



Scholarship Bulletin | March 2019

2019 Legislative Session

The 2019 session of the Florida Legislature is now underway. Some of the bills that have been filed may impact state scholarship programs. Watch for updates on the outcome of session in future newsletters from our office.

2019-20 Compliance Renewal

Renewing private schools that met the Scholarship Compliance Form submission deadline of March 1 must resolve any outstanding compliance issues by May 1, 2019, in order to remain eligible to participate in the state scholarship programs for the 2019-20 school year. Schools having unresolved issues after that date will not be able to participate in the McKay, Gardiner, FTC, or Hope Scholarship programs for the upcoming school year. Please contact your regional manager promptly if you have any questions concerning the review process.

Compliance Notes: *Fingerprint Retention*

In this compliance renewal season, it is important for both renewing schools and new participants to understand the employee fingerprinting requirements. Every employee or contracted personnel with direct student contact must electronically undergo a set of fingerprints through the Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE) for a state and national background screening. The screening results must be securely stored at the school's location and be available for inspection by the Department of Education should your school be selected for a site visit.

Once the criminal history report has been received, it is the private school's responsibility to ensure each employee and contracted personnel meets the background screening standards described in Section 1002.421, Florida Statutes. More information and links to applicable standards are available on our website on the [Employee Compliance Resources](#) page.

After initial processing, the electronic fingerprint submissions are retained by FDLE in the Applicant Fingerprint Retention and Notification Program. The retained fingerprints are searched against all incoming in-state arrest fingerprint submissions, and any matches will be reported to the private school. In addition, schools are required to instruct FDLE to re-run the FBI screening every five years. Private schools are invoiced by FDLE for the annual fee of \$6 charged per fingerprint submission retained. To remain in compliance with program requirements, promptly pay FDLE invoices related to personnel still working with scholarship students at your school.

Requirements for Owners/Operators:

Section 1002.421(p), Florida Statutes, requires private schools that intend to participate in state scholarship programs to have each owner/chief administrator and operator undergo a level 2 background screening **regardless of direct contact with scholarship students**. Each owner/chief administrator and operator **MUST** also submit fingerprints electronically through the Volunteer and Employee Criminal History System (VECHS) for a level 2 background check. Further information on the VECHS program can be obtained at <http://www.fdle.state.fl.us/Background-Checks/VECHS-Home.aspx> or by calling 850-410-8324.

Norm-Referenced Testing

Private schools participating in the Florida Tax Credit (FTC), Hope, and/or the Gardiner Scholarship Program are reminded of the requirement to administer, or make provisions for scholarship students in grades 3-10 to take one of the nationally norm-referenced tests identified by the Department of Education. The approved assessments and specific instructions are available on the School Choice website at: <http://www.fldoe.org/schools/school-choice/k-12-scholarship-programs/ftc/annual-assessment-requirement.stml> Participating private schools must make arrangements to administer one of the approved listed tests unless they have requested and received approval to use an alternate assessment. If you have any questions related to this requirement, please review the information on the page linked above, or contact your Regional Manager.

Scholarship Students and Virtual Schools

A McKay, Florida Tax Credit, or Hope Scholarship student **may take up to two state-funded virtual school courses each school year without jeopardizing scholarship eligibility**. This includes courses from Florida Virtual School as well as district virtual instruction programs and district franchises of FLVS. However, parents of Gardiner Scholarship students must contract to pay for any virtual courses from these providers. Parents should contact their scholarship funding organization for more information.

McKay Student Payments

The final regular payment for the McKay Scholarship Program for the 2018-19 school year is April 1st. Remember that each McKay student must have a valid Parent Affidavit on file with our office, completed by the parent who will endorse scholarship payments. To ensure that you receive payments for all eligible students, please review your student list and submit any missing Affidavit as soon as possible. To request payments missed for other reasons, submit a [Scholarship Issue Form](#) along with all documents noted on page 2 of the form. If you are unsure why a student hasn't received a payment, please contact your regional manager. Private schools should make an effort to resolve any outstanding payment issues by March 11th.

McKay Student Attendance Verification

March 4 – 11 is the time during which private schools can submit their online Attendance Verification in order to qualify for the April 1 McKay Scholarship payment. The Attendance Verification link will appear at the bottom of the school's Welcome page starting on March 4 and will remain available through March 11. Once a school has completed their Attendance Verification, the link will be replaced by a note indicating that the Attendance Verification has been completed.

Other Resources



Created by the Florida Legislature and housed at the University of Central Florida, the Florida Center for Students with Unique Abilities provides financial support so students with intellectual disabilities have opportunities for on-campus college experiences and employment opportunities through degree, certificate, or non-degree programs. Support provided by the Center includes scholarship funding for students and grant funding to support postsecondary institutions as they develop new opportunities. For more information, see fcsua.org.

McKay Upcoming Deadlines

May 1

Date by which all Compliance issues must be resolved.

June 1

Date by which requests for missing payments must be submitted.

July 3

Intent filing deadline for the September 1 payment.

August 2

Enrollment deadline for the September 1 payment.

More Information

[Regional Managers](#)

[McKay Calendar](#)

[McKay Deadlines](#)

[Application & Renewal Instructions](#)

[McKay Student Technical Assistance](#)

[Compliance Resources](#)

[McKay Parent Affidavit](#)

[Update Notification Form](#)

Office of Independent Education and Parental Choice
Turlington Building, Suite 1044 | 325 W. Gaines Street
Tallahassee, FL 32399-0400
Toll-Free Information Hotline: 1-800-447-1636
Fax: 850-245-0875

