

## **Supplemental Special Education Services (SSES) FAQ:**

- **What are Supplemental Special Education Services?**
  - Supplemental Special Education Services (SSES) are online accounts made available to eligible parents of students with disabilities that have been impacted by COVID-19 school closures. To ensure additional educational progress, families can use the online accounts to obtain goods and services up to the dollar value in the account which will supplement and bolster services a child is already receiving in school.
  
- **How many SSES accounts are available?**
  - Up to 20,000 accounts will be available for families across Texas whose children have eligible disabilities.
  
- **What is the value of an SSES account?**
  - \$1,500 per eligible student for reimbursement of qualified services, which will be increased in the event there are fewer applicants than available accounts or proportionally reduced for non-low-income families in the event there are more applicants than available accounts.
  
- **Who is eligible for an SSES account?**
  - Families of students who are enrolled in a Texas public school this year (2020-21), were enrolled during the initial COVID-19 school closures (2019-20), and were identified as having a low incidence disability (e.g., an intellectual disability, a developmental disability, a visual impairment, hearing loss, a significant physical disability, multiple disabilities, or are on the autistic spectrum).
  
  - Around 59,000 Texas students fit the SSES eligibility category.
    - If more families apply than there are available accounts, priority will be given to those with financial need (i.e. families whose children are eligible for a free/reduced price lunch).
    - If fewer families apply than there are available accounts, remaining funds will be added to existing parent accounts at the end of the 4-month application window.
  
- **Are students in private schools eligible?**
  - No. Students must have been enrolled in a Texas public school during the 2019-20 school year and must also be enrolled in the 2020-21 school year.
  
- **What are the specific requirements to qualify?**
  - Only students with an Individual Education Program (IEP) will be eligible, and the students' IEPs must indicate eligibility for IDEA stemming from a low-incidence disability.

- **Are accounts available per child or per family?**
  - Accounts are available for and funded per student. As an example, a family with two students with low-incidence disabilities would receive funding in their account for \$3,000—the combined amount—and funds can be used to support either child.
  
- **When can a parent apply?**
  - The family application will be made available in late 2020. The application window will remain open for 4 months in total, with two 2-month windows to facilitate batched application approval.
  
- **How do I apply, and what proof of eligibility is required?**
  - TEA will establish a web-based application process (including application materials in both English and Spanish). Families will supply information to identify each student, which will be matched with information on file with TEA about the student. Families will also supply certain necessary parent contact information to facilitate management of the online accounts.
  
- **When will I find out if my child has been approved for an account?**
  - All applicants will get an immediate email confirmation indicating their application has been received.
  - Families will be notified within five business days if they have been approved, placed on a waiting list, or do not qualify.
  
- **Will there be a paper application submission process for families without internet access/technology?**
  - No. This is designed to be web-based. The system is compatible with mobile devices.
  
- **How does a parent use the online accounts?**
  - Once a parent account has been approved, parents will be able to login to an online website maintained by TEA’s online accounts manager. That website will launch in 2020, to coincide with the launch of the online application.
  - Parents will be able to use the website to order an eligible good or service online.
  
- **What services or goods are eligible for parents to obtain via their online accounts?**
  - TEA, through the account manager, will maintain a list of approved vendors that have goods or services that parents can obtain via their online accounts. When the service launches, the list will be pre-populated with a large array of vendors already approved. TEA will separately manage a process to allow additional vendors to be vetted and approved as an additional choice.
  - Only vendors that provide certain types of goods or services will be approved, which are:
    - Private tutoring
    - Educationally related services and therapies from a licensed or accredited practitioner (OT, PT, BCBA, SLP, PT)

- Textbooks, curriculum, or other instructional materials
  - Computer hardware, software, or other technological devices that are used for educational needs
- **How does a parent request an eligible good or service?**
    - Parents will be able to select from an approved service provider within the online platform provided by TEA, through the TEA account manager. Through the online system, parents will be able to directly order goods. They will also be able to confirm services have been received and authorize payment for those services.
    - Parents will be asked to confirm that any goods or service ordered are consistent with the special education needs of the student.
    - Services cannot be purchased through the system for a service provider who is related (within the third degree of consanguinity) to the parent.
  - **How long does reimbursement to goods/service vendors take?**
    - Reimbursement will take 5-10 business days.
    - Parents will never need to front money, as the TEA account manager will send funds directly to the approved goods/service vendors.
  - **Must parents submit all receipts together for reimbursement or may reimbursement requests be submitted incrementally once service is rendered?**
    - Parents order goods directly, and no receipts are required.
    - For services, parents supply some documentation indicating that the service has been rendered when they ask for the service provider to be paid.
  - **Can parents submit for retroactive services and expenses incurred since the March 2019 closure of their public school?**
    - No. Services can only be purchased and received after a family establishes an account.
  - **What are the deadlines for parents to use all funds in their online accounts?**
    - Parents must have submitted funding requests for eligible goods or services by January 31, 2022.
  - **How does a goods or service provider become an approved vendor?**
    - Entities that sell eligible goods or services may submit an application to TEA to be considered as a vendor for the SSES account. TEA will determine if the goods or services provided are eligible and will ensure that these goods/services are provided at a negotiated cost. If approved, they will be added to the list of eligible vendors through the online account marketplace.
  - **Do public school teachers qualify as vendors?**
    - Tutoring is an eligible service. For individuals, including public school teachers, to provide tutoring for payment from an SSES account, they must work under the

umbrella of a pre-approved tutoring company or nonprofit in the SSES marketplace.

- **Must tutors have a special needs certification to provide services?**
  - Tutors, including any teachers, must meet the qualifications established by pre-approved tutoring companies or nonprofits in the SSES marketplace. Approval for companies or nonprofits may include criteria for providing qualified personnel for relevant services (e.g., a person with a background/degree related to math practice may tutor students in math) and background checks.
  
- **Is there a maximum per hour charge for special needs services?**
  - These will be dependent on determinations by TEA and will be based on the market rate. For example, specialized therapists cost between \$65 and \$85 per hour. Additionally, tutoring services will be determined based on market prices. TEA will set a statewide rate under this system.