



# The Hope Scholarship Parent Handbook

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## Contents

Hope Scholarship Program Eligibility .....	3
Hope Scholarship Account Holder Responsibilities.....	4
Applying for the Hope Scholarship Program .....	5
New Applications.....	5
Required Documentation.....	5
Student Application Status Terms.....	7
Notice of Intent Requirement .....	8
Eligibility Appeals .....	9
Annual Continued Participation Confirmations.....	9
Year-End Academic/Attendance Reporting Requirements for Continued Participation .....	11
Hope Scholarship Account Funding .....	12
Award Amount.....	12
Award Distribution .....	12
Prorated Funding.....	13
Funding Continuation .....	14
Funds from Closed Accounts.....	14
Tax Implications .....	14
Qualifying Expenses with Hope Scholarship Funds .....	14
Transactions Using Hope Scholarship Funds.....	16
Online Portal Access.....	16
Purchases.....	17
TheoPay .....	18
Refunds .....	19
Reimbursements .....	19
Termination of Program Participation .....	20
Account Holder’s Obligation to Notify .....	21
Noncompliance, Intentional Misuse of Funds, or Criminal Activity .....	21

## West Virginia Hope Scholarship Parent Handbook

---

Appeals.....	22
Contact information.....	22
Appendix A – Definitions .....	23
Appendix B – Hope Scholarship Account Holder Agreement.....	26

## Overview

The Hope Scholarship Program is an education savings account program that allows families to utilize the state portion of their education funding to pursue the learning experience that works best for their K-12 grade student.

The Hope Scholarship Program is governed by the Hope Scholarship Board (the Board) with the West Virginia State Treasurer's Office (WVSTO) performing substantial administrative functions for the Program. Student First Technologies LLC ("Student First Technologies") is the Program Manager retained by the Board, offering Hope Scholarship account functionality through the online Hope Scholarship online portal. All purchases using Hope Scholarship funds are made via an electronic transaction through the online Hope Scholarship portal with vendors and service providers that have been preapproved by the Board. In very limited circumstances, reimbursements of Hope Scholarship funds for personal expenditures are specifically authorized by the [Board's Reimbursement Policy](#).

The information in this Handbook will help you navigate the Hope Scholarship Program application process and utilize your Student's Hope Scholarship Account. In no circumstances should the information in this Handbook be interpreted to contradict the Hope Scholarship Act, the Hope Scholarship Board rules, or any other requirements adopted by the Board. All potential Hope Scholarship Program account holders should carefully read and review the [laws, rules, and requirements](#) governing the Program, all linked on the [Hope Scholarship Board website](#), before applying for the Program.

The information in this Handbook will be updated as determined necessary by the Hope Scholarship administrative personnel. Please regularly check [the Hope Scholarship website](#) for updates to Program documents and policies.

## Hope Scholarship Program Eligibility

To participate in the Hope Scholarship Program, state law requires the Student to meet the following eligibility criteria:

- The Student must be a resident of the State of West Virginia;
- The Student cannot have already successfully completed a secondary education program (*i.e.* graduated from high school);
- The Student must be under 21 years of age; and
- **The Student must be enrolled, eligible to be enrolled, or required to be enrolled in a public elementary, secondary school, or kindergarten program in West Virginia according to W.Va. Code §18-8-1a at the time of application; Provided, That if a student has not yet attained the age of five by July 1 and would not be eligible to be enrolled in a**

## West Virginia Hope Scholarship Parent Handbook

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kindergarten program under the provisions of West Virginia Code, the student may become eligible for a Hope Scholarship if the student successfully enrolls in a public kindergarten program in West Virginia through the public kindergarten program's early entrance process.

Once an application is awarded and the Student becomes a Hope Scholarship Participant, the Student may continue participation in the Program from one school year to the next, unless one of the following circumstances occurs:

- The Account Holder withdraws the Student from the Hope Scholarship Program;
- The Account Holder fails to submit the Annual Continued Participation Confirmations for the Student as required by the Board;
- The Student's [Year-End Academic/Attendance Reporting](#) is not timely submitted to the Student's local county board of education;
- The Board suspends or terminates the Student or Account Holder's participation in the Hope Scholarship Program for failure to comply with the requirements of the Hope Scholarship Act, the Board's rules, or other Program requirements; or
- The Student is no longer eligible to continue Program participation according to the Hope Scholarship Act because the Student:
  - Enrolls full-time in public school;
  - Successfully completes a secondary education Program (*i.e.*, graduates from high school);
  - Reaches 21 years of age; or
  - Ceases to reside in West Virginia.

**An Account Holder must immediately notify the Board if conditions occur that render the Student ineligible to continue participation in the Program.**

Please visit the Hope Scholarship's [FAQ](#) on the [Hope Scholarship website](#) for answers to common eligibility questions and more information regarding the Program.

### Hope Scholarship Account Holder Responsibilities

Only an individual eligible to be a Hope Scholarship Account Holder may apply for the Hope Scholarship Program on behalf of an eligible Student. To be an Account Holder, an individual must be the Student's legal parent or guardian or otherwise have the legal authority to make educational decisions for the Student (*i.e.*, by court order granting parental rights). An Account Holder's legal and contractual responsibilities are set forth in detail in [Appendix B – Hope Scholarship Account Holder Agreement](#). The Hope Scholarship Account Holder Agreement must be executed electronically using the online Hope Scholarship portal prior to completing the Student's Hope Scholarship Application. An individual should carefully read and understand all terms and conditions in the Hope Scholarship Account Holder Agreement before signing the agreement.

### Applying for the Hope Scholarship Program

To apply for the Hope Scholarship Program, the Account Holder must set up a profile and Account in the online Hope Scholarship portal. Please carefully review this Hope Scholarship Parent Handbook and the Hope Scholarship Account Holder Agreement in its entirety before accessing the Hope Scholarship Parent/Guardian Portal Guide and applying in the online Hope Scholarship portal.

#### New Applications

To accommodate acceptance of applications year-round, the Board adopted a policy to standardize proration amounts for Students receiving less than a full-year funding amount, based on when the original completed application is submitted to the Board.

For the 2026-2027 school year, an approved Student application submitted within the following dates will allow the Student to receive the associated level of Hope Scholarship funding:

- March 2-June 15: 100% of Hope Scholarship annual award amount
- June 16 -September 15: 75% of Hope Scholarship annual award amount
- September 16 -November 30: 50% of Hope Scholarship annual award amount
- December 1 -February 28: 25% of Hope Scholarship annual award amount

The last day to submit an application for the 2026-2027 school year is February 28, 2027. Beginning March 1, 2027, the online Hope Scholarship portal will begin accepting new applications for the 2027-2028 school year.

#### Required Documentation

**Please be sure to obtain your Student's West Virginia Education Information System (WVEIS) number from your Student's local county board of education before applying for the Hope Scholarship Program.** This is the identification number the Department of Education and local county boards of education use to track Student information, and the Hope Scholarship Board utilizes this number to confirm Program eligibility. If the Student does not already have a WVEIS number or if you do not know your student's WVEIS number, please complete and email the [WVEIS ID Request Form](#) to the county board of education for the county where you reside to receive your student's WVEIS number. The following documentation showing that the Student is eligible to participate in the Hope Scholarship Program must be uploaded to the Student's application in the online Hope Scholarship portal:

1. **A copy of the Student's state or county birth certificate. (Hospital issued certificates are not accepted).** The Student's birth certificate is used to establish age and is also used to help determine that the person acting as the Account Holder is legally authorized to act on behalf of the Student. If the Account Holder applying in the online Hope Scholarship portal is not listed on the Student's birth certificate, they must also submit documentation

## West Virginia Hope Scholarship Parent Handbook

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establishing legal authority to act on the Student's behalf.

