

Answers To Frequently Asked Questions About Education Allowances

. Q - What expenses are allowable for a child with special needs (DSSR 276.8)?

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A - A Special Needs Education Allowance is available for children who are covered under Public Law 105-17, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Once eligibility is established by a competent education or medical authority (for Department of State employees MED/ECS), the same allowable expenses specified under DSSR 277 apply equally to the special needs child unless DSSR 276.8 provides otherwise. To ensure eligibility, parents should work closely with the Department of State's Office of Medical Services Employee Consultation Service (M/MED/ECS), which deals extensively with such cases. (Other agency employees should consult their agency's Medical Office.) Eligible children are covered by this special needs allowance from birth to the 21st birthday.

Items allowed must be clearly called for by an established Individual Education Plan (IEP) or Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP) rather than recommended by the school or parent as desirable. In lieu of the post's established at-post or away-from-post education allowance, the post's authorizing officer may authorize reimbursement for allowable expenses up to the maximum rate provided in DSSR 274.12c for the method chosen (currently USD 26,800 for school-at-post plus USD 3,000 for supplementary instruction and USD 55,350 for school away-from-post). Home study costs, including tutoring, may be reimbursed up to USD 26,800 plus 3,000 for supplementary instruction. Medical treatment, including psychiatric care, is not an allowable expense under the allowance. However, periodic diagnostic testing as required by the school or a medical/education authority is allowable. Travel, accompanied by one family member, to the nearest site where this testing can be done is also allowable, per DSSR 276.8.

For students planning to use the school away-from-post allowance, travel from the foreign post to the school for a mandatory interview may be allowable as provided in DSSR 276.8. Expenses itemized in DSSR 277 are allowable, based on the selected method of education (At post, Away from Post or Home Study/Private Instruction). DSSR 276.8c lists additional allowable and non-allowable expenses and services.

In exceptional circumstances, when costs of services provided for in the IEP/IFSP exceed the maximum rate, the head of agency (DSSR 040e) may authorize reimbursement up to an additional fifty percent for allowable expenses on a post-audit basis, as explained in DSSR 276.81. State Department employees must contact M/MED/ECS for approval of additional expenses above the maximum rate.