

Anita Scott (00:18.915)

All right, welcome. Welcome to the Texas Homeschool Coalition webinar. If I'm seeing it correctly, I already see 92 people in here and it's only 101. That's impressive. Thank you all for coming to this webinar. I'm so excited, particularly because the bulk of this webinar will be a live Q and A. And I'm excited because one of the purposes of this webinar is to

empower you, inform you so that you can make the best decision for you and your family. If you can in the chat, drop in where you're watching from if you're watching, if you're listening from your car, don't put in "car." Like just keep driving. Don't tell us that you're driving. But you know, if you're stationary, go ahead and drop in the chat like, you know, listening from the Panhandle or listening from Austin, from Houston. That'll help us know. And then if you will, please

Feel free to share with us how you found out about this webinar. Your sister-in-law, your neighbor, your barber, a website, just let us know. And we're super excited that you're here. So my name is Anita Scott, and I'm excited to be joining a team here today. So it is 102. I'll go ahead and just let you know this is the.

Texas Education Freedom Account and Homeschooling Overview. And what you need to know is that Texas Homeschool Coalition, one of our primary passions, one of our primary passions, in fact, this year we turned 40 years old. And our primary passion since day one has been to help you navigate your homeschooling journey with confidence and ease. And at THSC,

We are dedicated to empowering you to take the lead in educating your children. And one of the reasons I wanted to take the screenshot from our website is so that you'll know that what I'm saying is authentic and accurate. And our mission has never changed. Our membership is crafted to give you the confidence and peace of mind to guide your children to success. So we offer three tiers of membership, one being the starter, and then it shows you exactly what you can have as a benefit

Anita Scott (02:39.035)

for being a free member of the Texas Homeschool Coalition. And then look at that middle column. It shows you that if you join now for \$1,395 a month, the benefits that come with that. And then look at the premium, the \$149. So what you're not seeing is all of the benefits that come with the premium membership for \$149. You get CPS defense, one-on-one coaching, CPS hotline, major interventions.

I could go on and on and on, but I know what you're thinking. You're thinking, Anita, if the premium membership were just \$30 less, I wish it were just \$30 less. Here's what I want you to know. But this is for those who are not driving. I want you to take out your phone and snap that QR code because for \$119, you can be a part of the premium membership.

And so please, we want to help you take the guesswork out of homeschooling. That is why we exist. So many of our members will say, how do I know if I'm doing it right? How many hours should I be doing? How do I know if I'm doing it according to Texas law? You don't have to

guess. We have homeschool coaches. And with the premium membership, you get unlimited homeschool coaching calls. So I invite you to take a picture of the QR code.

and then put in the code WEBINAR30 and you can receive the premium membership for \$119. So with that being said, again, my name is Anita Scott and I am the Policy Director with the Texas Homeschool Coalition. And with this webinar, I come with a team, which is so exciting. So the team here, we call them the Texas Education Freedom Account Team. And so you're probably like, yeah, woohoo. So I'm just gonna ask them to come on down.

Today on our call, we have Travis Pillow, we have Daniel Warner, and we have Lindsey Bearwald. And then that other person is like the excited homeschool student who's like, oh my gosh, this is really happening. There's a webinar. There's going to be live Q &A. I know you're excited. So and I feel like I know them. You all, I have weekly calls with this team right here. And that's how I feel. I know them. I know them. So let's just dive right in.

Anita Scott (05:02.243)

So I do want to let you know that as of Monday, October the 6th of last year, the Texas Comptroller provided Texas with its official name for the Education Savings Account program. So the ESA, what we've all been hearing all last year and the year before, that is now called the Texas Education Freedom Account. So when you hear the TEFA team talking about Texas Education Freedom Account, you can be sure we're talking about the same thing.

So I do want you to know that if you have questions about the history of school choice, how did Texas even pass school choice? What is THSCs? Why is THSC advocating for the Texas Education Freedom Account? I do want you to know that we do have a webinar that we already recorded sometime back in December, and you can have access to that webinar, and that way you can get some of your homeschooling 101 as it relates to the Texas Education Freedom Account questions answered.

The questions today will specifically be about, okay, what is this application? And if it's open from February 4th of last week until March 17th, how do I apply? And if it's six weeks, what if I want to make an amendment to my application? Can I change my application? What if I had this idea of schooling in mind, but what if I want to do this kind of schooling? So we want to answer all of those types of questions. We do encourage you to drop in your questions in chat.

because the bulk of this webinar will be live Q &A. So we expect the questions to populate our chat. Without further ado, I'm just going to go ahead and pass it over to Travis, Daniel, and Lindsay, and you. You are now part of the team. You ask the questions. We are here to answer. But before we go into live Q &A, I'm going to stop sharing and I'm going to pass it over to the

Texas Education and Freedom Account Team.