2. **Proof of current West Virginia residency as demonstrated by ONE of the following documents with a West Virginia address that matches the physical address on the student's application;** provided, that the Board reserves the right to request additional proof of residency as determined necessary.
  - Current government or employer issued tax records;
  - Proof of West Virginia home ownership, such as a current mortgage document or current homeowner's insurance document;
  - A valid and current West Virginia driver's license or other West Virginia-issued identification card, **when presented with a second form of accepted proof of residency;**
  - A valid and current West Virginia vehicle registration card;
  - Current proof of public assistance through the West Virginia Department of Human Services or Department of Health; or
  - **Two** West Virginia utility bills not more than 60 days old from two different companies, not including termination notices.
    - The following are considered utilities for purposes of proof of West Virginia residency: water, gas, electric, telephone, cellular phone, garbage, Internet, sewer, and cable. The document must be out of the envelope and unfolded to verify the current date of service.

The Board has also implemented an **optional** residency verification and authentication process in lieu of the manual submission of proof of residency documentation from the list above. Account Holders wishing to use this simplified way to verify their residency may use the Plaid service to scan a picture of their driver's license or other state-issued identification card. Plaid then authenticates the identification document and uses various databases available to confirm the residency of the Account Holder.

Only a Student who is a current resident of West Virginia is eligible to participate in the Program. Any action taken by an Account Holder to represent that a Student is a resident of West Virginia when the student is a resident of a different state may constitute one or more serious crimes under state or federal law.

The Student's Account Holder, legal guardian, or a biological parent listed on the birth certificate must be listed on the Student's residency documentation and the address listed on the residency documentation must match the Student's residential address in the Program application. If the Account Holder's, legal guardian's, or biological parent's name listed on the residency documentation has legally changed from what appears on residency documentation, an uploaded marriage certificate or other legal form of documentation may also be required depending on the individual circumstances of the name change and the legal relationship to the child. Please note that in circumstances where an Account Holder does not have residency documentation in his or her name, it is recommended that the Account Holder use the Plaid option to verify their residency. Account Holders may be permitted to use a marriage certificate to link the Account Holder to a

## West Virginia Hope Scholarship Parent Handbook

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manual proof of residency document in their spouse's name.

All proof of residency documentation submitted must include the physical address of the Account Holder. A Post Office (PO) Box does not prove West Virginia residency. The submitted residency documents must include a physical address, service address, etc. even if mailed to a PO Box. For example, a utility bill mailed to a PO Box must also show a physical or service address to satisfy the West Virginia residency requirements.

When applying for the Hope Scholarship Program, it is the sole responsibility of the Student's Account Holder, legal guardian, or biological parent to submit readable, accurate, and complete documents to the online Hope Scholarship portal for review by Hope Scholarship staff, including but not limited to residency verification documents and guardianship/custody documents.

### Student Application Status Terms

In the online Hope Scholarship portal, the Student's application status may be viewed in your online account under "My Applications". Below are the most common application status options:

**Finish Application** – The application is still being completed and has not been submitted for review. Account Holder still must submit the application to be reviewed and considered for eligibility.

**Pending Hope** – The application has been submitted in the online Hope Scholarship portal and is waiting to be reviewed by the Hope Scholarship Program.

**Update Application\*** – The application has missing documentation or other issues which require clarification and edits before an eligibility determination can be made. Applications that are waiting for updates are not complete and will not be reviewed until requested information is uploaded on the application and resubmitted.

**Eligible** – The new application was completed and the Student is eligible to participate in the Hope Scholarship Program. The application will remain in this status until the Student's Notice of Intent is verified as being on file with the county board of education in advance of the upcoming school year.

**Approved** – The submitted application was completed, and the eligible Student has complied with other applicable statutory requirements for submission of a Notice of Intent and Year-End Academic/Attendance Reporting. This does not signify that approved student has been funded. Students must be in Approved status for the school year before they are able to select IIP or connect with a participating school or microschool.

**Conditionally Eligible** – The application was completed and the Student is conditionally eligible for the upcoming school year until the Student's compliance with Year-End Academic/Attendance Reporting requirements are verified by the WV Department of Education.

## West Virginia Hope Scholarship Parent Handbook

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**Pending School Review** – The Account Holder has selected to connect with a participating school or microschool in the online portal and the requested school needs to verify Student's enrollment.

**Ineligible** – The application does not meet eligibility requirements for the Hope Scholarship Program.

**Appealed** – An application that was originally deemed ineligible has been resubmitted to the Hope Scholarship Board's Committee on Appeals for eligibility review.

**Appeal Incomplete** – Submitted appeal did not have enough support/context to be presented to the Committee on Appeals.

**Expired** – No further action can be taken on this application.

**\*Any application submitted without valid supporting documentation, including any application submitted with falsified, inaccurate, misleading, non-verifiable, illegible, or incomplete supporting documentation will be placed on hold in an "Update Application" status waiting for the Account Holder to make the necessary corrections to the application. The Account Holder will have 30 days to submit the missing or valid documentation or make other necessary corrections to the application. If the issue(s) with the student's application are still unresolved after 30 days, the application may be denied and/or deemed ineligible for the program.**

See the Hope Scholarship Parent/Guardian Portal Guide on the [Hope Scholarship website](#) for technical instructions on how to submit the required supporting documentation.

### Notice of Intent Requirement

**Once the Student's application has been found eligible, the Account Holder must provide a Notice of Intent (NOI) to the Student's local county superintendent.** The Hope Scholarship Board **cannot** accept your Student's Notice of Intent – State law requires that it be sent to the Student's local county superintendent. Failure to submit a Notice of Intent will jeopardize a Student's ability to participate in the Hope Scholarship Program, as the Notice of Intent is a state law requirement for Program participation. The Board will withhold or delay funding to a Hope Scholarship student's account if a Notice of Intent has not been submitted. The Student's Notice of Intent must be on file by specific dates to receive a quarterly funding distribution in accordance with the Board's [Quarterly Funding Policy](#).

A sample Notice of Intent letter for the Hope Scholarship Program can be found on the Hope Scholarship website under [Parent/Student Forms \(hopescholarshipwv.gov\)](#). Please keep a copy of your submitted Notice of Intent for your records. Click on the following link to find a list of email contacts where you can email your student's Notice of Intent: [Hope County Board Emails.pdf \(hopescholarshipwv.gov\)](#)

## West Virginia Hope Scholarship Parent Handbook

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Submission of a Hope Scholarship Notice of Intent is considered an official request to withdraw a Student from public school to participate in the Hope Scholarship program for the school year indicated on the Notice of Intent. It is important to clearly and accurately indicate the school year for which the Student has been found eligible to begin participation in the Program so that the county board of education can properly withdraw the student from public school. If the current school year is indicated on the Notice of Intent, the county board of education will immediately withdraw your student upon receipt of the Notice of Intent. If the subsequent school year is indicated on the Notice of Intent, the county board of education will withdraw your student over the summer in advance of the start of the school year.

Submission of the Notice of Intent to the student's local county superintendent is a one-time requirement. It does not need to be sent annually. However, there are certain circumstances when a new or updated Hope Scholarship Notice of Intent should be submitted. An updated notice of intent should be submitted to the Student's local county superintendent if the Student and/or Account Holder move to a new residence, if the Student's educational pathway changes, or if the student's grade level needs changed due to acceleration or retention. A new notice of intent must be submitted if the Student participated in the Hope Scholarship Program in a prior year but the Student's participation was terminated or declined and the Account Holder has now re-applied for the Student to return to the program as a new student. The Student's previous NOI was deactivated when the Account Holder decided not to participate in the Hope Scholarship Program in a prior year.

### Eligibility Appeals

If a Student is found ineligible for the Hope Scholarship Program but the Account Holder believes the determination is erroneous, the Account Holder may appeal the eligibility determination by filing an Appeal with the Hope Scholarship Board within forty-five (45) days of the Student being found ineligible for the Program. The Board's three-member Committee on Appeals will review and decide upon the appeal within forty-five (45) days after the appeal is received by Hope Scholarship Board staff.

