

Dear Parent and/or Guardian,

The **Georgia Special Needs Scholarship (GSNS) Program** is a school choice program available for special needs students attending Georgia public schools who are served under an Individualized Education Program (IEP).

To newly qualify for the Georgia Special Needs Scholarship Program a student must meet ALL the following requirements; however, the one-year requirement shall not apply if the student's parent is an active duty military service member stationed in Georgia within the previous year:

**Student Eligibility Criteria 1-** A student must have a parent/guardian who currently lives in Georgia and has been a resident for at least one calendar year.

**Student Eligibility Criteria 2-** A student was enrolled and completed the previous school year in a Georgia public school in grades kindergarten through twelfth.

**Student Eligibility Criteria 3-** A student was reported as attending a Georgia public school by a school district(s) during mandatory student counts conducted in October and March.

**Student Eligibility Criteria 4 -** A student does not need to have an Individualized Education Program (IEP) for the entire school year to qualify for the GSNS Program. A student must have received special education services at some point during the previous school year through an IEP. A student must be reported by a school district(s) in either the October or March student counts or in final student record as a student receiving special education services by the end of the previous school year.

At the end of the school year, school systems update student records for students served by an IEP after the March count to reflect that they are special education students. By mid-July the database for the scholarship calculator is updated to include these students.

If a student meets the eligibility criteria for the GSNS Program; a parent/guardian has the right to request a transfer from a student's current public school to:

- Another public school within their district of residence; or
- Another public school district outside their district of residence; or
- One of the three state schools for the blind or deaf; or
- A private school authorized to participate in the GSNS Program. Funds received through the GSNS Program can only be used to pay for tuition and fees at a private school authorized by the State Board of Education to participate in the program.

Funds cannot be used to pay the costs of out of district tuition, charter schools, or other options available under public school choice.

For additional information, please go to the Georgia Department of Education's Special Needs Scholarship Program website at:

<https://www.gadoe.org/External-Affairs-and-Policy/Policy/Pages/Special-Needs-Scholarship-Program.aspx>

Sincerely,

Emmaundia Ford, Director