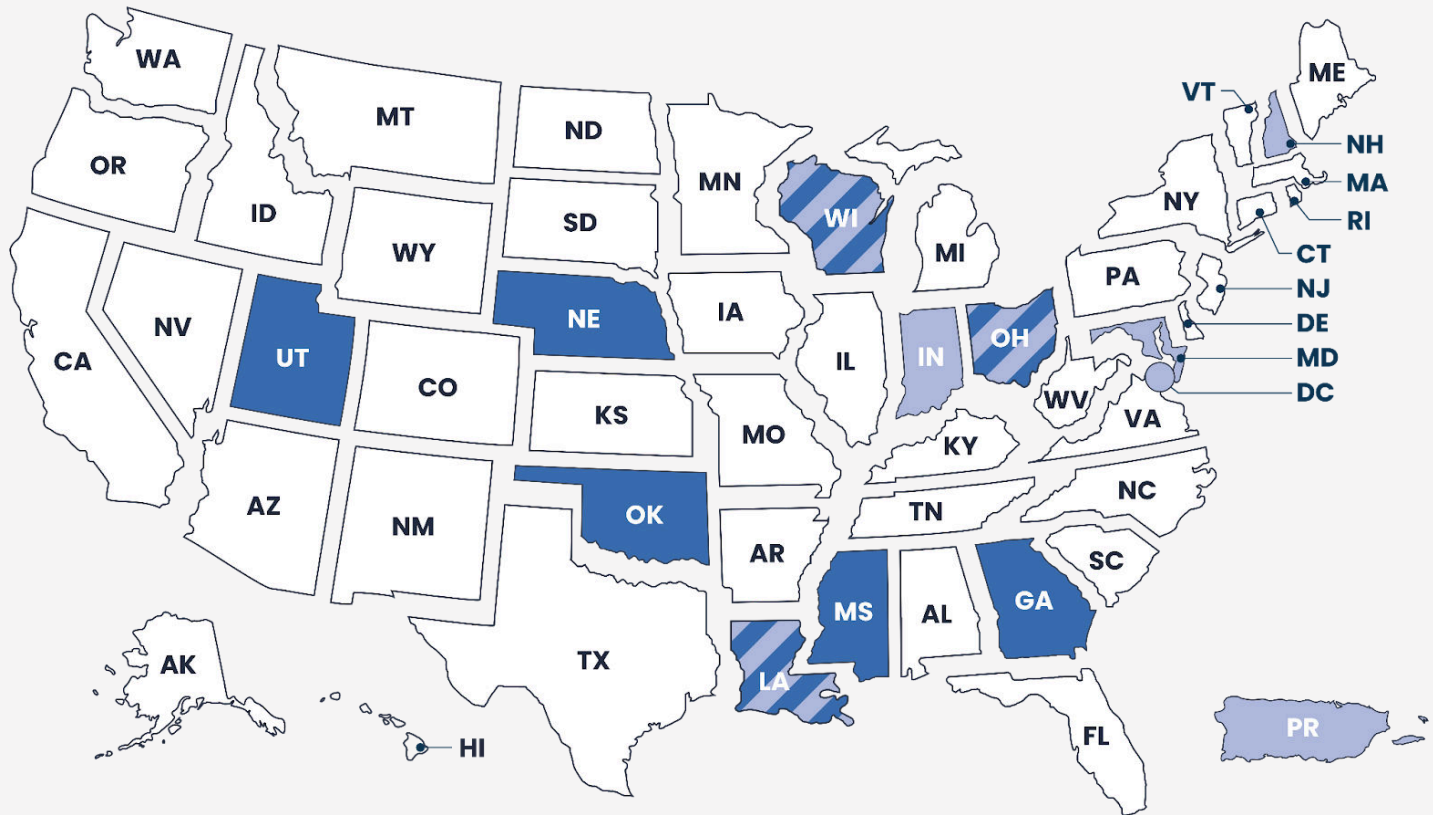


There are primarily three different programs offered across various states and Washington, D.C.: (1) private school vouchers; (2) tax incentives; and (3) ESAs. Though these programs use different legal mechanisms, all three provide public funding for private schooling.

Figure 1: Snapshot of Programs

		Number of states with programs	Number of programs across states
Voucher programs	For students with disabilities	7	10
	For all students or other subgroups	5 + PR + DC	14
Education savings accounts	For students with disabilities	8	8
	For all students or other subgroups	10	11
Tax incentives or credits	For students with disabilities	5	6
	For all students or other subgroups	24	31

A. Voucher Programs



Voucher program(s) for any student*



Voucher program(s) specifically for students with disabilities

*Note: Some states may have income thresholds or other eligibility requirements.