**An eligibility appeal and all supporting documentation may be submitted directly in the online Hope Scholarship portal. See the Hope Scholarship [Parent Guardian Portal Guide](#) for technical instructions on how to submit an eligibility appeal.**

### Annual Continued Participation Confirmations

To remain eligible for the Hope Scholarship Program each year following the Student's first year of participation, the Account Holder **MUST** submit an Annual Continued Participation Confirmation through the online Hope Scholarship portal by a certain deadline, which is published on the Hope Scholarship [website](#). Annual Continued Participation Confirmations for the 2026-2027 school year will be accepted from **January 5 through June 15, 2026**. **Annual Continued Participation Confirmations for the 2026-2027 school year will not be accepted after the June 15, 2026**

deadline.

**A Student who does not file an Annual Continued Participation Confirmation by the deadline but later wishes to participate in the Program will lose any carryover funds remaining in their account and be required to apply for the Hope Scholarship Program as a new Student under the eligibility requirements for new students at the time of application.**

The Student must also meet the following Annual Continued Participation Requirements, under State law, to continue the Student's Hope Scholarship Account and participation in the Program from one school year to the next:

- The Student must continue to be a resident of West Virginia.
- The Student cannot have successfully completed a secondary school program (i.e. graduated from high school).
- The Student cannot be 21 years of age or older.
- The Student must meet [Year-End Academic/Attendance Reporting Requirements](#) by June 8<sup>th</sup> annually.

All Students submitting Annual Continued Participation Confirmation and meeting Annual Continued Participation Requirements will be considered conditionally eligible for the upcoming school year, until the Student's compliance with Year-End Academic/Attendance Reporting Requirements is verified by the West Virginia Department of Education. Failure to meet Year-End Academic/Attendance Reporting Requirements or other Program requirements will prohibit the Hope Scholarship team from funding a Student and could lead to termination of Program participation and the Student's Account.

A Student's Hope Scholarship Account will remain open from one year of participation to the next, so long as the Account Holder meets all Annual Continued Participation Requirements, files an Annual Continued Participation Confirmation, and completes all other steps required by the Board. Unused funds in a Student's Account will be carried forward and will be available for use during subsequent school years during which the Student participates in the Program, so long as the Student remains eligible for the Program for consecutive school years.

If a Hope Scholarship Student does not complete an Annual Continued Participation Confirmation, the Student's Account will be closed, and all remaining account funds will be returned to the State. **If a Student's Account is closed for failure to complete an Annual Continued Participation Confirmation or for any other reason, and the Student later wishes to participate in the Program, the Student will be required to apply for the Hope Scholarship Program as a new student and meet all eligibility requirements for new students at the time of application.**

Please review the [Termination of Program Participation](#) section, below, for more information.

**Please visit the Hope Scholarship's [FAQ](#) on the [Hope Scholarship website](#) for answers to common questions about Annual Continued Participation Confirmations and Requirements and more information regarding the Program.**

### Year-End Academic/Attendance Reporting Requirements for Continued Participation

As explained above, each Hope Scholarship student's local county board of education must receive certain information regarding the Student's school attendance (participating school students) or academic progress (IIP students) **by June 8<sup>th</sup> following the end of the school year** for the Student to meet Annual Continued Participation Requirements in state law.

For each Hope Scholarship Student attending a participating school, the participating school must submit annual confirmation of the Student's school attendance to the Student's local county superintendent by June 8<sup>th</sup> following the end of the school year. **If an Account Holder is concerned that a Student's school has not submitted attendance confirmation as required by state law, please contact the Hope Scholarship team immediately.**

For Hope Scholarship students pursuing an Individualized Instructional Program (IIP) pathway, there are two options for meeting Year-End Academic/Attendance Reporting Requirements:

- Option 1: The Student may take a nationally normed standardized achievement test of academic achievement that tests the subject areas of reading, language, and mathematics, and when available for the Student's grade-level, science, and social studies. The mean of the child's overall test results for any single year must be within or above the fourth stanine, or if below the fourth stanine, must show improvement from the previous year's results. The official test scores must be submitted to the local county superintendent by June 8.
- Option 2: The Student may submit a certified teacher's determination, after review of the Student's academic work, that the Student is making academic progress commensurate with his or her age and ability in accordance with West Virginia Code §18-31-8(a)(4)(B). The determination must be submitted by June 8 following the school year.
  - A [sample academic progress review form](#) that may be used to submit the teacher's determination is available on [the Hope Scholarship website](#).
  - So long as the form used by the certified teacher to submit his or her determination contains all of the necessary language to meet the statutory requirements in accordance with West Virginia Code §18-31-8(a)(4)(B), they can use an alternative form.
  - If the certified teacher reviewing the Student's work is certified by a state other than West Virginia, that teacher must submit a copy of their teaching license/certificate with their attestation of the Student's academic progress. West Virginia county boards of education have no other way to verify the credentials of the certified teacher if they are licensed by another state.

## West Virginia Hope Scholarship Parent Handbook

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If a Student's local county superintendent does not receive the Student's Year-End Academic/Attendance Reporting, the Student's Hope Scholarship Program Participation and Account will terminate according to state law and the student will not be able to participate in the Hope Scholarship Program for the school year immediately following the year for which the Student failed to meet these requirements. Failure to meet the Year-End Academic/Attendance Reporting requirements in multiple academic years may be considered grounds for disqualification of the Student from any further participation in the program.

If your child has changed educational pathways from the original pathway that you identified on the Notice of Intent ("NOI") form that was submitted to your local county superintendent, please submit a revised NOI form to the county superintendent. The revised NOI form will help the county board of education enter your student's information properly in the WVEIS system. County boards of education will not enter Year-End Academic/Attendance Reporting for a Hope Scholarship student without a NOI on file for the appropriate year that indicates the educational pathway the matches the Year-End Academic/Attendance Reporting that was submitted.

### Hope Scholarship Account Funding

#### Award Amount

The amount of a Student's Hope Scholarship funding per school year will be equal to the statewide average amount of funding a public school is allotted per pupil in West Virginia in the previous year. Up to five percent (5%) of the amount awarded per pupil may be retained by the Board to administer the Program. **For the 2026-2027 school year, the full Hope Scholarship award amount is \$5,435.62.**

The amount of Hope Scholarship account funding will change on a yearly basis and will be published to [the Hope Scholarship website](#) each year prior to the initial August 15<sup>th</sup> funding date for the school year. The amount of the Hope Scholarship award for students participating for less than the full school year is determined by the percentages set forth under the Prorated Funding section below.

#### Award Distribution

Beginning in the 2026-27 School Year, Students will be funded on a quarterly basis with statutory distribution dates of August 15, October 15, January 15 and April 15 annually. Quarterly funding will be distributed in accordance with the Board's [Quarterly Funding Policy](#)

To receive a Hope Scholarship quarterly funding distribution by the statutory deadline, a student's Hope Scholarship application must be in Approved status and the student must have a valid Notice of Intent (NOI) on file with county board of education by the close of business (4:00 pm) on the funding cutoff dates listed below. Student applications not meeting the criteria by the funding cutoff date will first be funded with the next available quarterly distribution after becoming compliant with the requirements. The funding cutoff dates are subject to change if the dates fall on the weekend, a

## West Virginia Hope Scholarship Parent Handbook

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holiday, or if Board staff determine more time is necessary for the county boards of education to enter NOIs into WVEIS.