Travis Pillow (07:03.306)

Awesome. Thank you, Anita. Thank you for the opportunity to share with this group. Before we dive in, I did want to share a little bit about kind of our approach at the Comptroller and what has brought just how we approach the work of administering this account. So my name is Travis Pillow. I am in the process of relocating to Texas from Florida. I previously worked on the Education Savings Account program in Florida, which is currently the largest in the nation.

And I kind of set a rule for myself that I would only come to the state with a chance of creating an even bigger and better education savings account program. And that can only happen in Texas. The one thing that I have learned through our working on these programs, we launched the program in Florida in 2014. I was a part of that team as this program has grown. First of all, homeschoolers are some of our most active and highly engaged participants. And second of all,

A lot of these programs have a lot of rules and bureaucracy associated with them and homeschoolers with their kind of bottomless creativity have a way of forcing us to confront some of the rules that might stand in your way. And so we want to collaborate with homeschool families and try to figure out how can we make sure that our policies, our processes are as accommodating as possible to the many different flavors of parent directed education.

that parents are able to come up with. The other thing I want to say is that the comptroller himself has brought to this work kind of some of his business background where he has really wanted us to be as customer friendly as possible. Certainly we have great partners at Odyssey that are helping us deliver that. But also, you know, we really want to think about how can we be responsive to

the needs of people who are utilizing this program. And so we really want to be able to collaborate with all of you in terms of how do we build a program that's gonna, as the comptroller likes to say, put parents in the driver's seat. And we know that when you're in the driver's seat of your child's education, there's both a lot of freedom that comes with that, as well as a lot of personal responsibility that you take on. And so we want to applaud you for getting into the driver's seat of your child's education.

Travis Pillow (09:27.21)

Many of you may have already seen and Anita shared a link to our overview of the program. But really quickly, Texas Education Freedom Accounts are an ESA program that basically creates a flexible bank account that families can use to purchase a variety of eligible education expenses, private school tuition, as well as curriculum, tutoring, and other things associated with homeschooling.

The first funding for the upcoming school year will start to become available July of this year. We opened applications as Anita mentioned last week. Since that time we've already seen the numbers go up. So every time I quote a number it's out of date, but we've had a really great enthusiasm. Over 88,000 students have applied thus far. And probably by the time we get off this webinar, that number will be even higher.

Our partners at Odyssey have created a mobile friendly application that you can access at educationfreedom.texas.gov. And as you get ready to apply, there are some documents that you can prepare your Texas state ID, your tax return for income, and then if applicable, documentation of your child's disability. We'll get into that a little bit more in a minute because the disability piece is an important one. But we want to...

And Daniel will show in a little while what that application actually looks like. One really relevant point for this audience is who counts as a homeschooler. When you apply, you will have to select your educational setting that you intend for your child next school year. And that's really important because the educational setting you select will impact the amount of funding that your child will be able to receive. So selecting private school.

It has to be you means your child will be attending an accredited, participating private school that will allow most families to access ten thousand four hundred seventy four dollars or up to thirty thousand dollars if your student has a documented disability. Selecting the other option, homeschool slash other will allow your child to qualify for up to two thousand dollars per year. And this is really a group that includes

Travis Pillow (11:46.529)

a variety of learning options that are not an accredited participating private school. But there's some nuance here that I think is going to be really relevant. So first of all, if you are a homeschooler who uses a participating accredited private school to support your parent directed education, you can select that private school option and qualify for that larger funding amount. So if you, for example, have your child enrolled in an online private school.

that is accredited by an appropriate agency, you can select that private school option. Even though you identify as a homeschooler, you can select that private school option and qualify for that larger funding amount. A second important thing to note is that if you do choose to participate in the program as a private school student and receive that larger

funding amount, there is an assessment requirement that's associated with that. so private schools are required to administer an annual either norm referenced assessment like the Iowa test of basic skills or the map. There's a number of different assessments that can meet that need or the state assessment. You have to take one of those tests at least once a year in your private school will help report those results for your students if you want to receive that larger funding amount.

If you participate as a homeschool student, there is no assessment requirement and this does not apply to your child. And so those are just some options and trade-offs that we want families to be aware of and decide what makes the most sense for you.

A really important topic for many families who are looking to apply is how do you document your child's disability? So if you want to receive that additional funding up to \$30,000 to provide services for your child, you will need a Texas IEP that is on file with the state from the last three

school years, and that needs to be completed by your school district. If you have that document, that can also confirm your application priority.

Travis Pillow (13:54.731)

We know that many families and many homeschoolers do not have an IEP that is going to meet these requirements. And so we've provided a menu of other options. And that includes we've created a disability certification form that will allow a medical practitioner to sign off that your child has a qualifying disability that's impacting their learning. And that can allow us to prioritize your application in the event that there is a lottery. And so.