The voucher movement can be traced back to the wake of *Brown v. Board of Education* when voucher programs in the South were first created to allow white students to evade integration orders, funding segregation academies designed to keep Black and white students apart.² The modern-day voucher movement began in the early 1990s, providing public dollars to pay tuition at a state-approved private or parochial school.

Twelve states, Puerto Rico, and Washington, D.C., have voucher programs in place, totaling 24 programs (with some states operating multiple programs). Of these, 10 programs include eligibility

² *The Choice We Face: How Segregation, Race, & Power Have Shaped America's Most Controversial Education Reform Movement*, Beacon Press (2021); Chris Ford, et al., *The Racist Origins of Private School Vouchers*, Ctr. for Am. Progress (July 12, 2017)

or priority for students with disabilities. In many voucher programs, states allocate all or part of the public funding that would have followed the student to their public school into a voucher. This voucher covers partial or full tuition at a private school, including those with religious affiliations.

The amount of money awarded to a student varies by program, grade level, school district, and, in some cases, disability category. For example, under Georgia's Special Needs Scholarship Program provides an online "scholarship [calculator](#)" where parents can get an estimate of the voucher amount they may be eligible to receive. The Georgia Department of Education determines scholarship awards based on data provided annually by local school systems.

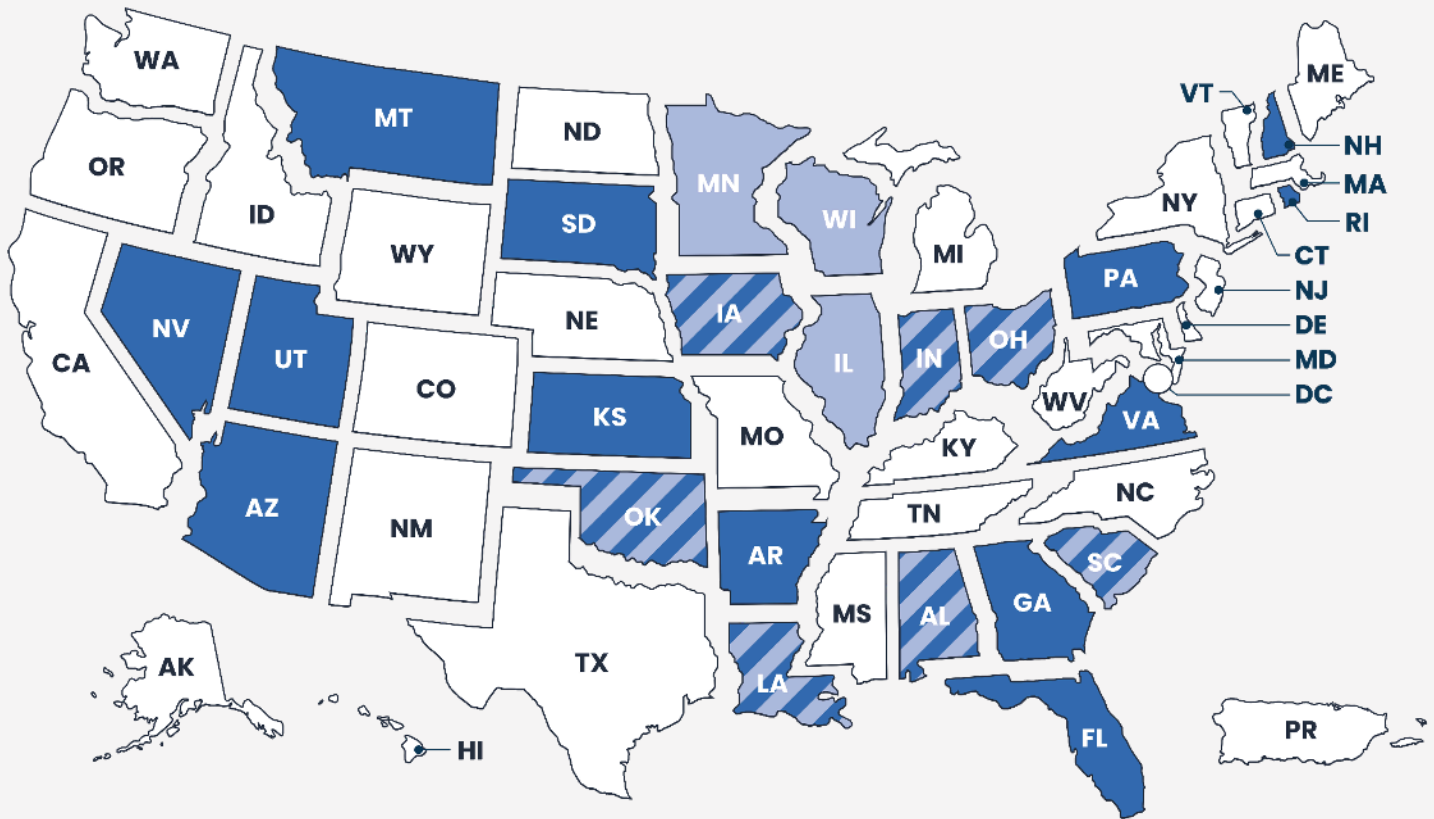
Substantial research³ on voucher programs indicate that they do not necessarily lead to better outcomes for students. In some states, like Louisiana⁴, students participating in voucher programs actually showed negative results in both reading and math.

