



Tennessee Secondary School Athletic Association

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MEMORANDUM

DATE: November 21, 2019
TO: DII Member School Principals and Heads of School
FROM: Bernard Childress, Executive Director
RE: ESA Payments

We have had a few questions from tuition receiving schools concerning the eligibility status of students that transfer to their school who are receiving a “voucher.” First of all, please know that any student transferring with an athletic record the past twelve months and no bona fide change of residence will be ineligible on the varsity level in that sport twelve months past their last date of participation at the previous school.

As we understand the ESA program, the parent applies for an account and the state funds their online account, if awarded. The parents control how every dollar is spent, so long as it is an approved expense as outlined in the law.

The parent can utilize the funds in their Education Savings Account for any number of approved expenses. There are about a dozen allowable categories, of which, one is tuition. Parents may also decide to use the funds for tutors, uniforms, transportation, meal plans, etc. The state does not hold “tuition monies back for schools.” They will not micromanage the parents’ account in any way other than to approve allowable expenses.

With all of the information we have obtained, it is our determination that receiving funding through the ESA program does not constitute a violation of Article II, Section 16 (Tuition and Financial Aid) of the TSSAA Bylaws. These students would be eligible to participate in athletics provided they meet all other TSSAA guidelines.

If you have any questions concerning this, please feel free to contact our office.

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