The bottom line is that if you want additional funding, there's slightly more stringent documentation requirements for your child's disability, but to help us prioritize your application, we provide flexible options. I wanna go into some of the options you have to browse available schools and providers and what can your account actually pay for. But before that, I just wanna say if you are in the process of applying, we have multiple ways to help.

Odyssey has created a very helpful parent support website that even includes a chat bot that knows the ins and outs of our program and our application. There's lots of great ways to get assistance and Daniel will soon walk through what that application looks like.

So we've gotten feedback from Anita and others that many homeschoolers want to know what learning options are available under this program. And I want to show you at educationfreedom.texas.gov how we can help you find not just schools near you, but other relevant homeschool providers. And so that includes, for example,

Online schools. So if you go into our school finder tool, you can view online schools only and so if you're if you are a homeschooler who utilizes an accredited participating online school there are lots of options that are available statewide for you to choose from that are now called out in our finder tool. So there are multiple ways for you to select Do you want local private schools and online or do you want to just look at those online options?

Travis Pillow (16:08.556)

to see if maybe an option that you are utilizing or would like to utilize could qualify you for the full funding amounts under this program. There are other learning options that might be relevant to you in addition to schools that can be browsed on this Finder tool. Those include, for example, tutoring, enrichment, therapy, curriculum. If you want to take individual classes from a specific provider, school supplies and assessments.

Those are all available for you to browse on our Finder tool. I would note that the offerings that are currently visible here are somewhat limited, but that is going to change. In just a few weeks, we are planning by next month at the latest to launch our application for other education service providers or vendors. And so we will be increasing the diversity of homeschool relevant learning options that will be available to you very soon.

So with that, I'm looking forward to taking some time to dig into any questions you all have. But first we'll hand it over to Daniel who can show you what the application actually looks like.

Daniel Warner (17:17.882)

Awesome. Thank you, Travis. Daniel Warner, Texas State Director with Odyssey. And I'm just going to actually drop in the chat. So if anyone wants to also be able to find this pretty easily after this, I don't know if that's helpful. Sorry about that. And this is where we actually have a video and I will pull that up. so share my screen. And it's about an eight minute presentation or video.

And can everybody see that? Not yet.

Daniel Warner (17:54.098)

Is that not working? Let's see. Okay, got it. Great. Can you hear that?

Anita Scott (17:57.061)

There it is.

Anita Scott (25:12.209)

I think the video froze.

Okay, there it is.

Daniel Warner (27:27.172)

Okay, thank you Anita.

Anita Scott (27:31.636)

Absolutely, yes.

Daniel Warner (27:32.044)

Absolutely, yes.

Anita Scott (27:36.045)

Awesome. Any follow up, Daniel, before we hop into live Q &A?

Daniel Warner (27:36.44)

Awesome. Any follow up, Daniel, before we hop into live Q &A? I don't think so, unless, Travis, am I missing anything? I think it was a pretty extensive review, but I'm happy to entertain kind of questions as they come up. OK. Great.

Anita Scott (27:52.004)

Okay.

Anita Scott (27:57.22)

We had some families who pre-submitted questions. so before we go into the live chat, I'm going to read the questions. One of the questions.

Daniel Warner (27:57.551)

We had some families who pre-submitted questions. And so before we go into the live chat, I'm going to read the questions. One of the questions.

Anita Scott (28:13.029)

What happens if we accept funding and later decide it is not right for our family?

Travis Pillow (28:22.592)

So if you accept funding and then decide that you do not want to participate in the program, that will allow us to then move people off the waiting list with the funding that was allocated for your child. So with the given volume and the interest that we've seen in the program so far, we do anticipate that we will, as the comptroller sometimes says, sell out and there will be more families applying than we're able to fund.

In that case, there will be a lottery and then there will be a wait list. And so if you decline your funding, then we will, know, the sooner you let us know, the sooner we'll be able to bring somebody off the wait list.

Anita Scott (29:03.761)

Thank you. And then Travis, can you even speak to or anyone on the team speak to about how many students will receive funds before it can even go or is there, what's the cap for it going into the lottery?

Travis Pillow (29:19.938)

So that's a hard number to pin down. What we know is that the legislature allocated \$1 billion to launch this program. And then how that funding gets allocated is going to depend on how many participating families are in that \$2,000 funding range for homeschoolers, how many are in that \$10,000 for private school, how many receive additional funding for a child with a disability. So it's hard for us to pin down an exact number.

Anita Scott (29:22.308)

Mm-hmm.

Anita Scott (29:27.313)

Mm-hmm.

Travis Pillow (29:49.485)

But we do know funding for the program is capped at that based on that billion dollar amount. There's some money that comes out for administration and then we'll allocate from there. So basically our goal in running this program has been to kind of keep the administrative costs as

low as possible because we want to basically use every penny we can find to make sure that it goes to families. And so that's what we're going to be doing. We would expect

that there would be tens of thousands of families participating in your work.

Anita Scott (30:21.265)

Thank you. Another question is, what are or are there any tax implications or legal ramifications for receiving the TEFA funds?

