MEMORIAL
LUTHERAN SCHOOL
Classical Education

Texas Education Freedom Accounts (TEFA)

Frequently Asked Questions for Families

Memorial Lutheran School is a TEFA-approved school. This guide answers the questions families ask most often. Program details are set by the State of Texas and are subject to change; please confirm current information at educationfreedom.texas.gov.

About TEFA

1. What is TEFA?

Texas Education Freedom Accounts (TEFA) is a state-funded education savings account program created by Senate Bill 2 in 2025, with $1 billion in initial funding. Approved families can use the funds for private school tuition and other approved education expenses. The program is run by the Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts, and Odyssey manages the family portal and accounts.

2. Does Memorial Lutheran School accept TEFA?

Yes. Memorial Lutheran School is a TEFA-approved school. Approved families may use TEFA funds toward tuition.

3. Who is eligible?

A child may be eligible if they:

- Are a U.S. citizen or lawfully present in the United States;
- Live in Texas, with a parent or guardian who is a Texas resident; and
- Are eligible to attend a Texas public school or charter school, or a public pre-K or kindergarten program.

There is no income limit that keeps a family from applying. Household income is used only to set priority when there are more applicants than available funding.

4. Can TEFA be used for Infant Care, Twos, Preschool, or Pre-K?

Infant Care and Twos: No. TEFA eligibility starts at pre-K age, so our infant and two-year-old programs are not covered.

Preschool (3-year-olds) and Pre-K (4-year-olds)): Only if the child meets the state's free pre-K requirements. Examples include a child who is learning English, qualifies for free or reduced-

price lunch, is from a military family, has been in foster care, or has a parent who teaches in a public school. Kindergarten through 12th grade students follow the standard eligibility rules.

Funding

5. How much funding does a student receive?

Award amounts for the 2026–27 school year:

Student situation	Annual award (2026–27)
Participating private school student (incl. pre-K/K)	$10,474
Private school student with a current IEP on file with TEA	Up to $30,000 (based on the IEP; most receive less)
Homeschool / other setting	$2,000

*Amounts are set by the state each year and may change for 2027–28.

6. My child has an IEP or a 504 plan. Does that change anything?

Extra funding (up to $30,000) depends on an Individualized Education Program (IEP) on file with the Texas Education Agency from the 2023–24 school year or later. The state's published guidance ties extra funding to an IEP only. A 504 plan is not listed as qualifying for extra funding. Please send MLS copies of any current IEP or 504 plan so we can plan for your child's support if applicable. MLS has limited resources for IEP Accommodations and will be reviewed on a case by case basis.

7. Will TEFA cover the full cost of tuition?

TEFA pays up to your child's award amount. Any tuition and fees above the award are the family's responsibility. Under state guidelines, schools may not charge TEFA students different tuition or fees, and families keep any discounts they already qualify for, such as sibling or parishioner discounts. **Application and enrollment fees for MLS are NOT covered by TEFA.**

8. When are funds released?

For private school students in 2026–27, the state released funds in installments:

Date	Amount released
July 1, 2026	First 25% of the award
October 1, 2026	Second 25% of the award
February 1, 2027	Remaining 50% of the award

Students awarded later in the year (for example, from the waitlist) may receive a prorated amount. The full award does not arrive at once, so please plan for timing when you set up your MLS tuition payment plan.

9. How is tuition paid? Will I receive a check?

No. TEFA funds stay in your child's account and are paid through the Odyssey portal. Funds are not deposited into a family's bank account, and TEFA purchases cannot be paid out of pocket and then reimbursed.

10. Is TEFA funding taxable income?

No. Under the program's rules, transfers into a student's TEFA account are not considered taxable income. Consult your tax advisor for guidance specific to your family.

11. Can TEFA be combined with MLS financial aid?

State guidelines allow schools to adjust financial aid based on a family's circumstances, including TEFA funding. MLS need-based tuition assistance is a separate application and available on MLS's website.

Applying

12. How and when do we apply?

Parents or legal guardians apply directly to the state at educationfreedom.texas.gov. The school cannot apply for you. The 2026–27 application window ran from February 4 to March 31, 2026. The state has not yet announced dates for 2027–28. Families can join the 2027–28 Interest List on the TEFA website to get updates.

13. What documents will we need?

- A complete Form 1040 federal tax return (pay stubs and W-2s were not accepted in the first year)
- Proof of Texas residency, such as a Texas driver's license, state ID, utility bill, lease, or mortgage statement
- Proof of citizenship or lawful presence if the state cannot verify it automatically, such as a birth certificate

14. Is it first come, first served?

No. Applying early or late in the window does not change your chances. If more applicants apply than funding is available, the state uses priority groups and a lottery. In the first year, children with a disability came first (household income at or below 500% of the Federal Poverty Level), followed by income-based groups. For example, 200% of the Federal Poverty Level is

$66,000 and 500% is $165,000 for a family of four. Starting in year two, siblings of current participants get priority.

15. Do we have to reapply every year?

No. Students in good standing stay in the program automatically. Families just need to confirm each year that they want to continue.

16. What if my child is on the waitlist?

Waitlisted students may receive an award if other families decline or leave the program. Check your Odyssey portal often for updates. Awards made later in the year may be prorated.

TEFA and MLS Admissions

17. Does a TEFA award mean my child is admitted to MLS?

No. TEFA and admission are separate. Your child must still complete the full MLS admissions process, including the application, required records, family interview and school tour, Shadow day and assessment, and the FACTS enrollment contract.

18. We received a TEFA award. What are our next steps with MLS?

1. Email Andrea Saenz, Director of Admissions, at asaenz@mlchouston.org to let the Admissions Office know you are interested in MLS.
2. Attach a copy of your TEFA award letter.
3. Attach copies of any current IEPs or 504 Accommodation Plans for each child who has one.
4. Include each child's name and the grade they will enter in the fall.
5. In your Odyssey portal, accept the award and select Memorial Lutheran School. MLS will then confirm enrollment through the portal.

Once we receive your information, Mrs. Saenz will reach out with next steps.

19. Should we wait for our TEFA award before applying to MLS?

No. Start both processes at the same time. TEFA and MLS admissions run on separate tracks with separate timelines, and a TEFA award does not hold a seat at MLS. Beginning your MLS application as soon as our application season opens keeps your family ready on both sides.

20. We are enrolled at another private school. Can we switch to MLS mid-year and bring TEFA funds with us?

Yes. TEFA students may change approved schools at any time during the program year. In your Odyssey portal, use the "Change School" option to select Memorial Lutheran School, and future quarterly payments will be redirected to MLS. Awards are prorated based on timing. Your child must still complete the full MLS admissions process, and MLS must confirm the enrollment in the portal.

21. What happens if we withdraw from MLS during the year?

Any eligible refund of TEFA-paid tuition goes back to your child's TEFA account, not to the family. If the account closes, the remaining money returns to the state. Students cannot be enrolled in a Texas public or charter school while in TEFA.

22. Who do I contact with questions?

- **TEFA program, portal, or appeals:** Odyssey at help.tx@withodyssey.com or educationfreedom.texas.gov
- **MLS Admissions:** Andrea Saenz, Director of Admissions, asaenz@mlchouston.org, 713-782-4022
- **TEFA enrollment at MLS:** Steve Rasmussen, srasmussen@mlchouston.org and/or Diana Christman, dchristman@mlchouston.org