

The Massachusetts Office of Student Financial Assistance



ACTION LETTER

Action Letter #3
April 2014

2013-2014 PROGRAMS GUIDELINES UPDATES

Dear Colleague:

The Massachusetts Department of Higher Education (DHE) wants to bring to the attention of Massachusetts public institutions the availability of the Children of Fallen Service Member Waiver Program. Attached are guidelines for the Waiver program that were approved by the DHE in November 2010 and have been effective as of award year 2010-2011.

Please do not hesitate to contact the Massachusetts Office of Student Financial Assistance at 617.391.6070 if you have any questions.

Thank you.

Massachusetts Office of Student Financial Assistance

Background

The Children of Fallen Service Members Waiver Program (CFSMW) was authorized by the Massachusetts Legislature as part of the Fiscal Year 2011 budget. The program provides financial assistance to children of deceased members of the armed forces of the United States or Massachusetts National Guard who lost their life on or after January 1, 1989, while engaged in hostilities or military conflicts outside the United States.

The CFSW provides tuition and fee waivers to help full or part-time students meet the cost of attending college, without the burden of student loans. A student may receive such waivers for up to 130 undergraduate credits towards a bachelor's degree at a Massachusetts public college or university. Students who enroll full-time may also receive waivers for actual room and board charges while living on campus. To qualify for the CFSMW, an eligible student must provide proof that their parent was (and remained) a legal resident of Massachusetts at the time of enlistment and while called to active duty, lost his or her life as a result of injuries sustained while serving outside the United States in an armed conflict or hostility while deployed in direct support of military activity in a zone of armed conflict.

The Children of Fallen Service Member Waiver Program was authorized by the Massachusetts Legislature without an appropriation in the FY 2011 state budget. As such, institutions are required to support the cost of such waivers, and may include the awarding of other financial aid resources to cover the cost of fees and housing for students who are enrolled full-time and living in a campus residential facility. Data is not currently available to project the total cost of this program. Based on other federal programs currently supporting spouses and dependents of Massachusetts residents who were members of the armed forces and died in the line of duty, however, it is estimated that fewer than 100 students will be eligible for this program in its initial year.

Students applying for the program will be required to complete a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). All applicable need and merit based scholarships and grants would be applied to the student's charges before the Children of Fallen Service Member Waiver is awarded. Public colleges will be required to waive all remaining charges associated with undergraduate tuition, fees and campus based housing in accordance with program procedures. The total of all aid received, in combination with the CFSMW, cannot be greater than the student's Title IV Cost of Attendance.

**COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS
CHILDREN OF FALLEN SERVICE MEMBER WAIVER PROGRAM**

DEFINITIONS:

INSTITUTION:

An institution within the system of public institutions of higher education as identified in Section 5 of Chapter 15A of the Massachusetts General Laws.

ELIGIBLE PROGRAM:

Any two-year or four-year undergraduate (bachelors) degree offered by an eligible institution at a public college or university that is part of an undergraduate degree program.

ELIGIBLE STUDENT:

A student enrolled full or part time in an undergraduate degree program and meeting the following requirements:

- a) a permanent legal resident of Massachusetts for at least one year
- b) has not previously received a prior bachelor's degree, or its equivalent, from a public or private college or university of higher education
- c) has completed the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)
- d) is not in default of any federal or state educational loan for attendance at an institution or owe a refund for any previous financial aid received
- e) is a surviving child of a parent who was an active and full-time member of the armed forces or the United States or National Guard who:
 1. died as a result of injuries sustained during active and full-time military service, occurring after 1989 while outside the United States in an armed conflict or hostility; or
 2. died while deployed in direct support of military activity in a zone of armed conflict or hostility, outside the United States, occurring on or after January 1, 1989 while outside the United States
 3. was a resident of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts at the time of entry and remained a Massachusetts resident throughout full-time military service.

- f) has presented to the institution, documentation of eligibility for this program, as specified
- g) is in compliance with applicable law regarding Selective Service
- h) maintains Satisfactory Academic Progress, according to institutional standards, while pursuing the undergraduate degree

DETERMINATION OF ELIGIBILITY:

The following documents must be presented by the student as proof of eligibility for the Children of Fallen Service Member Waiver:

1. Department of Defense form DD 1300 Report of Casualty; and/or
2. Standard Form 93 (SF93) listing the recipient as a child of a service member killed on active duty

STUDENT AWARD VALUE:

- a) Waivers awarded under this program for an academic term of study must cover the total cost of tuition and fees. The institution must also provide room and board for any eligible student enrolled full-time and living in an on campus residential facility. Children of Fallen Service Members are to be awarded only after available financial aid from all other sources, excluding loans, have been considered.
- b) All aid awarded under this program, in combination with other state, federal or institutional merit and/or need-based aid, may not exceed the recipient's cost of attendance for any academic period of study
- c) Students qualifying for the Fallen Service Member Waiver must be awarded the full value of billed tuition and fees consistent with these guidelines
- d) A student may not receive a waiver of tuition and fees for more than 130 undergraduate credits earned in pursuit of a bachelor degree, which shall include those credits earned to complete an associate degree.

PARTICIPATION AGREEMENT:

All institutions must file a State Financial Aid Participation Agreement to be maintained on file in the Office of Student Financial Assistance.

AUDIT REQUIREMENTS:

- a) The Commissioner shall require each institution to complete an annual report to the Department of Higher Education which details recipient data for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Children of Fallen Service Member Waiver Program

- b) All financial books, records and documents pertaining to this program shall at all times be open to inspection, review and audit by the Commissioner, the State Auditor or their authorized representatives who shall have access to the premises whenever such books, records and documents are located. The institution shall retain such financial books, records and documents for seven years. An institution may retain such records for a period of five years if approval is received from the Records Conservation Board in accordance with General Laws, Chapter 30, Section 42.