



# **TRANSPORTATION STIPEND**

## **PARENT/GUARDIAN HANDBOOK**



## Welcome

This handbook is designed to help you navigate the Transportation Stipend program. Inside, you will find in-depth guidance, from applying for the stipend to using it in accordance with Florida law.

If you need assistance along the way, our team is ready to help. The Step Up For Students Customer Engagement Center is available Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. EST to support families with any questions or concerns:



### [Inquiry Form](#)

Fill out this form to send us a question or message online



### [\(877\) 735-7837](#)

Call us to speak directly with a team member



### [Live Chat](#)

Click the red “Online Chat” tab on the right-hand side of our website



Click on any line within the Table of Contents to go directly to that section.

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## **Stipend Overview**

Florida's Transportation Stipend provides eligible households with \$750 to cover the cost of transporting their children to Florida nonvirtual public schools different from the school to which the student is assigned.

Step Up For Students is a state-approved, eligible nonprofit Scholarship Funding Organization (SFO) that empowers families to pursue and engage in the most appropriate learning options for their children.

Step Up For Students is one of the SFOs that administers Florida's education choice programs, and the only SFO that administers the Transportation Stipend.

This handbook guides families through the process of qualifying for, applying for, and receiving the Transportation Stipend.

## **Eligibility**

Transportation Stipends are available to students enrolled in kindergarten through grade eight (K-8) in a Florida nonvirtual public school that is different from the school to which the student is assigned. Qualifying public schools may include:

- A magnet school or other school of choice operated by a school district
- A charter school
- A [developmental research school](#) operated by a state university
- A school participating in a school district's [open enrollment policy](#)

A "household" is a group of people who share housing and other significant expenses. More than one "household" may reside together in the same physical home. Separate households in the same physical home do not share expenses and are financially independent from one another.

Households with more than one eligible student will only receive one stipend. A student may only be submitted under one household, and on one application. Students who are members of multiple households should be submitted on a single application. Households renewing their stipend participation will receive funding priority.



## **How To Apply**

### **Creating Your EMA Account**

To apply for the scholarship, the parent or guardian must first create an account on the Education Market Place (EMA)

EMA is Step Up For Students' secure online platform that allows parents and guardians to apply for the Stipend and upload required documents.

To create an EMA account, please follow this [video tutorial](#) and [this guide](#).

### **Add Students To EMA**

Before applying for a stipend, parents or guardians must add all eligible students for whom they are applying to their account as explained in [this guide](#).

Students added to EMA during previous school years, even if for a different scholarship program, do not need to be added again. Parents and guardians should ensure their information is up to date.

### **Submitting Your Application**

Step Up For Students requires parents and guardians to submit a complete stipend application each school year through their account in EMA.

Step Up For Students and the Florida Department of Education (FLDOE) will determine if a student is eligible for a Transportation Stipend.

Before submitting their application, parents and guardians should carefully review all the information they have entered for accuracy. Providing false or misleading information may result in a revocation of the stipend and may be punishable as a crime. Parents and Guardians may be required to return any funds they receive if the information they provide on their application is found to be inaccurate.

To complete the submission, the parent or guardian must agree to the Terms and Conditions and sign the Sworn Compliance Statement, acknowledging you will follow all applicable Florida statutes, rules established by the Florida Department of Education, and Step Up For Students' guidelines.

### **Enrollment Verification Documentation Required**

Parents and guardians must upload one of the following documents with the application to verify their students' enrollment at their current school:

- A letter from the student's school on school letterhead
- A printout or screenshot from the student's online grade portal
- A copy of the student's public school progress report
- A copy of the student's public school report card



Uploaded documents must include the student's name, school name, school year, and current enrollment status.

## Application Processing Status Definitions

- **Draft:** The application has been saved but not submitted. The application will not be reviewed by SUFS or the Dept of Education until it is submitted.
- **Submitted:** The application has been received, and the student's eligibility is under review.
- **On Hold:** The application did not have the information needed to determine the student's eligibility, or the information provided must be updated. The application may remain On Hold until eligibility is determined.
- **In Review:** Information on the Application was updated since it was submitted. The application has been received, and the student's eligibility is under review.
- **Declined:** The parent or guardian has declined the stipend. The student will not be eligible for further funding through the declined program for the remainder of the school year.
- **Eligible:** The student was found eligible for the Transportation Stipend, and the household will receive a stipend.
- **Ineligible:** The student was found to be ineligible for the Transportation Stipend program and will not receive a stipend. A household may still receive a stipend if another student in the household is found eligible.
- **At Capacity:** All currently available program funds have been awarded to other students. See the [Capacity](#) section for more information.

## Capacity

**Please Note: Due to a reduction in funding from the Florida Legislature this year, not every family who received a stipend in the 2024-2025 school year will receive one in 2025-2026.**

Parents and guardians should submit their application as soon as possible once the application opens. The number of applications received by Step Up For Students may exceed program capacity. The number of Transportation Stipends available each school year is limited by the amount of funds the Florida Legislature appropriates to the program in its annual state budget.