Statutory Funding Date	Funding Cutoff Date
August 15	August 1
October 15	October 1
January 15	January 2
April 15	April 1

Each Hope Scholarship Student will have one designated Hope Scholarship Account, even if multiple Hope Scholarship students reside in the same household or share the same Account Holder. **Funds in a Hope Scholarship Account may only be used for the Student who is assigned to the individual Account.**

### Prorated Funding

To accommodate acceptance of applications year-round, the Board adopted a policy to standardize proration amounts for Students receiving less than a full-year funding amount, based on when the original application is submitted to the Board. Under this policy, a Student's approved application submitted within the following dates will allow an approved Student to receive the associated level of Hope Scholarship funding:

- March 1-June 15: 100% of Hope Scholarship annual award amount
- June 16-Sept. 15: 75% of Hope Scholarship annual award amount
- Sept. 16-Nov. 30: 50% of Hope Scholarship annual award amount
- Dec. 1-Feb. 28: 25% of Hope Scholarship annual award amount

Please note that this is a general guide of dates and that the Hope Scholarship Board reserves the right to adjust these application window dates from year to year depending on what day of the week the beginning or ending date may fall. Be sure to check the specific dates for the school year for which you plan to apply for exact dates verified by the Hope Scholarship Board for that school year.

Deposits of prorated Hope Scholarship funds will be made under the assumption that any proration will be assigned to the first semester of participation. For students who are awarded a prorated amount of Hope Scholarship funds after one of the two primary funding dates (August 15 and January 15), the Board will deposit the prorated funds as soon as feasible. The Board generally deposits prorated funds on a monthly basis to allow time for the various state processes needed to make the transfers.

### Funding Continuation

The Hope Scholarship Board will continue to make deposits into an eligible Student's Hope Scholarship Account until the Student's participation in the Program terminates according to State law and Program requirements. Please review the [Termination of Program Participation](#) section.

When Program participation terminates, the Board will notify the Account Holder that the eligible recipient's Account will be closed in forty-five (45) calendar days. If an Account Holder fails to adequately address the condition(s) causing the closure or does not respond within thirty (30) calendar days of being notified, the Board shall close the Account and any remaining funds shall be returned to the State.

### Funds from Closed Accounts

If an Account Holder fails to submit a timely Annual Continued Participation Confirmation, resulting in an Account's closure, or if an Account is terminated for any other reason, all remaining funds in the Account will be returned to the State. If an Account is closed because the Student is returning to public school after October 1 of the academic year, upon request of the county board of education, the funds in the Student's Account will be transferred to the county where the public school is located in order to fund the Student's education for the rest of the school year.

### Tax Implications

Funds deposited into a Student's Hope Scholarship Account, other than those expended on fee-for-service transportation services, **do not** count as West Virginia taxable income for the Account Holder of a Hope Scholarship Student or for the Student themselves.

### Qualifying Expenses with Hope Scholarship Funds

**Account Holders for a Hope Scholarship Student may *only* use the funds deposited in their Student's Hope Scholarship Account to pay for qualifying expenses incurred in the Student's K-12 education. Expenses incurred for Pre-K instruction are not qualifying expenses under the Hope Scholarship Act. Expenditures of Hope Scholarship funds for the following are qualifying expenses according to state law:**

- Ongoing services provided by a public school district, including a public charter school, under W. Va. Code §18-31-8(f), including without limitation, individual classes and extracurricular activities and programs;
- Private or parochial school tuition and fees at a participating school;
- Tutoring services provided by an individual or a tutoring facility, **provided that such tutoring services may not be provided by a member of the Hope Scholarship Student's immediate family;**
- Fees for nationally standardized assessments, advanced placement examinations, aptitude

## West Virginia Hope Scholarship Parent Handbook

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testing, any examinations related to college or university admission, and tuition and/or fees for preparatory courses for the aforementioned exams;

- Tuition and fees for programs of study or the curriculum of courses that lead to an industry-recognized credential that satisfies a workforce need;
- Tuition and fees for nonpublic online learning programs;
- Tuition and fees for alternative education programs;
- Fees for after-school or summer education programs;
- Educational services and therapies, including, but not limited to, occupational, behavioral, physical, speech-language, and audiology therapies;
- Tuition and fees for programs of study, curriculum, or supplemental materials in reading, language, mathematics, science, social studies, or the arts;
- Fees for transportation paid to an approved fee-for-service transportation provider for the Student to travel to and from an education service provider;
- Tuition, fees, and materials for enrollment in dual credit or college level courses;
- The cost of school uniforms required by a participating school;
- Basic educational supplies, including but not limited to, paper, writing utensils, scissors, etc.;
- Tuition and fees for programs of study, curriculum, or supplies needed for supplemental or elective educational courses;
- Technology equipment needed for an educational program, including but not limited to computers, printers, smartboards, and required software;
- Any assistive technology or other equipment/supplies necessary to accommodate a Student with a disability, including the rental of such items;
- Vocational supplies or equipment required for a K-12 course of study;
- Tuition and fees at a microschool;
- Certified teacher annual reviews of a Student's academic work;
- Payments to out-of-state public schools for tuition and fees;
- Fees for general or special event admission to museums, art centers, science centers, agricultural centers, geological locations, and zoos for educational purposes;
- Portable DVD and CD players for educational purposes;
- Student lunch fees charged by a participating school for lunches consumed on school premises during the school day;
- Fees for Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB) preparatory courses;
- Building blocks and kits other than LEGOs;
- LEGOs purchased from the official LEGO Education site <https://education.lego.com/en-us/>;
- Individual library membership fees;
- Instruments or equipment required as part of a music education course or curriculum; provided that Board staff may require proof of the musical education course or curriculum for purchases of instruments or equipment in excess of \$1,000 prior to approving the purchase in the online portal;
- Any other qualifying expenses as approved by the Hope Scholarship Board. Requests for the Board to approve a new qualifying expense can be submitted to the Board on the Qualifying Expense Request Form available at [Hope Scholarship Parent and Student Forms \(hopescholarshipwv.com\)](https://hopescholarshipwv.com).

## West Virginia Hope Scholarship Parent Handbook

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The Hope Scholarship Board has authorized the denial of purchases due to excessive or unreasonable costs even if the item requested for purchase is otherwise a qualifying expense. The Hope Scholarship Board defines Reasonable Cost as a cost that a prudent person would incur under similar circumstances, considering the nature of the goods or services and the prevailing market prices for such items. Consideration will be given to whether the cost is generally recognized as ordinary and necessary, to any unique student circumstances, to the Student's age, etc.

Hope Scholarship funds in a Student's Hope Scholarship Account must only be used for the qualifying student. A Student does not have to be enrolled in a nonpublic school to incur the qualifying expenses listed above; a Student may incur qualifying expenses in an individualized instructional program (IIP).

**Hope Scholarship funds may not be refunded, rebated, or shared with an Account Holder or Student in any manner. Parents may not utilize Hope Scholarship funds to pay themselves for providing educational services to their children. Any refund or rebate for goods or services purchased with Hope Scholarship funds shall be credited directly to a Student's Hope Scholarship Account on the Hope Scholarship portal, except in the limited instances where the Board authorizes a reimbursement to the Account Holder.**

The Account Holder of a Hope Scholarship Student is not prohibited from making payments using personal funds for the costs of educational goods and services not covered by the funds in their Student's Hope Scholarship Account. However, reimbursements for personal expenditures are generally not permitted, with very limited exceptions set forth in the [Hope Scholarship Board Reimbursement Policy](#). Personal deposits into a Hope Scholarship Account are never permitted. The Board has published lists of non-qualifying or unallowable items to help identify items and services which cannot be purchased with Hope Scholarship Funds. The Nonqualifying Expense List can be found [here](#). This list is not intended to be fully comprehensive and additional items that are predominantly for personal use or that pose a high risk of fraud also fall into this category and may be added by the Board.

### **Transactions Using Hope Scholarship Funds**

#### **Online Portal Access**

Only the Account Holder is authorized to access his or her Student's Hope Scholarship Account or complete a transaction using a Student's Hope Scholarship funds. An Account Holder should never share his or her Account login information.