Travis Pillow (30:34.698)

So there are not, this does not count as, the funding you receive does not count as income and there are not, it would not be tracked by the IRS. And there are some pretty strong statutory protections for confidentiality, privacy, educator autonomy and so forth that are basically intended to say that if you meet the requirements in the law for participating,

there's not gonna be additional sort of regulatory burden placed upon your family.

Anita Scott (31:10.159)

Awesome, thank you. Another question is, and I saw this in the video you just played, Daniel, but I'm gonna ask it again because I've seen the number of participants increase since the video ended. And the question is, do students with disabilities qualify for more funding? That's part one of the question.

Daniel Warner (31:18.968)

I've seen the number of participants increase since the video ended.

Anita Scott (31:40.239)

and then do prior IEPs count.

Daniel Warner (31:42.459)

count. So the only way for students with disabilities to get additional funding is that you have an active IEP from 23-24, 24-25, or 25-26 on file with your local school district and that must be uploaded into the system if you will. And then what was the second part?

Anita Scott (32:06.065)

Do students with disabilities qualify for more funding?

Daniel Warner (32:14.886)

that could be anywhere from 10, 474 all the way up to 30, I guess a little bit more than that, to \$30,000.

Lindsay Baerwald (32:23.163)

but they must be enrolled in a participating private school either online or in person. Homeschool, traditional homeschool students don't qualify for the additional funding.

Anita Scott (32:27.537)

Mm-hmm.

Daniel Warner (32:29.906)

That's right. So, yeah. So regardless of if you have you have an IEP on file, if you're home, if you're selecting a home school, you are only are allowed that 20, that \$2,000. Excuse me.

Anita Scott (32:44.881)

All right, next question is a parent asks, can we switch between homeschooling and private school after applying? So maybe you could speak to the six week window and then what it looks like for after the six week window.

Travis Pillow (32:59.894)

So you will have through applications will be open through March 17th. And any time before then, you can log into the Odyssey platform and edit your application. There's no special process for that. You don't need to call in or anything like that. We've made it really easy that if there's some info you want to update before March 17th, it's really easy to log in and do that. After March 17th, there's kind of a freeze on some changes that you're able to make. And so.

You're able to, for example, if you've said you want to attend an accredited private school and you've changed your mind, you can make changes that will bring you down in funding, but you cannot make changes that will bring you up in funding. So in other words, you cannot switch from homeschool slash other to an accredited private school after March 17th. And part of the reason for that is that we want to know how much funding we're providing. And if you go down in funding, that could allow us to bring some folks off the waiting list.

But if you go up in funding, there might not be necessarily reserve funding available because we're expecting that all available funding will be allocated. So before March 17th, you'll have chances to update your information, update your selection. After March 17th, you can make changes that bring you down in funding, but not that will bring you up in funding. So when in doubt, select that private school option. The other thing I would note here is that even if you haven't selected the, if you think you might be a private school family,

and you haven't selected the specific school, you will not have to confirm enrollment in a specific private school until June. The deadline for doing that is not until June. And part of the reason for that is that there are more accredited private schools joining the program every day right now. And so at the time you apply, if your specific school that you participate with is not in the program, that's okay, more being added at all times. And that school selection will be available through the summer.

Anita Scott (34:56.529)

Thank you. I see questions popping up. There were two back to back and I'm gonna read the question and I'll start off by answering and then I'll ask you guys to follow up with anything you

wanna address. A pre-submitted question was, will accepting the TEFA funds give the government control over how I homeschool? The question affiliated with that is what strings are attached to taking the fund?

And then there was a question that just came in that said, I'm going to it right now. Does acceptance of funding create a state or federal interference in your homeschool? So those three are very similar in nature. And so what I'm going to do is as the policy director for the Texas Homeschool Coalition, first address that I am so grateful for those candid questions, because we have to call out the pink elephant in the room. So thank you for asking.

The first to all three questions, if you'll think about the history of homeschooling, we have so many families who received whiplash from homeschooling because it was illegal until 1994. And so we have families who were homeschooling and legitimately like closing their blinds, not answering the phones and not letting their children out during daytime hours. So that's why I say I appreciate your question because there's a reason to have caution.

homeschooling was underground. You did it and you were considered awkward and weird because you wanted to be in control of your children's education. Well, we know since 1994, Texas Supreme Court decision, the case was called Arlington versus Leaper, and that made it to where homeschooling became legal. Nine Texas Supreme Court judges unanimously decided that one, homeschooling should have never been illegal, and then two,

Now homeschooling is legal. So last year in 2025, the Texas Homeschool Coalition, we took that Texas Supreme Court decision. I see you, Rachel. You said you were one of those early 90s homeschool kids. Me too. Last year during the legislative session, Texas Homeschool Coalition took that case from the 1994 and we codified it into state law. And it basically says there's no state agency

Anita Scott (37:23.981)

government agency, entity or organization who can unanimously decide to micromanage or create government interference into homeschooling. And we did that because with the passing of the school choice legislation, with the passing of Senate Bill 2, we know that there are families who are saying, I homeschool, we've been homeschooling for forever and we're just trying to make sure no one will come knock on our door and say, how many hours a day are you homeschooling?