Further, voucher recipients are required to select a school from an approved list. In the Washington, D.C. area, several private schools that specialize in learning disabilities, such as the Lab School of Washington, are not included on this [list](#), limiting options for families seeking tailored support for their child's needs.

³ R. Joseph Waddington & Mark Berends, [Impact of the Indiana Choice Scholarship Program: Achievement Effects for Students in Upper Elementary & Middle School](#), 37 J. of Policy Analysis & Mgmt. 4, 738-808 (Aug. 2018); Atila Abdulkadiroğlu, Parag A. Pathak & Christopher R. Walters, [Free to Choose: Can School Choice Reduce Student Achievement?](#), 10 Am. Econ. Journal: Applied Econ. 1, 175-206 (Jan. 2018); David Figlio & Krzysztof Karbownik, [Evaluation of Ohio's EdChoice Scholarship Program: Selection, Competition, & Performance Effects](#), Fordham Inst. (July 2016); U.S. Dept of Educ., [Evaluation of the DC Opportunity Scholarship Program: Impacts Two Years After Students Applied](#) (June 2018); Megan Kuhfeld, et al., [The Pandemic Has Had Devastating Impacts on Learning. What Will It Take to Help Students Catch Up?](#), Brookings Inst. (Mar. 3, 2022)

⁴ Jonathan N. Mills & Patrick J. Wolf, Univ. of Ark., [The Effects of the Louisiana Scholarship Program on Student Achievement After Four Years](#), EDRE Working Paper No. 2019-10 (Apr. 2019).

B. Tax Incentives



Individual Tax-credit/deduction

Tax-credit Scholarship

Tax incentives and credits for approved educational expenses

These kinds of programs allow parents or guardians to receive a tax credit or a tax deduction for approved educational expenses, including private school tuition for their child. While each state defines approved expenses differently, commonly approved expenses include private school tuition, books, transportation, and technology. These programs either lower the amount of taxes a person owes to the state or reduce a person's total taxable income. [Indiana's program](#), for example, allows parents or guardians of students in private or homeschools to claim a deduction of up to \$1,000 per student for education expenses such as private school tuition, tutoring, or textbooks. Similarly, [a program in Wisconsin](#) allows parents or guardians to deduct from their taxable income up to \$4,000 per child in grades K–8 and up to \$10,000 per child in grades 9–12 for private school tuition.

There are 12 programs in eight states in the U.S. that allow individuals to receive these tax credits or deductions for educational expenses. [South Carolina's program](#) is the only one specifically designed for students with disabilities. In 2017, Congress passed the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act, expanding the use of 529 savings accounts—previously limited to postsecondary education expenses—to allow families to use up to \$10,000 annually for private K-12 tuition. However, not all states have adopted the federal government's expanded use of 529 funds.

High income families are also the most likely to benefit from K-12 voucher tax credits that reduce the dollar-for-dollar amount of taxes owed. Recent research analyzing data from Arizona, Louisiana, and Virginia found that more than half of the state voucher tax credits are claimed by families with incomes over \$200,000, including 60 percent of families claiming the credit in Arizona, 87 percent of families in Virginia, and 99 percent of families in Louisiana.⁵

Tax incentives for donations to scholarship-awarding nonprofits

Other tax incentive programs provide full or partial tax credits for individuals or businesses that donate to a scholarship granting organization. The organization then distributes scholarships to the families of eligible students to pay for tuition at approved private schools.

