

Fiction

There's No Accountability in Arizona's ESA Program

"Arizona's universal ESA voucher program stands out as both the most expansive and least accountable nationwide, lacking any financial oversight, academic accountability, or student safety."^[xxiii]

Key Facts

- **Transparency:** Program regulators, Arizona state policymakers, and the public know far more about the details of ESA-related transaction activity than they do for similar programs (or for the public school program).
- The Department of Education tracks and pre-approves individual transactions using ESA funds; **there is no equivalent system in place for other K-12 money.**
- **Reporting:** The Department regularly reports on specific expenditure activity, audit and performance review results, and other program details to the Legislature and State Board of Education. There is no equivalent regular reporting by the Department of expenditures by public schools.^[xxiv]
- **Accountability:** Parents and students are required by law to use ESA funds for academic purposes – including at least “a portion” of the monies on reading, grammar, math, social studies and science. Private schools are accredited and regulated by various bodies. Though newer and maturing, micro school standards and certifications are developing through organizations like the National Microschooling Center and National County for MicroSchool Education. School-choice parents are discerning in their educational choices.^[xxv]
- **Safety:** There is no evidence that private- or home-schooled students are less safe than traditional District public school students. In fact, research shows that students in private schools enjoy a broadly safer environment than traditional public school students.^[xxvi]
- **Efficiency:** Because of aggressive oversight by state regulators, it takes 22 days to approve any transaction in the ESA program.

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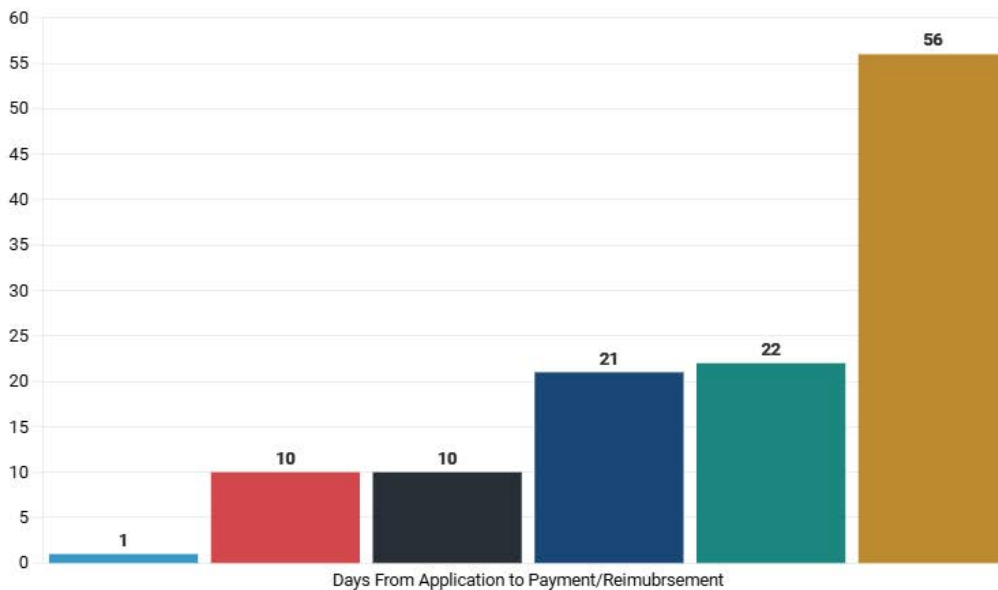
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Key Facts Continued

Average Payment & Reimbursement Times

In general, comparable programs provide refunds or payments to taxpayers faster than the ESA program - which can take from 12 to 29 days.

■ SNAP ■ Unemployment Insurance Benefits ■ Medicaid Prior Authorization ■ Federal Income Tax Refunds ■ ESA Reimbursements (FY2024 Avg.)
■ State Income Tax Refunds



Source: Dept of Revenue, Dept of Economic Security, Dept of Education • ESA reimbursement times are sourced from the Dept. of Education's two most recent ESA Quarterly Reports. The Q4 value is a weighted average of reimbursed and rejected processing times.

B O T T O M L I N E

While it is probably true that the Arizona ESA program is the most expansive in the country, the program is far more accountable and transparent than comparable programs. In fact, the program is overburdened – excessive oversight hampers the efficiency function of Arizona's ESA program (and not the other way around).