The Board may allow a person who is the Account Holder for multiple Hope Scholarship students residing in the same household to access all the accounts through one online Hope Scholarship portal user account; however, **Hope Scholarship funds for each Student must remain separate and segregated at all times.**

### Purchases

Account Holders **must** complete all payments of Hope Scholarship funds to education service providers and vendors electronically using the online Hope Scholarship portal, except in very limited circumstances when reimbursements are permitted by the [Hope Scholarship Board's Reimbursement Policy](#). If a specific vendor is NOT signed up to participate in the Hope Scholarship Program and reimbursement is not permitted by the Board's Reimbursement Policy, Account Holders will be *unable* to utilize their Hope Scholarship funds to pay for goods or services from that vendor. Account Holders may share the [HOPE Scholarship Program New Provider Request Form](#) with vendors who are not already participating in the Hope Scholarship Program and Board Staff will onboard new vendors and help answer any questions they have regarding the Program.

**Reimbursements will NOT be allowed except for expenses specifically authorized by the [Hope Scholarship Board's Reimbursement Policy](#). Account Holders should carefully review this policy before making a personal expenditure of funds with the expectation of receiving Hope Scholarship funds as reimbursement.**

**See the Hope Scholarship Parent/Guardian Portal Guide on the [Hope Scholarship website](#) for technical instructions on how to submit a reimbursement in the online Hope Scholarship portal.**

There are three different mechanisms available to Account Holders for making purchases within the online Hope Scholarship portal. For those students attending a participating nonpublic school or a microschool, Account Holders will select the nonpublic school or microschool to initiate the process to use Hope Scholarship funds to pay for tuition and fees. The nonpublic school/microschool will complete the enrollment process in the online portal and parents will click on the Pay Tuition tab to confirm their child's continued enrollment at the school and the accuracy of the tuition amount before payment is made.

Purchases of educational services (other than tuition and fees) are made through the closed Marketplace in the online Hope Scholarship portal, while purchases of goods and commodities are made through the TheoPay open marketplace.

The Hope Scholarship Board has limitations on the purchases of certain technology equipment. Each of the following types of technology may only be purchased after two (2) calendar years have passed since the date the item was originally purchased:

- Desktop computers
- Laptop computers
- Tablets/ Readers (Large & Small Tablets, Kindles, etc)
- Monitors
- Portable DVD/CD Players
- Printers (Traditional Paper and Photo)
- 3D Printers and 3D Scanners

## West Virginia Hope Scholarship Parent Handbook

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- Cameras
- Camera accessories
- Smartboards
- Headphones in excess of \$200

*For example:* A Student who purchases a laptop on February 1, 2025, will be eligible to purchase another laptop using scholarship funds on or after February 2, 2027. The Student will still be eligible to purchase a desktop computer, tablet/reader, and monitor, provided there have been no prior purchases of those items within the previous two (2) calendar years.

Due to the Hope Scholarship Board's adopted policy establishing limits on the purchases of excessive quantities, only single quantities of the following types of technology:

- Headsets/ Earbuds
- iPad pencils/ Pointer devices
- Keyboards

Attempts to purchase multiples of the above-listed items in a single order will be denied and excessive quantities may be unallowable and subject to repayment.

### TheoPay

TheoPay is the tool that Account Holders may use to make qualifying expense purchases for goods and commodities from approved external websites using their Student's Hope Scholarship funds. Account Holders can search for TheoPay enabled vendors directly from the online Hope Scholarship portal by accessing the Marketplace tile on their dashboard.

- Please note that TheoPay works the best when shopping on the Google Chrome browser on a laptop or desktop computer.
- TheoPay requests must be submitted individually for each student participating in the Hope Scholarship Program. Hope Scholarship funds can only be used for the eligible student.

When shopping on a TheoPay enabled site, the Account Holder must first log into the TheoPay Browser Extension (puzzle piece) before shopping like normal on the site. The Account Holder adds the desired items to the checkout cart on the website. Once they have completed shopping, the Account Holder uses the TheoPay browser extension to scan the cart. The scan will review each item eligibility with the Hope Scholarship qualifying expense limitations. When all items in the cart have been approved for purchase, the Account Holder submits the cart for fulfillment. Account Holders do not actually check out and make purchases using their own credit card information – instead, the submitted order goes to the Hope fulfillment team who reviews the order and manually places the order for the approved items with the vendor and has the items sent directly to the student's home.

See the Hope Scholarship Parent/Guardian Portal Guide on the [Hope Scholarship website](#) for technical instructions on how to use TheoPay in the online Hope Scholarship portal or watch [Helpful Videos](#) on the TheoPay process.

### Refunds

All refunds of Hope Scholarship funds by an educational service provider or vendor must be electronically credited directly back to the Hope Scholarship Student's Account. **It is illegal for Hope Scholarship funds to be refunded, rebated, or shared with a parent, Account Holder, or Student in any manner other than a credit directly into the Student's Hope Scholarship Account.**

If a Hope Scholarship Student uses Hope Scholarship funds to make a partial payment of tuition or fees to an educational service provider to reserve the Student's enrollment in a Program and the Student does not participate in the Program, the education service provider must electronically credit the payment back to the Hope Scholarship Student's Account within thirty (30) days after receiving notice that the Student will not participate in the Program or after the Program has commenced, whichever occurs first. Additionally, if the Student pays for an education service provider's goods or services ahead of time and does not ultimately receive those goods or services, the provider must refund the Student's Account for the value of the goods or services not rendered. **Please email [hopescholarshipwv@wvsto.gov](mailto:hopescholarshipwv@wvsto.gov) and notify the Hope Scholarship team if you are concerned that a provider is keeping Hope Scholarship funds in exchange for an enrollment reservation that your Student does not use or goods/services that your child does not receive.**

### Reimbursements

**Reimbursements for payments made out of pocket with non-Hope Scholarship funds will only be permitted when specifically authorized by the [Hope Scholarship Board's Reimbursement Policy](#).** The vast majority of purchases that are qualifying expenses must be made with a participating education service provider using the online Hope Scholarship portal. The Hope Scholarship Reimbursement Policy defines the extenuating circumstances in which the Board will approve an out-of-pocket expense. **You should carefully review this Policy before making any purchase with personal funds for which you intend to seek reimbursement.**

The most common type of reimbursement that is authorized in the Hope Scholarship Board's Reimbursement Policy, is for out-of-pocket purchases of "off-the-shelf curriculum." Off-the-shelf curriculum is defined as lessons and academic content taught in a specific course, program, or grade level, including supplemental materials directly related to the course of study that is widely and immediately available and not customized or designed for a particular Student. Examples include, but are not limited to, the following: Textbooks (including electronic); Workbooks (including electronic); Student/Teacher Curriculum kits; Student/Teacher Curriculum Educational videos, DVD's, or CD's; Activity/Learning or Study guides; Books (fiction and nonfiction); and Teacher Curriculum Lesson plans.

## West Virginia Hope Scholarship Parent Handbook

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Any reimbursements that have been authorized by the Board must be requested in the online Hope Scholarship portal and must be supported with detailed documentation.

***Please note: The Account Holder requesting reimbursement must provide official documentation/receipts from the educational service provider that clearly shows the Student's name, qualifying educational expenses, and the amount of each expense, along with the amount paid and payment dates. The Account Holder must attach detailed, itemized receipts or invoices that reflect the educational expenses. A bank statement alone, without any of the other criteria above, is not sufficient support for a reimbursement request. All reimbursement requests must be submitted within 90 days of the date of purchase.***

Approved reimbursements are issued to Account Holders by an Automated Clearing House (ACH) payments. Before creating a reimbursement request, the Account Holder will be asked on the online Hope Scholarship portal to connect their banking information. If an Account Holder needs alternative banking options to receive reimbursements, please email the Hope Engagement Center (HEC) at [help@hopescholarshipwv.com](mailto:help@hopescholarshipwv.com). The Board may adopt alternate methods of issuing reimbursements to Account Holders based on administrative, security, or privacy considerations. Any change to reimbursement method will be communicated to Account Holders via email.