## How To Get Your Scholarship Funds

The eligibility and funding process may take several months. All Transportation Stipend funds will be disbursed by October 30, 2025. Parents and guardians will receive notifications to the email address listed in their parent or guardian profile when there is an update in eligibility and when stipend checks are distributed.

Funding for the Transportation Stipend is provided by the State of Florida. The stipend amount is \$750 per eligible household for the 2025-2026 school year.



Once a student is found eligible for the Transportation Stipend, the Florida Department of Education will release funds to Step Up For Students, which will issue a **one-time payment** by check to the parent or guardian listed in the EMA Guardian Profile. The check will be sent to the mailing address listed in the parent or guardian profile in EMA. Step Up For Students cannot mail a Transportation Stipend check to a P.O. Box. If a parent or guardian's name or mailing address changes, they must update EMA immediately to ensure proper delivery.

For the 2025-2026 school year, priority will be given to renewing households with an eligible student. Households that received the Transportation Stipend in the previous school year are considered renewal households, even if one of the qualifying students in the household is no longer eligible for the program. Any remaining stipends will be provided on a first-come, first-served basis.

Parents and guardians will be notified via email when funds have been disbursed. Parents and guardians may also [log in](#) to EMA to view their student's status.

### Multiple Scholarships

A student **may not** participate in the Transportation Stipend and any other Florida K-12 scholarship program at the same time.

### Authorized Uses of Transportation Stipend Funds

The Transportation Stipend was created to help families pay for transportation to a public school that is different from the student's assigned school. Families do not have to report itemized expenditures of Transportation Stipend funds.

### Parent & Guardian Rights & Responsibilities

For an eligible household to receive a stipend, the student's parent must:

- Submit an application to an SFO by the deadline established by the SFO;
- Provide the documentation necessary to verify the student's eligibility for the specified school year; and
- Be responsible for the payment of all transportation-related expenses in excess of the amount of the stipend

A parent, student, or provider of services may not bill any insurance company, Medicaid, or any other agency for the same services that are paid for using stipend funds.

Parents and guardians of scholarship recipients are subject to all stipend program rules and responsibilities described in the application and Terms & Conditions in EMA, relevant Florida statutes, and rules set by FLDOE.

The terms outlined in this handbook are subject to change.





## Data Confidentiality

The information available behind the parent and guardian login in EMA is personal and confidential.

A parent or guardian may not assign responsibility for submitting any application or required documentation to another user and must not provide anyone, including service providers or personnel at a school, access to a student's account by providing a username and password.

Doing so may result in loss of eligibility and funding, or financial or criminal penalties. Step Up For Students will not be responsible for changes or purchases made by anyone other than the account owner if the login information has been shared.

This policy is intended to prevent misuse of scholarship funds and protect the confidentiality of sensitive personal financial and educational information that belongs to students and their parents or guardians.

## Data Security

Step Up For Students will never ask a parent or guardian for the following information via email, phone call, or text message:

- Full account password or any part of it
- Full social security number (Step Up may ask for the last 4 digits for account verification)
- Credit card number or banking details
- Any personal identification numbers other than the PIN provided on the stipend application

Parents or guardians who receive any communication requesting this type of information or have received a suspicious email, must not respond to, or click on any links in that email. Instead, the suspicious activity should be immediately reported to Step Up For Students.

## Maintaining Up-To-Date Contact Information

Parents and guardians should keep contact information current, especially their legal name, primary email address, and mailing address. Step Up For Students will communicate important information related to a student's stipend primarily through email, and stipend checks will be made out to the parent or guardian listed in the EMA Guardian Profile and sent to the mailing address listed in the parent or guardian's profile.

Parents and guardians should update email filters to accept messages from Step Up For Students, so emails are not sent to spam or junk folders.

If there is a change of parent or guardian name, physical or mailing address, telephone number, cell phone number, or email address, the information must be updated in EMA.





## Confidentiality

To protect the confidentiality of personal and financial information stored in EMA, only the parent or guardian listed on the account is permitted to access and manage it.

Parents and guardians must not share account login credentials with anyone, including school and service provider personnel, or other individuals. Sharing login information or allowing another person to access the account may result in loss of stipend eligibility and funding, and financial or criminal penalties.

Step Up For Students is not responsible for changes to the account or unauthorized transactions made by someone other than the parent or guardian listed on the account.

## For More Information

- [Transportation Stipend Information](#)
- [Transportation Stipend Statute](#)

## Handbook Disclaimer

Please note that the information and terms outlined in this handbook are subject to change as laws or rules are amended. To ensure you have the most current information, we update this handbook regularly.

## Handbook Feedback Form

Step Up For Students welcomes feedback from parents and guardians to help improve this handbook. We encourage you to share your suggestions using the [Parent Handbook Feedback Form](#).