



## **What is the Gardiner Scholarship Program?**

The Gardiner Scholarship Program formerly known as Personal Learning Scholarship Account (or PLSA) was established in 2014 to provide parents the option to better meet the individual needs of their eligible children. Parents of eligible Florida children may use the accounts to purchase approved educational-related goods or services, as well as provide for prepaid college plans.

## **Who is eligible for Gardiner Scholarship Account Program?**

A student is eligible for a Gardiner from AAA through this program, if:

- A. the student is a resident of Florida;
- B. the student will be 3 or 4 years old on or before September 1<sup>st</sup>, or
- C. the student is eligible to enroll in kindergarten through grade twelve in a public school in Florida; and
- D. the student has at least one of the disabilities (as defined by Section 1002.385(2)(d), Florida Statutes) listed below; and
- E. the student has an AAA Diagnosis of Disability Form completed and signed by a U.S. licensed physician or a Florida licensed psychologist that matches at least one of the disabilities (as defined by Section 1002.385(2)(d), Florida Statutes) listed below.

## **What types of disabilities qualify?**

- A. Autism Spectrum Disorder
- B. Cerebral Palsy
- C. Down's Syndrome
- D. Intellectual Disability
- E. Phelan-McDermid
- F. Prader-Willi Syndrome
- G. Spina Bifida
- H. For a 3-5-year-old, being a high-risk child
- I. Muscular Dystrophy
- J. Williams Syndrome
- K. Dual Sensory Impaired
- L. Anaphylaxis
- M. Deaf
- N. Visually Impaired
- O. Traumatic Brain Injured
- P. Rare Disease
- Q. Hospital or Homebound

## **How much is the scholarship worth?**

The scholarship amount will vary according to grade, county and matrix score, and is worth 90% of the funding a school district would receive for the student. The average amount for most students is \$10,000. Students with the most severe disabilities may be eligible for a higher scholarship amount if the student receives an IEP after he/she has been awarded a Gardiner Scholarship.

### **How can the scholarship account funds be used?**

The accounts can be used to pay for:

- A. Instructional materials, including digital devices, digital periphery devices, and assistive technology
- B. Curriculum materials
- C. Specialized services by approved providers which may include, but are not limited to applied behavior analysis services, speech-language pathologists, occupational therapy; physical therapy; services from listening and spoken language specialists
- D. Tuition and fees at an eligible private school
- E. Private tutoring (full or part-time by a state-certified teacher or one who can show Mastery of the subject)
- F. Virtual programs offered by FL DOE approved private online providers
- G. Florida Virtual School
- H. Approved online courses
- I. Fees for nationally standardized, norm-referenced achievement tests, AP exams, industry certification exams, assessments related to postsecondary education or other assessments
- J. Contributions to Florida Prepaid College Program or Florida College Savings Program
- K. Contracted services provided by a public school or school districts
- L. Fees for specialized summer education programs
- M. Fees for specialized after-school education programs
- N. Transition services provided by job coaches
- O. Fees for an annual evaluation of educational progress by a state-certified teacher under s.1002.41(1), if this option is chosen for a home education student;
- P. Tuition and fees associated with programs offered by Voluntary Prekindergarten Education Program providers approved pursuant to s.1002.55 and school readiness providers approved pursuant to s.1002.88.
- Q. Fees for services provided at a center that is a member of the Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship International;
- R. Fees for services provided by a therapist who is certified by the Certification Board of Music Therapists or credentialed by the Art Therapy Credentials Board;
- S. Tuition or fees associated with enrollment in a nationally or internationally recognized research-based training program for a child with a neurological disorder or brain damage.

### **How do I apply for a scholarship?**

AAA will provide an application on our website at [www.aaascholarships.org](http://www.aaascholarships.org) that can be completed on-line or printed, signed and returned to AAA with All required documentation including a diagnosis of an eligible disability from a licensed U.S. physician or Florida psychologist.

### **How are scholarships awarded?**

Scholarships are awarded to eligible students in the following order of priority: renewing students; students retained on the previous school years wait list; new applicants and late-filing applicants (renewals and wait listed students who missed the priority deadline) on a first-completed, first-awarded basis.

Eligibility is conditional until the Florida Department of Education has cross-checked the student against the rosters for public school and the other Florida scholarship programs. The cross-checks begin in July of each year and continue monthly as new applications are found conditionally eligible until all available grant funds have been exhausted.