What's the name of your curriculum? How many children are you homeschooling? How many are in your house? How many go to this co-op? So that bill that was passed was called House Bill 2674, the Homeschool Freedom Act. And it was filed and authored by Representative David Cook out of the Mansfield area. And I share all of that with you because I want you to know that I live in Austin when the legislative session is happening. And I'm at the Capitol every day.

and I testify in the committees for that bill to pass to make sure there are no strings attached. So we're talking about, there's no testing requirement for homeschoolers unless you decide to go to

an accredited private school. And that's because accredited private schools already have it in place where you do take a nationally normed reference test. But we held the line for the homeschool community that says, if you continue to homeschool, there's no testing requirement.

You don't submit the name of your curriculum to the state government or the comptroller's office. You don't have to submit how many hours a day you homeschool. And that's a part of why the Texas Homeschool Coalition exists is to make sure we don't just create freedoms, but we defend the freedoms. And so with that, I'll pass it over to any member of the TEFA team who says, you're welcome, Lizeth, thank you. I'll pass it over to...

the team in case you want to add anything else, you know, yes.

Travis Pillow (39:20.632)

So I want to speak a little bit to some of the experiences that I've seen in other states where I've worked and kind of how that experience comes into Texas, which is we do see, frankly, a debate in the homeschool community where some people say they don't, don't, they're very skeptical of these programs and worried about potential entanglement with the government or with public funding and what strings might come attached over time. And there are other people who say these are great resources that make homeschooling accessible for more.

families and part of what Texas has done to kind of try to address some of those tensions is to basically put some really strong guardrails and there are now 20 states with programs like this in place in one form or fashion. Of all the ones that I've looked at, Texas has some of the strongest safeguards that I've seen anywhere and I think that's in part due to the feedback of Anita and others who have been advocating that basically say that participating in this program

is not a government, like cannot be treated like a government benefit and it cannot become a Trojan horse that leads to any increased regulation of teaching and learning in a lot of different ways. And I put some of that language from the legislation in the chat. But so there are some pretty clear guardrails that are designed to make sure that by participating in this program, you're not giving up any of your education freedom.

Anita Scott (40:48.717)

I appreciate you sharing that Travis and I'm looking in the comments and so many of you are saying thank you for that history, thank you for that. And I just, have to stamp your caution. That is why a team, we moved to Austin every legislative session. I also want you all to know, similar to what Travis just said, Texas is one of the freest states to homeschool. And people actually leave other states to come to Texas to homeschool. And so that is why I'm

I'm at the Capitol every day. I saw someone drop in some language. I'm at the Capitol every day. And I'll also share this to the chairman of the House Education Committee and the chairman of the Senate Education Committee, where you're frequently, when I say we, meaning

the Texas Homeschool Coalition, frequently invited to the table to look over the language to make sure that how it impacts the homeschool community is done in a positive way.

Because again, we're not just creating opportunities for the homeschool communities, we're defending the freedoms that you all have been experiencing since 1994. And so when something comes across our desk, comes across our headline, build language that will not support the homeschool family, we're frequently invited to the table. We're on Zoom calls, we're on video, we're making a phone call, we're there in person to make sure this helps you offset the cost. And it doesn't, as Travis said,

introduce a Trojan horse that begins to demand. And so that's why we filed the Homeschool Freedom Act because now we can say we have the Texas Supreme Court decision from 1994 and now we have the law that says there's no agency or government entity that can unilaterally make a decision that removes your freedoms. So that being said, anyone else want to comment on that before I ask another question?

All right, let's see. Nathan, if you are good to feature a question, I think we can do that.

Anita Scott (42:58.767)

Here's a question for the team. What if we receive funds for a private school but don't get accepted to any of the private schools we selected? Can we then try applying to private schools we didn't list?

Travis Pillow (43:14.05)

So this speaks to the school selection process where you will be able to update that school selection up until this summer. In addition to, yes, once you are not limited to, as long as the school is participating, you will be able to update that school selection at any time. We will also develop procedures that will allow you to change schools mid-year.

because we know that part of the goal of this program is to put families in the driver's seat and be able to make those informed decisions. It is also the case that if you choose a new school that is not an accredited participating private school, that could affect the funding amount that you qualify to receive, or you could get dropped down to that \$2,000 amount if the new school you select is not accredited or is not participating in

Anita Scott (44:10.785)

Thank you. Nathan, all right, I see another question. Just to clarify, I think I heard you say that children must have an IEP and attend an accredited private school in order to receive additional funding up to 30K. Otherwise, only 2K is available to the homeschool community.