Account Holders may appeal denied reimbursement requests within forty-five (45) days of the request being denied by completing the [Hope Scholarship Reimbursement Appeal Form](#). The completed form along with any supporting documentation should be emailed to the Board at [hopescholarshipwv@wvsto.gov](mailto:hopescholarshipwv@wvsto.gov).

### Termination of Program Participation

A Hope Scholarship Student's participation in the Program will terminate if any of the following circumstances occur:

- The Account Holder withdraws the Student from the Hope Scholarship Program;
- The Account Holder fails to submit the Annual Continued Participation Confirmation for their Student as required by the Board or fails to meet Annual Continued Participation Requirements under state law;
- The Student does not meet Year-End Academic/Attendance Reporting Requirements;
- The Board suspends or terminates the Student or Account Holder's participation in the Hope Scholarship Program for failure to comply with the requirements of the Hope Scholarship Act, the Board's rules, or other Program requirements; or
- The Student is no longer eligible to continue Program participation according to the Hope Scholarship Act because the Student:
  - Enrolls full-time in public school;
  - Successfully completes a secondary education program (*i.e.* graduates from high school);
  - Reaches 21 years of age; or

## West Virginia Hope Scholarship Parent Handbook

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- Ceases to reside in West Virginia.

**An Account Holder must immediately notify the Board if conditions occur that make the Student ineligible to participate in the Program.**

If circumstances requiring termination of Program participation occur, the Board will notify the Account Holder that the scholarship funds will be placed on hold and the Account will be closed in forty-five (45) days. The Board will close the Account if:

- The Account Holder does not respond to the notice within thirty (30) days of receiving it;
- The Account Holder does not provide information showing that the circumstances leading to the Board's decision to close the Account were factually incorrect within forty-five (45) days of the notice.

Any funds remaining in a Hope Scholarship Account upon its closure will be returned to the State. If an Account is closed because the Student is returning to public school after October 1 of that academic year, upon request of the county board of education, the funds in the Student's Account will be transferred to the county where the public school is located, in order to fund the Student's education for the rest of the school year.

### Account Holder's Obligation to Notify

If a Student will no longer participate in the Hope Scholarship Program or becomes ineligible for the Program, the Account Holder *must* immediately provide notice by email to [hopescholarshipwv@wvsto.gov](mailto:hopescholarshipwv@wvsto.gov). **Account Holders must also notify the Board immediately (within 5 days) if the following circumstances occur** in which a Student is ineligible to continue participation in the Hope Scholarship Program:

- The Student enrolls full-time in public school;
- The Student ceases to reside in West Virginia;
- The Student does not enroll in or commence Kindergarten after being awarded as an incoming Kindergarten Student (*i.e.* the Student instead enrolls in another year of preschool);
- The Student successfully completes a secondary education program (*i.e.* graduates from high school); or
- The Student turns 21 years of age.

**Once a Student becomes ineligible to continue Hope Scholarship Program participation, the Account Holder must not continue or attempt to continue to spend Hope Scholarship funds.** Utilizing scholarship funds for an ineligible Student is a violation of Program rules. Please review the [Termination of Program Participation](#) section above for more information.

### Noncompliance, Intentional Misuse of Funds, or Criminal Activity

## West Virginia Hope Scholarship Parent Handbook

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The Hope Scholarship Board may temporarily freeze or put a hold on an Account if they receive credible information that an Account Holder or Student has violated the Hope Scholarship Act, Program rules or requirements, or engaged in criminal activity involving Hope Scholarship funds. An Account Holder will be notified of an Account freeze or hold within twenty (20) days following said freeze or hold.

Account Holders must submit to any audit related to Hope Scholarship funds initiated by the Board. Upon request from the Board, an Account Holder must provide all records in the Account Holder's possession relating to Hope Scholarship transactions. Failure to cooperate with an audit may lead to immediate referral to the State Auditor or law enforcement authorities. Violation of the Hope Scholarship Act, Program rules or requirements, or criminal laws may lead to temporary or permanent disqualification from the Program and/or referral to the State Auditor or law enforcement authorities.

### Appeals

A three-person Committee on Appeals has been appointed by the Hope Scholarship Board to review all appeals submitted by Account Holders. Appeals may be submitted to the Committee on Appeals by completing the appropriate appeal form on the Hope Scholarship website. Appeal decisions made by the Committee are reviewed by the full Board. The Board's review is the final step in the appeals process and the Board's decision is the final determination on all appeals submitted by account holders.

Eligibility appeals are specifically addressed under the Eligibility Appeals section above and Reimbursement appeals are specifically addressed in the Reimbursements section above.

Appeals to the Board are governed by the Board's Procedural Rules and Bylaws, which are available on the Board's website: [Hope Scholarship > Home > About > Board of Directors \(hopescholarshipwv.com\)](#).

### Contact information

If you have any questions regarding your online Hope Scholarship portal account or application status, please contact [help@hopescholarshipwv.com](mailto:help@hopescholarshipwv.com) or call our Hope Engagement Center at 681-999-HOPE(4673). Our engagement center is open Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. ET.

If you have general questions about the Hope Scholarship Program, please visit our [website](#) and FAQ at [www.hopescholarshipwv.gov](http://www.hopescholarshipwv.gov). You may also email [hopescholarshipwv@wvsto.gov](mailto:hopescholarshipwv@wvsto.gov) or call 304-340-5058 for questions related to appeals, academic progress, and guardianship issues.

**Fraud Reporting:** If you are aware of any person who has committed fraud or attempted to commit fraud involving Hope Scholarship funds, you can file a report on the Hope Scholarship website:

[Report Fraud \(hopescholarshipwv.gov\)](http://hopescholarshipwv.gov).

### Appendix A – Definitions

**Academic year:** The period of time occurring between the first day of July and ending on the 30<sup>th</sup> of June, during which a Student must meet the educational requirements equivalent to an instructional term under W. Va. Code §18-8-1.

**Account or Hope Scholarship Account:** The account established for an individual Hope Scholarship Student in the online Hope Scholarship portal, into which the Board deposits the Hope Scholarship funds allocated to the Student for qualifying educational expenses.

**ACH or Automated Clearing House:** A national Electronic Funds Transfer network which enables participating financial institutions to distribute electronic credit and debit entries to financial institution accounts and to settle the entries.

**Account Holder:** The parent, guardian, or other person who is legally authorized to make educational decisions for a Student and who is designated to manage the Hope Scholarship Student's Account according to Program requirements.

**Annual Continued Participation Confirmation or Annual Confirmation:** The information and forms required for a Student to continue the Student's Account and participation in the Hope Scholarship Program from one school year to the next, as required by W. Va. Code §18-31-8, W. Va. Code of State Rules §112-18-4.2, or any other provision of the Hope Scholarship Act or Board rules.

**Annual Continued Participation Requirements:** The requirements and criteria a Student must meet to remain eligible to participate in the Program and to continue the Student's Account and Program participation from one school year to the next, as required by W. Va. Code §18-31-8, W. Va. Code of State Rules §112-18-4.2, or any other provision of the Hope Scholarship Act or Board rules.

**Board:** The Hope Scholarship Board was created pursuant to W. Va. Code §18-31-3.

**Curriculum:** A complete course of study for a particular content area or K–12 grade level, including any supplemental materials required by the curriculum.

**Education Service Provider or Provider:** A person or organization approved to receive payments from Hope Scholarship accounts to provide educational goods and services to Hope Scholarship Students.

**Elementary or secondary public school or public school program:** A K-12 county school, public charter school, virtual public charter school, or any other publicly supported elementary or secondary school in this state.

**Hope Scholarship funds or funds:** The monies deposited in a Hope Scholarship Student's Account

## West Virginia Hope Scholarship Parent Handbook

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in accordance with Program requirements.