The award value is prorated based on the date the student is found eligible by AAA:

1. By September 1st, a student shall receive 100 percent of the maximum award level for that student.
2. By November 1st, a student shall receive 75 percent of the maximum award level for that student.
3. By February 1st, a student shall receive 50 percent of the maximum award level for that student.
4. By April 1st, a student shall receive 25 percent of the maximum award level for that student.

### **How are scholarships funded?**

Scholarships are funded by the Florida Department of Education through a state grant to AAA Scholarship Foundation. The state determines the level of funding for the program each year. If sufficient funding runs out or is not available, eligible students will be placed on a waiting list.

### **Do I have to renew my child's scholarship each year?**

Yes, eligibility has to be determined each year.

### **How do I learn more about the scholarship?**

Please refer to the AAA Florida Gardiner Scholarship Handbook available on our website at <https://www.aaascholarships.org/parents/florida/>.

### **Can my student attend public school and get a Gardiner Scholarship?**

No, your student cannot receive the Gardiner Scholarship and stay in public school. However, you are more than welcome to apply for the Gardiner Scholarship regardless of where your student is currently attending. If "Awarded" then the student can be home schooled or private school which must be in good standing with the Department of Education.

### **Can my student receive the McKay Scholarship and Gardiner Scholarship at the same time?**

No, your student cannot receive both Scholarships at the same time. You may apply for both but once deemed eligible and awarded, you must choose one or the other.

### **When does the school year start and end for the Scholarship?**

The school year for AAA Scholarship Foundation starts on July 1st and ends June 30<sup>th</sup>.

### **Is an IEP required to apply for the Gardiner Scholarship?**

No, an IEP is not required to apply for the Scholarship. However, our Physician Diagnosis Form is required to be completed by a U.S. licensed physician or Florida licensed psychologist. A Nurse Practitioner, Medical Assistant, Nurse or office staff cannot sign the Physician Form.

### **Can the Gardiner Scholarship cover therapy services?**

Yes, the Gardiner Scholarship can pay or reimburse for services provided by a Licensed or Certified Therapist.

*\*Note: A request cannot be submitted that has been billed to an insurance company, Medicaid, or any other agency for the same services that are paid through the Gardiner Scholarship.*

### **Can the Gardiner Scholarship cover tutoring services?**

Yes, the Gardiner Scholarship can pay or reimburse for services provided by a tutor that is licensed, certified, or that can show a mastery in the field they are instructing

### **What types of therapy, tutoring services or devices need prior authorization?**

Therapy and Tutoring do not need pre-authorizations however, educational materials, digital devices, curriculum, etc. require a pre-authorization form to be completed.

### **Can I transfer scholarship funds to a Florida Prepaid College or 529 Savings Plan?**

Yes, but the plan/account must be an eligible Gardiner Transferable plan/account. Go to <http://www.myfloridaprepaid.com/GardinerScholarship> for more information on establishing an eligible account.

Once an eligible account has been established, you may request a transfer of the awarded funds to the established account by providing the required information. See “Transfer to Florida Prepaid College & Savings Plan Form” on our website. Because AAA is only allowed to transfer funds to Florida Prepaid once per month, your request must be submitted to AAA by the 10th of the month in order to be transferred that month.

### **What are some examples of goods or services that are not allowed?**

- Live animals
- Food or housing for live animals
- Gas or electric powered gardening tools
- In-ground or above-ground swimming pools
- Blades or knives or items with blades or knives
- Theme park admissions or annual passes
- Wheelchairs, walkers and walking devices
- Braces (back, leg, neck, etc.)
- Medical testing kits and testing equipment
- Medically required equipment and accessories (feeding tubes, hygiene, sleeping, etc.)
- Hyperbaric chambers
- Family memberships to gyms, YMCAs or other facilities
- Pool tables
- Household items, including kitchen appliances and cookware
- Household furniture (chairs, lamps, pictures, beds, etc.) or fixtures
- Outdoor equipment (playground, basketball equipment, etc.)
- Gaming consoles (Xbox, PlayStation, Nintendo, Nintendo switch, etc.)
- Mileage or fuel for transportation
- Teaching manuals
- Private sale and/or cash purchases

### **How do I contact AAA Scholarship Foundation?**

You may contact us via email at [AAAGardiner@aaascholarships.org](mailto:AAAGardiner@aaascholarships.org), by telephone at 888-707-2465, extension 1 or by mail at AAA Scholarship Foundation, PO Box 15719, Tampa, FL 33684-0719.