Daniel Warner (44:33.062)

That's it.

Anita Scott (44:36.537)

So whoever submitted that question, you are accurate.

Anita Scott (44:42.961)

Thumbs up. Okay. Is there an approved list for homeschool families for curriculum and co-ops?

Daniel Warner (44:51.026)

So yeah, maybe you want me to take this one Travis so far? Yeah. So, you know, our team has been in constant communication with Anita, I think going back, you know, for a few months now. And so basically once this goes live, we will have a whole curated marketplace with curriculum, with instructional materials, with supplies, with electronics, kind of think of it like an Amazon or an Etsy kind of thing.

and families will be able to select any and all that's on there. And we will work, and if you have some specific ones that you'd like on there, please always reach out to us or have the vendor reach out to us saying, we want you to be on the platform or have Anita reach out to us. And we will, you do our best to have that vendor fill out an application. I think that we've got a pretty good starting space. Anita, I think you spoke to my colleague Ross on what's most used in this space.

But just want to remind everyone that all the curriculum must be bought through the Odyssey portal. And so there are no reimbursements in the program. Most importantly, want to be very clear. So don't want families paying out of pocket and then expecting an ACH transfer or a Venmo request from the state, something like that. And so just know that all your digital balance will be in the Odyssey platform.

and it will be specifically curated. Also, you do this in other states and it's specific for each state. So we do have experience dealing with homeschool communities in other states. So it's a pretty good baseline on what homeschool families like. But again, if you like a specific curriculum, please reach out to our support team or Anita or me and we'll get in contact with that vendor and see if they want to participate in the.

Anita Scott (46:33.553)

So I'm going to pull out two questions from what you just said, Daniel, before Nathan serves up another question. To be clear, are you saying that families have to purchase curriculum through the portal? They can't purchase it outside the portal and hope for a reimbursement? Okay.

Daniel Warner (46:50.854)

That's correct. are no per the law, per Senate bill two per statute, there are no reimbursements allowed in the program.

Anita Scott (46:54.416)

Yes.

Anita Scott (46:59.673)

What if they already have their own personal Amazon account?

Daniel Warner (47:02.994)

So don't use that and everything has to be done through the portal. That's how we track every dollar spent. And then if you, and again, if you, won't even, the way that we make it work, when we'll have a whole demo on this, when it goes live, you buy everything to the portal. So it's not like you click and you go outside and you have to deal with that and the shipping. We have it all preloaded on your application. So once you hit submit and once you hit pay, and then the invoice comes through to us.

Anita Scott (47:21.051)

Mm.

Daniel Warner (47:31.012)

we go ahead and build that account for you. So it's really not a lot to do on your end and you kind of just shop around like you're on an Amazon like software and we fulfill that directly to your house or digital subscription or technology or anything like that.

Anita Scott (47:46.107)

Got it, awesome. And then can funds be, this was a question I saw in the chat, can funds be used for sports?

Daniel Warner (47:57.724)

Travis, you wanna take that one?

Travis Pillow (47:59.211)

Sure, the short answer to that question is yes. Then, you know, sports can take different forms. So for example, there might be some equipment that will be eligible as a school supply. There might be, you know, some people who offer, you know, athletic programs that would qualify as enrichment. So, you know, there are some nuances as to how it qualifies. But then the other thing is

If you have a provider, a specific provider that's part of your homeschooling arrangement that is basically your version of PE, you can encourage them to apply. The application for them to join the program will be available in the next few weeks. You can encourage them to apply and we can work with them to determine what of their offerings are gonna be eligible to participate in the program.

Anita Scott (48:51.223)

So Travis, you said something, and I think I heard you say it too, Daniel. So for families who are already enjoying the curriculum provider that they have, the vendor that they have, you're encouraging them to ask that vendor to be a part of the vendor list so that they can see their vendor on the portal. Is that accurate?

Daniel Warner (49:11.142)

Yeah, I mean, we already have them on there. But again, as these vendors come onboarded and Travis Mench showed that School Finder tool and you see all those little different toggles, they'll be populated there as those offerings become online and approved. Again, it takes a little more legwork on our end because we manually review them to make sure they are who they say they are and just kind of vet them a little bit to ensure that they're academic in nature.

Anita Scott (49:34.395)

Mm-hmm.

Daniel Warner (49:40.646)

and things like that and a few little, you know, business registration, things that are required by law and the program rules. So we do that on the front end and then once they get approved, they kind of go through all their offerings and one might be a third grade math class, a fourth grade math class, or eighth grade ELA, or these kind of books, things like that. And so it's pretty great.

Anita Scott (50:01.778)

Thank you. One of the pre-submitted questions I realized I didn't read, so if you're on here, I'm coming to you now. This question says, are there any curriculum restrictions or state approval restrictions when it comes to the vendors that can reach out to you all to be a part of the vendor list?