**Hope Scholarship portal or portal:** The Hope Scholarship Program’s portal, or any other portal utilized by the Board, as “online portal” is defined in W. Va. Code of State Rules §112-18-2.

**Hope Scholarship Student or Student:** A Student who has successfully applied for the Program and awarded participation in the Hope Scholarship Program.

**Hope Scholarship website:** The website created and maintained by the Board to provide Program information, documents, and forms available to the public. The website address is [Hope Scholarship \(hopescholarshipwv.gov\)](http://hopescholarshipwv.gov).

**Immediate family member:** With regard to a Hope Scholarship Student, any of the following:

- The father or mother of the Student, or an ancestor of either;
- The grandfather or grandmother of the Student, or an ancestor of either;
- A brother, sister, stepbrother, or stepsister of the Student;
- A first cousin of the Student;
- A stepfather or stepmother of the Student;
- A brother or sister of the father or mother of the Student;
- A son or daughter of a brother or sister of the Student;
- A father-in-law, mother-in-law, brother-in-law, or sister-in-law of the Student;
- The spouse of the Student;
- The spouse of any person described in the bullet points above;
- A person related to the Student as described in the bullet points above through a lawful adoption.

**Individualized Instructional Program (IIP):** A customized educational experience that takes place either at home or another location. Hope Scholarship Students on an IIP educational pathway are not enrolled in a participating school.

**Instructional term:** A period of continuous enrollment in the West Virginia public school system for the full academic year. The instructional term refers to the regular 180 instructional days of the public school calendar in accordance with W. Va. Code §18-5-45.

**Local county:** The county and school district in which the Student resides. This term is used to refer to the local county superintendent or local county board of education of the Student’s residential county and school district.

**Microschool:** A school initiated by one or more teachers or an entity created to operate a school that charges tuition for the students who enroll and is an alternative to enrolling in a public school, private school, homeschool, or learning pod in accordance with W. VA. Code § 18-8-1(n)(1)(B).

**New application:** A Student’s application to participate in the Hope Scholarship Program for the

## West Virginia Hope Scholarship Parent Handbook

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first time, as opposed to an application to continue participation from one school year to the next. This term also includes an application to participate in the Hope Scholarship Program after a previous Hope Scholarship Student failed to submit an Annual Continued Participation Confirmation and later wishes to participate.

**Participating school or nonpublic school:** Any private school that provides education to elementary and/or secondary students and has notified the Board of its intention to participate in the Program and comply with the Program's requirements.

**Program:** The Hope Scholarship Program.

**Reasonable Cost:** A reasonable cost is defined as a cost that a prudent person would incur under similar circumstances, considering the nature of the goods or services and the prevailing market prices for such items. Consideration will be given to whether the cost is generally recognized as ordinary and necessary, to any unique student circumstances, to the student's age, etc.

**Student:** For the purposes of application requirements, a Student refers to an applicant who is eligible to participate in the Hope Scholarship Program according to section 3 of this rule. For the purposes of Program participation requirements, a Student refers to a current Hope Scholarship Student.

**Transaction:** A single purchase, payment, or transfer.

**WVEIS number:** The West Virginia Education Information System (WVEIS) number that West Virginia's public school system assigns to individual students to track student information and progress. The Hope Scholarship Board also utilizes this identification number to track Program eligibility and compliance, and exchange necessary data with the West Virginia Department of Education.

**Year-End Academic/Attendance Reporting Requirements:** The information and documentation of a Student's academic progress or attendance that a Student must submit to the Student's local county board of education following a school year according to West Virginia Code §18-31-8(a).

Appendix B – Hope Scholarship Account Holder Agreement

**HOPE SCHOLARSHIP ACCOUNT HOLDER AGREEMENT**

This contractual agreement must be executed electronically using the Hope Scholarship portal to complete your Student’s application to participate in the Hope Scholarship Program.

**DEFINITIONS OF TERMS USED IN AGREEMENT**

**Account** means the Student’s Hope Scholarship Account. **Account Holder** means the parent or legal guardian of the Student. **Account information** means all information within the Hope Scholarship Portal associated with a Hope Scholarship account, including but not limited to records of account balance, account transactions, account invoices, and account user information. **Act** means the Hope Scholarship Act, contained in *W. Va. Code* §§ 18-31-1 *et seq.* **Agreement** means the Agreement between Account Holder and the Board contained herein, which includes the terms required by *W. Va. Code* § 18-31-5 and *W. Va. Code of State Rules* § 112-18-6. **Annual Continued Participation Confirmation** means the information and forms required for a Student to continue the Student’s Account and participation in the Hope Scholarship Program from one school year to the next, as required by *W. Va. Code* §18-31-8 and *W. Va. Code of State Rules* § 112-18-4.2. **Board** means the Hope Scholarship Board, established in *W. Va. Code* § 18-31-3. **County** means the county school district in which the Student resides. **Hope Scholarship Portal or Portal** means the Hope Scholarship Program’s portal, or any other portal utilized by the Board, as “online portal” is defined in *W. Va. Code of State Rules* § 112-18-2. **Participating school** means an educational service provider that is a participating school, as that term is defined in *W. Va. Code* § 18-31-2. **Program** means the Hope Scholarship Program. **Program Manager** means the entity the Board selects and contracts with to administer the Hope Scholarship Portal or other substantial program functions on behalf of the Board. **Provider** means an education service provider in the Hope Scholarship Program, as defined in *W. Va. Code* §18-31-2, and includes a provider’s duly authorized employees, agents, and subcontractors. **Rules** means the Hope Scholarship Board’s legislative rules, contained in *W. Va. Code of State Rules* §§ 112-18-1 *et. seq.*; the Hope Scholarship Board’s procedural rules, contained in *W. Va. Code of State Rules* §§ 112-19-1 *et. seq.*, and any Program policies and requirements adopted by the Board. **Student** refers to the student on whose behalf Account Holder is applying for participation in the Program. **Student information** means information pertaining to a Hope Scholarship student or Program applicant that Account Holder submits to the Board, the County, or the West Virginia Department of Education for the purposes of participating in or applying to participate in the Program. **WVSTO** means the West Virginia State Treasurer’s Office under the supervision of the West Virginia State Treasurer, acting as Chairman to the Board.

**TERMS AND CONDITIONS**

I, the Account Holder, hereby understand and agree to the following requirements, terms, and conditions:

A. *General Provisions:*

- Account Holder hereby submits an application on behalf of a Student who is eligible to participate in the Program, according to the requirements of the Act and the Rules.
- Account Holder will not share login credentials for the Hope Scholarship portal either intentionally by sharing the information with another individual or unintentionally by saving log-in credentials in Account Holder’s browser settings.
- Account Holder is the Student’s biological parent, legal guardian, or custodian.
- Failure to sign this Agreement is grounds for denial of the Student’s application for the Program.
- Account Holder and the Student will comply with the Act and the Rules at all times.
- Account Holder has carefully reviewed and understands all information contained in the Hope Scholarship Parent Handbook located at <https://hopescholarshipwv.com/>.