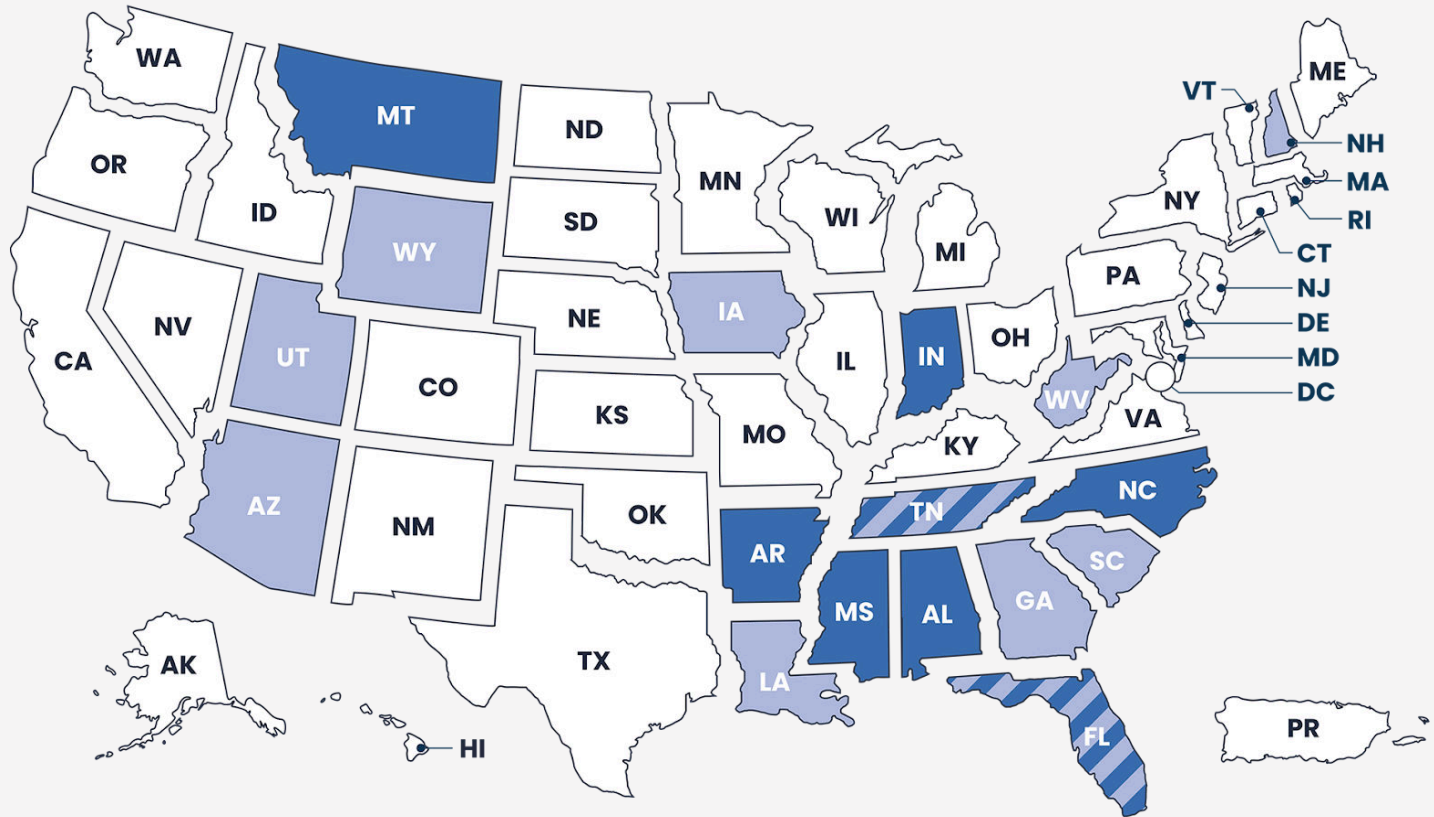
There are 37 programs in 20 states that allow individuals or businesses to make these kinds of donations to nonprofits. South Carolina, Utah, and Arizona are the only three states with tax incentive programs specifically for tuition for students with disabilities. Some states allow a dollar-for-dollar credit to donors, which is an indirect way for the state to fund private school tuition through these scholarship programs.

