



Education Savings Account: Sports Brief

When considering the use of a Tennessee Education Savings Account (ESA) and enrollment in a non-public school, account holders and schools should be aware of the following provisions, as outlined in Tennessee Code Annotated § 49-6-2603(k):

An ESA participating student is not eligible to participate in a sport sanctioned by an association that regulates interscholastic athletics for the first year in which a student attends a participating school if:

- (1) the participating student attended a Tennessee public school and participated in that sport;
- (2) the student participated in that sport in the year immediately preceding the year in which the participating student enrolled in the participating school; and
- (3) the participating student has not relocated outside of the Local Education Agency (LEA) in which the Tennessee public school that the participating student formerly attended is located.

Frequently Asked Questions

Does this mean my child cannot play a sport in the first year he or she receives an ESA?

It depends. If a child played a sport at a Tennessee public school the year before transferring to a non-public school as a result of receiving an ESA, the child would not be able to compete in that same sport for the non-public school in the first year. However, the child can compete in a different sport.

If a child moved from one zoned Tennessee public school district to another—such as moving into Shelby, Davidson, or Hamilton counties—the child is eligible to participate in any sport at the non-public school.

How does the ESA amount impact Tennessee Secondary School Athletic Association (TSSAA) or other association eligibility in terms of financial aid?

Any child participating in a specific association-sanctioned sport, such as a TSSAA-sanctioned sport, should check with the TSSAA liaison regarding eligibility. In most cases, the ESA can be used for tuition up to the amount determined through the school's financial aid need-based percentage. ESA families and account holders who wish to participate in a TSSAA sport can determine the allotment of the ESA toward tuition, textbooks, uniforms, and other educational expenses. The account holder determines how ESA funds are spent, not the school. Account holders with questions about sports participation should contact their school's athletics department.

What if my student was already enrolled in the participating school and received the ESA as part of the 'Grandfather bill' (Public Chapter 171)?

If a student was enrolled in a participating school prior to receiving the ESA, the sports limitations do not apply. Athletic ineligibility only extends to the first year a student is enrolled at a participating school.