REQUIREMENTS FOR PARTICIPATING IN STATE SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAMS

Important: This is an attempt to summarize important requirements related to the state scholarship programs. This page is only a guide, and the provisions in law take precedence. Private school administrators are responsible for knowledge of and compliance with the requirements outlined in sections 1002.42, 1002.421, 1002.394, and 1002.395, Florida Statutes (F.S.), as well as 6A-6.03315, 6A-6.0952, and 6A-6.0960, Florida Administrative Code, as they relate to private schools participating in Florida's K-12 scholarship programs.

In order to participate in a state scholarship program, a private school must:

- Maintain in this state a physical location where students regularly attend regularly attend onsite classes.
- Notify the Department of Education of their intent to participate.
- Demonstrate fiscal soundness by:
    1. Being in operation for at least 3 school years, or
    2. Filing with the Department of Education a surety bond or letter of credit for the amount equal to the scholarship funds for any quarter.
- Comply with the anti-discrimination provisions of 42 U.S.C. s. 2000d.
- Employ or contract only with teachers who hold a baccalaureate or higher degree, or have at least three years of teaching experience in public or private schools, or have special skills, knowledge, or expertise that qualifies them to provide instruction in subjects taught.
- Submit a signed and notarized Scholarship Compliance Form certifying that
    a. All owners, operators, and chief administrative officers have undergone the required background screening.
    b. All school employees and contracted personnel with direct student contact have undergone the required background screening.
- Meet state and local health, safety, and welfare laws, codes, and rules.
- Beginning with the 2018-19 school year, the Department will conduct site visits to private schools entering a scholarship program for the first time. Beginning with the 2019-20 school year, a private school is not eligible to receive scholarship payments until a satisfactory site visit has been conducted by the Department.
- For initial eligibility to participate in a scholarship program, a school must submit a signed and notarized Scholarship Compliance Form no later than October 1 and all outstanding compliance documentation issues are to be resolved by December 1. A school that fails to meet either of these deadlines may not participate in the scholarship program until the subsequent school year.

Once approved to participate in a state scholarship program, a private school must:

- Comply with the requirements of individual scholarship programs, and be aware of all program deadlines.

- Timely respond to requests for information from the Department, including responses to Departmental inquiries based upon complaints against your school.
- Notify the Department of a change in the school's name, director, mailing address, or physical location within 15 days after the change.
- Timely submit any updates to the required documents which may have been affected by the change in director or change in location.
- Maintain current contact information on the Department's website, including e-mail addresses.
- Return any funds received for services that were not provided.
- Accurately report student withdrawal dates.
- Complete and submit the signed and notarized Private School Annual Survey required by section 1002.42, F.S.
- Annually complete and submit the signed and notarized Scholarship Compliance Form by February 1 of each school year. Any additional documentation must be submitted by April 1 of that school year.
- Annually meet scholarship compliance requirements and keep evidence and documentation demonstrating your school's compliance. We recommend keeping a binder of all important scholarship information.

Private school administrators may log in through the link below to access additional technical assistance on this topic and to notify the Department of Education of their intent to participate in the state scholarship programs.

Private School Administrator Log-In

Norm-referenced Test Requirement

For students in grades 3 through 10 participating in state scholarship programs, an eligible private school must annually administer one of the nationally norm-referenced tests identified by the Department of Education or the statewide assessments pursuant to section 1008.22, F.S.

Agreed Upon Procedure Guidelines

Private schools that receive funding from state scholarship programs are required to submit a report from an independent certified public accountant who performs the agreed-upon procedures developed pursuant to section 1002.395(6)(o),F.S. if the private school received more than $250,000 in scholarship funds. The private school must submit the report by September 15 to the scholarship funding organization that awarded the majority of the school's scholarship funds.