If admitted to a private school that accepts a scholarship through the tax incentive program, students and their families are responsible for complying with their selected private schools' code of conduct in order to maintain enrollment at the school. Step Up for Students, a nonprofit that manages Florida's Tax Credit Scholarship Program, notes in their [parent handbook](#): *"Scholarship students must follow all academic and discipline policies of the private school they attend. Private schools have the right to expel or suspend students if their published policies are not followed."* Importantly, private schools have great latitude in deciding which students will be accepted and which will not.

Unlike many voucher programs, tax incentive programs use an indirect mechanism that prevents public dollars from being tied directly to private use. This roundabout approach has protected many tax incentive programs from legal challenges. For example, in *Arizona Christian School Tuition Organization v. Winn*, the Supreme Court upheld the program, allowing it to continue.

⁵ Carl Davis, "Tax Avoidance Continues to Fuel School Privatization Efforts" Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy, March 3, 2023, available at <https://itep.org/tax-avoidance-fuels-school-vouchers-privatization-efforts/>.

C. Education Savings Accounts



ESA Program for any student*



ESA Program Specifically for Students with Disabilities

**Note: Some states may have income thresholds or other eligibility requirements.*

Education savings accounts (ESAs) are state-funded accounts that eligible parents can use to pay for a variety of approved education-related expenses, including private school tuition. Rather than giving taxpayer funds directly to the private school like traditional vouchers, the government deposits funds into an account. There are currently 18 ESA programs, eight of which are specifically for students with disabilities. [Arizona's ESA program](#) was originally created for students with disabilities but expanded its eligibility in 2022 to all students.

To participate in an ESA, parents must withdraw their child from a public or charter school. Once a student is no longer enrolled in public school, a parent can then receive government funds to cover a variety of educational expenses. While these are seemingly intended to fund expenses like private school tuition and fees, tutoring, or online learning, they also allow parents to use the funds to pay for services offered by public schools, such as extracurricular activities.



III. Implications for Students with Disabilities: Legal Protections and Discrimination



Loss of Civil Rights Protections

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)

When families enroll in a voucher, ESA, or tax incentive program, private schools and the local school district may avoid responsibility for providing educational services to children under IDEA by: (1) requiring parents to waive their rights under IDEA; (2) treating the voucher like a parental placement in a private school under IDEA and waiving IDEA rights; or (3) remaining silent on whether those rights still apply.

Many states require a parent to formally waive their rights under IDEA, and others are silent on the matter. This means when a student accepts a voucher, parents must be prepared to give up important protections like the right to an Individualized Education Program (IEP), a free, appropriate public education (FAPE), an education in the least restrictive environment (LRE), and procedural due process protections to safeguard these rights while attending a private school. Arkansas, for example, requires parents who participate in its voucher program to sign a [waiver](#), which reads as follows: “As of the date I sign this waiver, I hereby acknowledge that the resident school district is under no obligation to provide services or education to the child(ren) listed below except for services that may or may not be provided to other private school students as part of the district’s regular obligations* under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 20 U.S.C. § 1400 et. seq. during the time I choose to enroll my child(ren) in private school.”

ESA programs are no different. Of the eight ESA programs for students with disabilities,

none explicitly allow parents and children to retain their rights under IDEA. For example, Mississippi’s ESA [states](#) that parents must sign and acknowledge that they have been “provided clear notice” that their child has no more entitlement to FAPE so long as they are participating in the program.

Tax incentive programs similarly waive or fail to mention the IDEA rights of students with disabilities. South Carolina’s Educational Credit for Exceptional Needs Children [provides](#) information on eligibility criteria, but provides no guidance about what happens to IDEA rights after eligibility for the program is determined.

By relinquishing their rights under IDEA, students with disabilities lose access to essential legal protections and academic opportunities. For example, the right to FAPE ensures that students with disabilities have a meaningful opportunity to participate in the same curriculum as their peers without disabilities. Without FAPE, there is no legal guarantee of the services and supports necessary to help a child meet grade-level expectations. Also, under IDEA, parents of students with disabilities have significant rights, including:

- the right to attend and participate in IEP meetings,
- the ability to bring experts to assist in decisions about their child’s education, and
- the right to agree to the services or changes in services before they are implemented.

These parental rights, under IDEA, are critical to ensuring accountability and collaboration, yet they are not required by private schools. In fact, without these critical IDEA protections, private schools can change or eliminate a child’s services without notifying parents—and at any time.