Daniel Warner (50:22.14)

Travis, correct me if wrong, but generally no. It's a pretty wide range of instructional materials. We will vet them to make sure that things that should be school-aged children reading, or at least appropriate, if you will, perhaps there might be something that mature adults should not have yet of that offering on the platform, but that's something that the CPA team and our team will kind of go back and forth and say,

and have the ability to have a conversation and make that determination. For most, generally speaking, there are really no restrictions on, no tics alignment, nothing like that, things that are true in nature to homeschooling families.

Anita Scott (51:06.915)

And that's great. That's great. Thank you. And we have someone about to feature another question. Yes, here it is right here. We've used Classical Conversations for years. Will my local campus director need to apply to the program as a vendor in order for me to use TEFA to pay tuition?

Daniel Warner (51:25.916)

So I'm not familiar with that vendor. Is that like an instruction materials? Is that an online school? Okay. Yeah, so it's a curriculum. They would just go onto that vendor application, kind of explain

what they do, history of the company, include a link of their program basically. We look at that on the back end, then we get them onboarded pretty quickly after that.

Anita Scott (51:31.385)

Mm-hmm. Yes, it's a curriculum. Yeah.

Anita Scott (51:45.965)

Awesome, thank you. All right, do we have another? If my child is approved for the 2000 homeschool fund and I end up needing to put them in public school later in the year, what happens?

Travis Pillow (51:59.221)

So once you leave the program for homeschool, you will no longer be eligible for the program. And so at that point, you will not receive additional funding. So the funding will be dispersed kind of in installments. The first one will be in July, where you'll get about 25 % of your total funding. Then there'll be another funding round in October, and then at least one more funding round in the spring.

And so if between one of those funding rounds you decide to return to public school, we expect that there will be lots of families who might want to move back and forth. I mean, the goal is families are going to be in the driver's seat. But once that happens, you will not receive additional funding installments.

Anita Scott (52:45.155)

What if after the school year ends, I'm sorry, what if, yeah, after the school year ends, there's money left over in a family's account? Is it to go back to the state? Does it roll over?

Travis Pillow (52:56.874)

It does roll over, so you will be able to, I mean, it's called an education savings account. And so if you economize in one year, you know, to make a big investment, you know, it's very common, for example, that high school programming could be more expensive than some of the early childhood programming. And so if you want to start planning ahead and reserving up that funding to pay for more expensive programming or post-secondary career education, et cetera, when your child is older.

You can plan ahead, roll those dollars over. It is. Sorry, I had another point I wanted to make on that and I lost my train of thought.

Daniel Warner (53:37.168)

I would just, I was just gonna add Travis to that. Let's say you are banking the money and then you decide to leave the program or go into public school, the money goes back to the state. So just be cognizant, you know, if you're, you know, if there's any kind of going back into the public school setting, that account gets wiped and it goes back to the general fund to fund future students.

Travis Pillow (53:56.257)

Yeah, and that actually reminds me of my point. So it's that once you're in, you're in. So it's not like once you're in, you have to reapply and there's any chance that you might not get it in future years. can, as long as you remain in the program, your child remains eligible. You haven't gone to public school or anything like that. You will once you're in, you're in and you don't have to re-qualify over and over. So you will be able to plan ahead and reserve those dollars if that's what makes sense for your child's long-term planning.

Anita Scott (54:24.207)

That makes sense. That makes sense. And there's a question from someone who asked, as a homeschool parent, when we were filling out the application, do we input the child's grade based on their age in accordance with public school standards or based on their grade according to how they have been homeschooling? And let me know if that question makes sense. Okay.

Travis Pillow (54:49.558)

So I want to clarify, are you basically saying like my child is say a six year old, but they read on a third grade level, something like that. Do I say that they're a third grader or do I say that they're a kindergarten?

Anita Scott (55:00.217)

Mm-hmm, yes.

Anita Scott (55:04.401)

Yeah, like yeah, they're a third grader. If they went to a public school, they'd be a third grader, but they're homeschooling and so they know they're fifth grade in all subjects.

Travis Pillow (55:13.236)

in general

Daniel Warner (55:13.274)

Yeah, so the application won't lock you in. So it won't say this age is required to do this. But for the benefit of if you're selecting online private provider, if you're say you're eight years old, but you're really a third grader on third grade level, but you're really operating at a fifth grade level, go ahead and enter that fifth grade level because that might give you more options that some schools might offer fifth, that kind of thing, if that makes sense. Does that answer the question?

Anita Scott (55:40.966)

Think so? Yes. Because you talked about options and the flexibility for it. Okay, here's another question. You got thumbs up on that one, Daniel. Good job. Here's another question. And I know the answer, but I appreciate these questions that are coming in because it's just going to help families make the best informed decision for their families. This question says, if one of my students are planning to go to public school next year, do I apply as public school?