## West Virginia Hope Scholarship Parent Handbook

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- If the Student returns to public school, the Student is no longer eligible for the Program and Account Holder must immediately cease use of Hope Scholarship funds. Account Holder must provide notice by email to [hopescholarshipwv@wvsto.gov](mailto:hopescholarshipwv@wvsto.gov) within 5 business days of the Student's return to public school.
- Only a Student who is a current resident of West Virginia is eligible to participate in the Program. Any action taken by a Student or Account Holder to represent that a Student is a resident of West Virginia, when the student is actually a resident of a different state, may constitute one or more serious crimes under state or federal law.
- If a Student is no longer a resident of West Virginia at any point during Program participation, the Student is no longer eligible for the Program and Account Holder must immediately cease use of Hope Scholarship funds. Account Holder must provide notice by email to [hopescholarshipwv@wvsto.gov](mailto:hopescholarshipwv@wvsto.gov) within 5 business days of the Student moving out of state.
- If the Student graduates from a secondary school program, the Student is no longer eligible for the Program and Account Holder must immediately cease use of Hope Scholarship funds. Account Holder must provide notice by email to [hopescholarshipwv@wvsto.gov](mailto:hopescholarshipwv@wvsto.gov) within 5 business days of the Student's graduation.
- Accounts for 12<sup>th</sup> grade students will automatically be frozen and closed on June 16 annually unless a Continued Participation Confirmation is submitted for the student to indicate that the student has not yet completed a secondary school program. Board staff may request documentation as to why a student needs additional time to complete their graduation requirements.
- Account Holder may not unnecessarily delay awarding a Student a diploma for the purpose of utilizing Hope Scholarship funds to pay for the student's college-level education.
- If the Student reaches 21 years of age, the Student is no longer eligible for the Program and Account Holder must immediately cease use of Hope Scholarship funds. Account Holder must provide notice by email to [hopescholarshipwv@wvsto.gov](mailto:hopescholarshipwv@wvsto.gov) within 5 business days of the Student reaching the age of 21.
- The Board and the WVSTO will direct all communications, including communications required by the Act or the Rules, by electronic mail (email) to the email address for Account Holder that Account Holder uses to create an Account in the Hope Scholarship Portal, and all emails correctly addressed and sent to said email address are deemed received by Account Holder. It is Account Holder's responsibility to maintain and regularly monitor Account Holder's email address listed in the Hope Scholarship Portal for communications from the Board, and Account Holder will immediately update Account Holder's email address in the Portal if the Account Holder's email address changes during the Student's Program participation.
- Failure to comply with this Agreement, the Act, or the Rules may result in termination of participation in the Program for Account Holder, the Student, or both Account Holder and the Student. If the Student's Account is terminated due to failure to comply with the terms of this Agreement, the Act, or the Rules, all funds remaining in the Student's Account will be returned to the State.
- Failure to comply with the Act, the Rules, or this Agreement, or commission of any crime involving Hope Scholarship funds, may result in permanent disqualification from Program participation for Account Holder, the Student, or both Account Holder and the Student.
- The Student's participation in the Program is a parental placement under 20 U.S.C. § 1412 of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and participation in the Program releases the public school system of the County from its obligation to provide the student with a free appropriate public education (FAPE). For more information about the rights of parentally placed students under IDEA and applicable state laws and regulations, please refer to the information contained in West Virginia Board of Education Policy 2419: Regulations for the Education of Students with Exceptionalities and the corresponding Procedural Safeguards Brochure found at [Policy 2419 - West Virginia Department of Education \(wvde.us\)](http://Policy 2419 - West Virginia Department of Education (wvde.us)).

## West Virginia Hope Scholarship Parent Handbook

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- Account Holder will neither share in nor permit the Student to share in Hope Scholarship funds in any manner, as strictly prohibited by *W. Va. Code* § 18-31-7(c) and *W. Va. Code of State Rules* § 112-18-13.
- Neither the Board nor the WVSTO is responsible or liable for any action or failure to act by a Provider. Account Holder will hold the Board and the WVSTO harmless for any injury or damage caused to Account Holder or the Student by the action or inaction of a Provider.

### *B. Educational Requirements*

- Account Holder will provide an education for the Student in at least the subjects of reading, language, mathematics, science, and social studies.
- Account Holder will afford the Student opportunities for educational enrichment such as organized athletics, art, music, or literature.
- The Account Holder will be responsible for selecting and vetting all providers they choose to provide educational services to their Student.
- Account Holder will provide a Notice of Intent to participate in the Hope Scholarship Program to the County superintendent. The Board may withhold or delay funding to a Student's Account if a Notice of Intent has not been properly submitted.
- If the Student is enrolled in a participating school, Account Holder will ensure that the Student remains in good standing with the participating school to continue participation in the Program.
- If the Student is enrolled in an individualized instructional program, Account Holder will ensure that the Student is academically evaluated annually using one of the methods below, and provide documentation of the evaluation to the County superintendent by no later than June 8th each year, to continue participation in the program:

**Evaluation method 1:** The student takes a nationally normed standardized achievement test of academic achievement that tests the subject areas of reading, language, and mathematics, and when available for the student's grade-level, science, and social studies. The mean of the child's overall test results for any single year in each tested subject must be above the fourth stanine, or if below the fourth stanine, must show improvement from the previous year's results.

**Evaluation method 2:** A certified teacher conducts a review of the student's academic work annually and determines the student is making academic progress commensurate with his or her age and ability.

### *C. Use of Hope Scholarship Funds*

- Account Holder will only use Hope Scholarship funds for qualifying expenses to provide the Student with an elementary or secondary school education.
- Account Holder is solely responsible for reviewing any and all qualifying expense list and/or non-qualifying expense lists before any purchase to ensure items being purchased are not prohibited.
- Account Holder is financially responsible for any approved purchases that are later determined to be ineligible and must pay back any funds to the Program for these ineligible purchases to maintain access to their Hope Account and/or maintain their eligibility for the Program.
- Account Holder will not receive a payment, refund, or rebate of Hope Scholarship funds from any Provider whatsoever, including but not limited to a refund, rebate, gift card, or credit for any goods or services paid for with Hope Scholarship funds then later returned to the Provider.
- Account Holder is responsible for the completion of actions necessary in the portal for payment of all education expenses requested and/or invoiced in the portal. If Account Holder does not complete required actions, steps may be taken on behalf the Account Holder within the portal in order to complete the payment to the participating and/or the education service provider.

## West Virginia Hope Scholarship Parent Handbook

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- Account Holder is responsible for the payment of all educational expenses in excess of the amount of Hope Scholarship funds in the Student's Account, according to any agreement between Account Holder and a Provider.
- Account Holder must not take possession of Hope Scholarship funds in any manner; provided, that Account Holder may receive reimbursements for qualified expenses when authorized by the Hope Scholarship Board.
- Account Holder must not resell items purchased with Hope Scholarship funds to other parties.
- Account Holder must not use items, including individual items, purchased with Hope Scholarship funds to operate any type of business or to build/make another item to be sold.
- If the Student receives services provided by a public school system, tuition will be charged by the County board of education proportionate to the percentage of total instruction provided to the student by the public school system.

### *D. Annual Continuation of Account and Program Participation*

- For a Student to continue his or her Account and participation in the Hope Scholarship Program from one school year to the next, Account Holder and the Student must meet all annual requirements set forth in *W. Va. Code § 18-31-8* and *W. Va. Code of State Rules § 112-18-4.2*. These requirements must be met annually for the duration of Program participation.
- Annual Continued Participation Confirmations must be submitted to the Board for continued participation in the Program from one school year to the next and must be submitted to the Board by the date established and communicated to Account Holders by the Board. If Account Holder does not submit an annual Continued Participation Confirmation for the Student by the deadline, any funds remaining in the Student's account will be returned to the State. If the Student who missed the Continued Participation Confirmation deadline desires to participate in the Program, the Student must apply for the Program as a new applicant and meet eligibility requirements to apply for the Program at the time the application is submitted.

### *E. Sharing of Student and Account Information*

- The Board, the WVSTO, and the Program Manager will have unlimited access to view any and all Account and Student information associated with the Student's application and Account.
- Providers, including any authorized employee, subcontractor, agent, or volunteer that a Provider authorizes to access the Hope Scholarship Portal on the provider's behalf, may be able to search for and view Account and Student information through the Portal for the purposes of account invoicing and identification of Provider's students.
- Account Holder hereby consents to the sharing of Student and Account information among the following parties for the purpose of Program administration: the Hope Scholarship Board, the WVSTO, Providers, the Program Manager, the County, the Department of Education, any school associated with the Student, and any other state agency.

**>>>>Signature<<<<<**