Any parent may choose to place their child in a private school, and many do so for a variety of reasons unrelated to their child’s disability. However, data collected from the U.S. Department of Education showed that in 2022–23, only 1.7% of children with disabilities (and 1.3% of children with a Specific Learning Disability) nationwide were parentally placed in private school⁶. Nonetheless, parents should recognize that private schools do not have any obligation to provide special education services to a student with a disability.

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 is a federal law prohibiting any program or activity that receives federal funding from excluding, denying benefits to, or discriminating against any “otherwise qualified individual” solely on the basis of disability. It also requires schools receiving federal funding to provide appropriate educational services to students with disabilities, ensuring their needs are met equally as well as those of students without disabilities.

⁶ U.S. Department of Education, EDData Data Warehouse (EDW): “IDEA Part B Child Count and Educational Environments Collection,” 2022–23. Data extracted as of August 30, 2023 from file specifications 002 and 089.

In public K-12 schools, some students with disabilities receive a “504 plan” so that they can access the general education curriculum. A child who receives an evaluation under Section 504 may be entitled to certain accommodations or individualized services that best provide an educational experience comparable to that of students without disabilities—like speech therapy or extended testing time. Many private schools do not take federal funds so they are not obligated to abide by Section 504. If a school does receive federal funds, Section 504 applies but the school may not be as equipped to develop and implement accommodations.

Americans with Disabilities Act

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a civil rights law that protects individuals with disabilities across many areas of public life, including transportation, schools, workplaces, and public and private spaces. While various ADA protections apply to all public schools and many private schools, private schools operated by religious organizations are exempt from certain ADA requirements. In 2021-22, about three-quarters of private school K-12 students attended a religiously affiliated school⁷. These students could face discrimination based on their disability, be denied admission or access to private schools, or may be treated differently than other students due to their disability.

Explicit and Implicit Discrimination

Admission Policies

A family can only enroll a student in a private school if the student was first admitted to the school. Given private schools create their own admission policies, explicit and implicit discrimination can and does exist within private school admission as compared with public schools who admit all students. While schools may not outright reject a student, they may indicate that they do not have the resources to serve students with specific learning needs. For example, watch this [video clip](#) of a parent sharing the responses she received from private schools in Tennessee telling her they are unable to serve her child. In Wisconsin, [Wisconsin Watch](#) found that about 15% of voucher schools had policies or statements appearing to discriminate against students with disabilities, often citing limited capacity to meet their needs.

The only federally funded voucher program in the United States is located in the District of Columbia. One of the participating schools, St. John’s College High School, offers a specialized program called the [Benilde Program](#) “for highly motivated students with diagnosed mild learning

⁷ Pew Research Center. (2024, June 6). U.S. public, private and charter schools in 5 charts. Retrieved from <https://www.pewresearch.org>

differences.” On its website, one of the FAQs asks, “Who is the ideal Benilde student?” The responses states:

“Ideally, a Benilde student...”

- Demonstrates average to above-average cognitive abilities
- Has a diagnosed learning difference documented by a psycho-educational evaluation completed within three years of application to the program
- Demonstrates the ability to navigate social situations adeptly
- Is emotionally healthy
- Does not have a history of behavioral problems that would interfere with classroom learning

In an evaluation of the Washington D.C. voucher, the [main reason](#) students didn’t use the voucher program was because they could not find a private school that would provide the accommodations their disability required. Cherry-picking, for disability status as well as other characteristics like religion, gender identity, or sexuality, undermines the provision of a high quality education for all learners using public tax dollars..

Disciplinary and Expulsion Policies

In addition to policies that may limit who can attend, private schools can restrict enrollment with stringent disciplinary or expulsion policies, including zero tolerance policies. Disability and behavior are linked, as unmet needs can sometimes result in challenging behaviors. Private schools have no regulated discipline policies and students can be disciplined or excluded from learning settings for a variety of reasons. Public schools, on the other hand, have a responsibility to ensure nondiscrimination in discipline. In 2022, the U.S. Department of Education issued [guidance](#) specifically about students with disabilities and clarified that schools must identify behaviors related to a student's disability. Public schools are also required to submit data on in and out of school suspensions, expulsions, and instances of seclusion and restraint in the Civil Rights Data Collection.