Travis Pillow (56:09.812)

So if a child who is going to be attending public school is not going to be eligible for this program, we do not allow dual funding. So basically you can either choose to get funded through the TEFA program or you can get funded through the public education funding for the state. If you have, now many families will have probably multiple children in multiple different education settings. And that is very much that is very much

allowed. And so, and I think we, for those cases, you would only apply for the students that you want to participate in the TEFA funding.

Anita Scott (56:48.933)

And that leads to a follow-up question I think I have. have is 157. So we maybe can get two more questions in. And I see you Sue. See your question is, can this funding be used for dual credit class tuition from community colleges? The team is saying yes.

Travis Pillow (57:04.887)

Yes.

Daniel Warner (57:05.668)

Yes, the answer is yes, but I would encourage that school to participate as a marketplace provider. So that's the only way, again, that funds can be transferred or funds can be used for dual credit.

Anita Scott (57:19.255)

Awesome. And then with large larger families, do they have to reapply every year? For not even larger families, but for families in general, what is it? What is the reapplication process looks like?

Daniel Warner (57:31.898)

It's almost like an attestation kind of thing. It's like a check mark. You don't have to reapply. Not the same, you know, eight minute video I showed. It was big. Do you plan on enrolling in the program next year? Yes. Great. We got you for next year.

Anita Scott (57:43.991)

Awesome. And what if a whole family applies? Is there any likelihood that four get in the program, two don't?

Daniel Warner (57:52.882)

We keep all the families together. So if one gets in and priority one and the other, know, someone has a child with a disability and the rest kind of fall into that, you other category, all the kids are accepted together.

Travis Pillow (58:06.595)

So, yeah, so the student who has the best, the highest priority in the lottery basically will bring all their siblings in with them if they're chosen in the lottery. The one nuance I would put on this is that if, for example, one of your students, if your student, if your children, some of your children are different ages and one of them, for example, might be pre-K, there are more stringent eligibility criteria for pre-K than for K through 12. So,

If you're K through 12, all your students will come in together. But for pre-K or students who are not yet eligible for K through 12 education, there are some stricter eligibility requirements.

Anita Scott (58:46.063)

And Travis, you spoke to this earlier. The whole purpose of the program is for parents to have flexibility, freedom, options. What if a parent is in the program and then they leave the program? And then what if they want to come back to the program? Are they like on some tally list of, aha, you were in the program and then you left and you're trying to come back? Like, what kind of concerns or are there concerns or is it like, no, please come back to the program?

Lindsay Baerwald (59:14.663)

You'll just be lowest priority. Yes, you'll have to reapply, but you'll be in the lowest priority for the year two and beyond if you opt out and try to come back in.

Travis Pillow (59:14.772)

Yet you will have to reapply.

Anita Scott (59:17.744)

Okay.

Anita Scott (59:26.385)

Thank you. Thank you, Lindsay. Can funding be, this is the last question. I'm going to, there are two parts. Can funding be used for GED prep? Yes or no?

Travis Pillow (59:40.056)

As long as the provider is able to get approved as a vendor on the Odyssey Marketplace, then that would qualify as a tutoring or teaching service.

Anita Scott (59:49.603)

Awesome. And then final question is, does a music teacher or math tutor need a teaching certificate to be a vendor?

Travis Pillow (01:00:01.165)

So for tutoring or teaching services, there are credential requirements. You don't necessarily need a teaching certificate. There are other avenues. So for example, if you have previously been employed at a private school or you're a retired educator, there are other sort of mechanisms to get qualified. But there are those credentialing or sort of work history requirements for tutoring and teaching services, including in subjects such as.

Anita Scott (01:00:33.873)

Thank you so much. Wherever you are, just please give a round of applause for Travis, for Daniel, for Lindsay, for setting aside this time to answer the questions in real time. I also just want you to know that this is why we exist. We exist to help you be informed. We exist.

so that you can say, have all these questions, but where will I ask them? And I see you guys are getting hearts, you're getting applauses. I don't think I got that many back in December when I did this. So clearly you all are the dream team. I'm seeing all these thank yous pop up. Texas Home School Coalition, this is why we're here. This is why that Texas Supreme Court decision happened in 1994, because Tim Lambert, his family, the Texas Home School Coalition, the attorney Shelby Sharpe said,

enough is enough, it needs to be legal. And now, just think, 40 years later, you have opportunity for more options, freedom, and flexibility. So scan this QR code, feel free to join today so that you can continue to receive the information that you need. When you registered for this webinar, you now will receive access to this webinar. If you're member, you'll have access to it for the rest of the time you're a member. But if you registered for this, then you will receive it. We're so excited.

I would just want to thank Travis. Thank you so much. Daniel, thank you so much. Lindsay, thank you so much. We are so grateful for your time today. For everyone who registered and attended, thank you so much for what you're doing to help keep Texas families free.