IV. Inconsistent Access to Information



Language around the impact of choosing a voucher, tax credit, or ESA fails to fully inform families about the changes in their rights and responsibilities. Parents are often not provided accessible resources regarding IDEA rights under school choice program participation or program eligibility information. Thus, students and their families may unknowingly lose IDEA protections. A report⁸ by the Council of Parent Attorneys and Advocates found that many parents participating in school choice programs did not understand the impact their participation had on their IDEA rights.

For example, rather than providing clear language around what happens to student rights under their program, Utah’s Carson Smith Special Needs Scholarship program “[General Overview](#)” document instructs parents to do their research elsewhere. It states:

“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).”

Georgia’s Special Needs Scholarship (GSNS) program maintains a resources page for parents on its website that acknowledges the lack of clarity for parents, but also puts the burden on families to inquire about learning supports and accommodations at the private school.

The “[Understanding the Program](#)” guide states:

“Many parents/guardians are surprised to learn that a private school participating in the GSNS Program is not required to follow a student’s IEP and is not required to provide special education services to a student. You as a parent/guardian have to ask a private school directly regarding the specific special education or other services it provides for students. Ask the private school if it is willing to put services in writing as a plan for your child’s education if he/she were admitted to the school.”

⁸ Almazan, S., Marshall, D. (2016). School Vouchers and Students with Disabilities: Examining Impact in the Name of Choice, Council of Parent Attorneys and Advocates.



V. Failure to Cover Full Private School Tuition



Voucher recipients are disproportionately families from higher socioeconomic backgrounds. A 2023 analysis⁹ of Arizona’s universal private school voucher data found that 52 percent of participating students live in the state’s highest income zip codes, and students in the highest income zip codes benefit ten times more than students in the lowest income zip codes.

In many states, funding for voucher, ESA, or tax incentive programs is rarely enough to cover the cost of private school tuition and fees, especially for students with disabilities who may seek to attend a specialized school or receive additional specialized services. Where the program does not cover the cost of a child’s education, parents or guardians are expected to make up the difference. Louisiana’s School Choice Program for Students with Certain Exceptionalities “Frequently Asked Questions” document states: *“If the school’s tuition and fees exceeds the certificate amount, then parents are responsible for paying the difference.”* This clearly limits the families who can take advantage of these programs to those with a certain level of income security.

Under individual tax incentive programs, parents must pay tuition and fees up front and receive the tax write-off later. In many cases, private schools charge extra fees not included in tuition, which parents are also responsible for covering.

The following chart illustrates the funding gap between the average voucher and ESA amount and the average or sample tuition costs in several states, highlighting the discrepancy between the provided financial aid and actual expenses.

⁹ Garrett Archer, “Analysis: More than half of ESA students come from high-income zip codes,” Arizona ABC 15, updated January 10, 2024.

State	Program	Average Voucher, ESA, or Scholarship Amount	Average private school tuition ¹⁰	Sample tuition at private school for LD ¹¹
Arizona	Arizona Empowerment Scholarship (ESA)	\$6,000 - \$10,000 for child with SLD	\$10,446	\$30,500¹²
Florida	Family Empowerment Scholarship (ESA)	\$10,000 for child with SLD	\$10,617	\$38,000¹³
Louisiana	School Choice Program for Certain Students with Exceptionalities (Voucher)	50% of state per pupil funding (approx. \$2,500)	\$7,849	\$15,725¹⁴
Ohio	Jon Peterson Special Needs Scholarship (Voucher)	\$12,470 for child with SLD	\$7,929	\$35,340¹⁵
Washington, DC	DC Opportunity Scholarship Program (Voucher, federally funded)	\$14,000	\$27,775	\$24,900 (+\$3,500 for students accepted into program for LD) ¹⁶

¹⁰ Methodology: Average Private School Tuition Cost (2024-25) retrieved from <https://www.privateschoolreview.com/tuition-stats/private-school-cost-by-state>

¹¹ Methodology: For voucher programs, a school with an LD program was selected from the list. For ESAs, an LD school in the state was selected at random.

¹² Source: <https://newwayacademy.org/admissions/affording-new-way/>

¹³ Source: <https://roigacademy.com/admissions/tuition/>

¹⁴ Source: <https://www.thebrightonschool.org/admissions/tuition--financial-aid>

¹⁵ Source: <https://www.juliebilliartschool.org/admissions/tuition-financial-aid/tuition-fees>

¹⁶ Source: <https://www.stjohnschs.org/admissions/tuition>



VI. For Families: FAQ About Voucher Programs



Parents and families strive to provide the best educational experience possible for their children and can feel frustrated when their child’s needs are not being met in their current school. Families deserve comprehensive information about the options available to their child. These Q&A outline key questions parents should ask as they navigate private school options.

What types of programs does my state offer?

It depends on where you live. Some states offer multiple types of programs—vouchers, ESAs, and tax incentives. Others offer none at all. It’s important to know the programs available in your state and how they operate before making any decisions.

Will the program cover the full cost of the school I am considering? Or will I be responsible for some of the cost?

In many states, there is a significant gap between private school tuition and the actual amount covered by a voucher, ESA, or tax incentive program. This is especially true if you are considering a specialized private school, such as one geared toward students with specific learning disabilities (SLD). If the program does not fully cover the school’s tuition, you will likely need to pay the difference, in addition to other costs. It’s also important to note that private schools typically do not cover ancillary expenses, such as transportation or related services your child may require. Any costs not covered by the voucher or ESA will be your responsibility. Furthermore, if you choose to use a tax incentive program, you will need to pay the education costs upfront and receive a tax credit or tax deduction later.

Is my child eligible to participate in a voucher, ESA, or tax incentive program?

Eligibility depends on the specific program you're considering. Some programs are limited to families earning below a certain income threshold, while others are available only to students who have an Individualized Education Program (IEP) from a public school. Understanding the eligibility requirements for each program in your state will help you determine which options may be available for your child. Will my student's rights under IDEA apply in private schools? What kind of special education or related services will my child receive if I use a voucher?

Private schools are not required to follow IDEA. How IDEA rights are handled under voucher programs varies by state. Some states require families to waive their IDEA rights, while others make no mention of them at all. In states where IDEA rights are not upheld, or if you are required to waive those rights, your child will not have an IEP, IEP meetings, or notifications of changes to educational services for your child. As a result, the services your child receives in a private school may differ significantly from those provided in the public school system. Every private school is different, and you will need to work with the private school to advocate for your child's needs. For these reasons, when choosing a voucher program, it is important to determine whether and how your child's rights will be upheld in a private school. Also, you should ask whether your child will stop receiving his or her educational services upon entering the private school.

Can I use a voucher, ESA, or tax incentive program to enroll my child in any private school in my state?

Not necessarily. First, you may be limited to only private schools that have been pre-approved by the state. Additionally, not all private schools participate in voucher, ESA, or tax incentive programs, so the school you are considering may not be an option. Second, even if a school is eligible, it must accept your child, and private schools have the ability to reject students for nearly any reason.

Is the private school I choose required to accept my child?

No, private schools have great discretion in determining which students to enroll. The civil rights protections afforded to students with disabilities in public schools do not apply to them in private schools. It is possible to be eligible for a voucher, ESA, or tax incentive program and still have a difficult time finding a school that will enroll your child and meet his or her needs. In addition, the discipline rules you may be familiar with under IDEA do not apply in private schools. A private school may expel a student at any time and for any reason.

Some ways private schools can implicitly or explicitly discriminate against students include:

- Religious and conservative standards, including anti-LGBTQ+ policies or requiring families to sign a statement of faith
- Admission requirements or processes that favor academic performance or test scores
- Requiring out-of-pocket family expenses for tuition or related academic expenses, such as equipment, field trips, and more

Will the private school I am considering for my child be able to meet his or her needs without any support from the district?

It depends on the school. First, it's important to understand that private schools are not held to the same academic standards as public schools. In general, private schools are not required to administer state testing or verify student performance. Parents should ask what academic information the private school can share to demonstrate students' success. In addition, there is no guarantee that a private school can meet the full range of needs of students with disabilities. Most private schools—particularly those not specifically designed for students with disabilities—cannot provide the same level or intensity of academic and behavioral supports as public schools. Furthermore, educators at private schools may not hold the same credentials or training as those in public schools. It is important to determine how the private school you are considering will address your child's academic, behavioral, or social/emotional needs, especially if the voucher amount awarded to you through the voucher, ESA, or tax incentive program does not cover the full cost of additional services.

Where can I get more information on my state's programs?

Your state's department of education is the best place to find information about whether a voucher, ESA, or tax incentive program is offered in your state. However, states generally do not provide clear or comprehensive information about these programs to parents, especially parents of students with disabilities who have questions relating to IDEA rights and special education services in private schools.



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unlimited opportunity.*