

# The Massachusetts Office of Student Financial Assistance



## ***ACTION LETTER***

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Action Letter #3  
December 2005

### **2005-2006 PROGRAMS GUIDELINES UPDATES**

Dear Colleague:

This Action Letter publishes guidelines for the following two new financial aid programs:

- 1. Early Childhood Educators' Scholarship Program**
- 2. One Family Inc. Scholarship Program**

In addition, this Action Letter also provides revised guidelines for the **Paraprofessional Teacher Preparation Grant Program**. Please note that the Paraprofessional Teacher Preparation Grant Program is now available at both Massachusetts public and independent colleges/universities.

Lastly, the Massachusetts Board of Higher Education, at its November 17, 2005 meeting, approved a motion that permits the awarding of the **Commonwealth Hurricane Katrina Tuition Waiver** for the spring 2006 semester and, thereby, amending Section U of the Tuition Waiver Program Guidelines. Revised Commonwealth Hurricane Katrina Tuition Waiver guidelines are also attached.

These guidelines and/or amendments, as described in the pages that follow, are effective with the academic year **2005-2006**.

Please do not hesitate to contact the Massachusetts Office of Student Financial Assistance at 617.727.9420, if you have any questions or need further clarifications.

Massachusetts Office of Student Financial Assistance

## **I. EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATOR'S SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM**

### **Background Information**

The Early Childhood Educators' Scholarship Program was funded as a pilot initiative by the Massachusetts Legislature for the purpose of increasing the quality and availability of teachers and care providers to work with young children in inclusive settings including infant/toddler, preschool and child care programs. The scholarship program is designed to provide financial assistance for currently employed early childhood educators and providers who enroll in associate's, bachelor's and master's degree programs in Early Childhood Educators' or related programs.

Acting jointly with the Department of Early Education and Care, the Board of Higher Education is charged by the Massachusetts Legislature with developing guidelines and application criteria for the administration of the Early Childhood Educators Scholarship Program. The Board of Higher Education recognizes the significance of this program in promoting higher education and degree completion as a means of assisting the Commonwealth in bringing highly qualified teachers and providers into the developmental learning environments to provide educational services and care for children.

The Early Childhood Educators' Scholarship will provide much-needed financial assistance to employed instructors and providers who are encouraged to matriculate in degree programs at the associate's, bachelor's or master's level. This scholarship will facilitate a pathway for educators and providers who are financially unable to afford the cost of college tuition due to their overall low-income levels.

**COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS  
EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATORS' SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM**

**DEFINITIONS**

**INSTITUTION:**

Any regionally accredited public or independent (private) college or university in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts offering an Early Childhood Education program of study or program in a related field.

**ELIGIBLE PROGRAM:**

An undergraduate associate's, bachelor's or master's degree program offered by an eligible institution in either Early Childhood Education (infancy through pre-school) or a related field.

**ELIGIBLE STUDENT:**

A matriculated undergraduate student enrolled full- or part-time in an eligible program meeting the following requirements:

- a) Is a permanent legal resident of Massachusetts for at least one year prior to the start of the academic year.
- b) Is a U.S. citizen or eligible non-citizen eligible under Federal Title IV Regulations.
- c) Is employed or is a licensed family child care provider and continues to work as an early educator in an early education and care program in Massachusetts.
- d) Has maintained employment or has provided licensed family child care for at least one year prior to receipt of grant funds and has provided documentation of such employment.
- e) If enrolled in an undergraduate program, has not earned a prior bachelor's degree.
- f) Maintains satisfactory academic progress in accordance with institutional standards.
- g) Annually files the Free Application for Federal Student Aid.
- h) Signs an agreement to continue employment as an early educator or provider in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, with the expectation that the student will continue to be employed in the Early Childhood Education field as an educator or

provider in Massachusetts for six months per semester of scholarship receipt, not to exceed a two year maximum commitment upon graduation from an associate's degree program and a four year maximum commitment upon graduation from a bachelor's degree program.

Priority consideration will be given to eligible applicants recommended by an individual qualified to speak to their commitment and dedication to the field of early education and care.

### **AWARD VALUE**

The award for eligible applicants under this program shall be as follows:

- a) up to \$450 per credit at a public university or private college or university, not to exceed a maximum of \$4,050 per semester.
- b) up to \$325 per credit at a public four-year college, not to exceed a maximum of \$2,925 per semester.
- c) up to \$200 per credit at a public two-year college, not to exceed a maximum of \$1,800 per semester.

Grants may be awarded for a maximum of three courses per semester, and recipients must enroll in a minimum of three credits in a given academic semester to be awarded funds. Awards may not exceed the recipient's cost of attendance for any academic term.

The Board of Higher Education will annually review the tuition and fee charges at Massachusetts public colleges and the university and adjust the program award values, as it deems necessary.

### **INSTITUTIONAL DISBURSEMENT OF GRANTS**

Each participating institution must certify that the recipient is eligible in accordance with guidelines established for the Early Childhood Educators' Scholarship Program. Academic year awards will be disbursed in equal payments for the fall and spring semesters or as calculated based on enrolled credits within the established limits for the fall and spring semesters.

Grants may be awarded to eligible applicants for summer terms based on availability. All funds appropriated for this program must be expended by June 30 of each fiscal year or as otherwise determined by the Legislature.

## **PARTICIPATION AGREEMENT**

All institutions participating in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Early Childhood Educators' Scholarship Program must file a State Financial Aid Program Participation Agreement to be maintained on file in the Office of Student Financial Assistance.

## **AUDIT REQUIREMENTS**

- b) It shall be the responsibility of each college and university to maintain documentation of a recipient student's eligibility.
- c) The Chancellor shall require each campus to furnish to the Board of Higher Education a report detailing specific information regarding recipients. The Office of Student Financial Assistance will coordinate specification and procedures for this report.
- c) All financial books, records and documents pertaining to this program shall at all times be open to inspection, review and audit by the Chancellor, the State Auditor or their authorized representatives, who shall have access to the premises wherever 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.

## **AUTHORITY**

MGL Chapter 15D Section 5 Clause (10)  
C. 45 of the Acts of 2005, Item 7070-0065

## **II. ONE FAMILY INC. SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM**

### **Background Information**

In an effort to help eradicate homelessness in the Commonwealth, the Massachusetts Legislature funded the One Family, Inc., Scholarship Program as a matching resource for One Family, Inc., a non-profit organization offering integrated services for heads-of-households who have experienced homelessness or are on the verge of becoming homeless. The One Family, Inc., program of services consists of financial scholarships, leadership development and mentor support, which are designed to end family homelessness by helping at-risk women to achieve a college education, pursue their career dream and become financially independent.

Designed as a matching fund, the One Family, Inc., Scholarship Program recognizes the impact of the homeless crisis in Massachusetts. Though a number of shelters are available for families and individuals, most are often filled to capacity, and there is a growing demand for services offered by these facilities. One Family, Inc., offers a unique approach to ending family homelessness. With financial aid and extended services, women and their families are given an opportunity for a permanent path out of poverty. The One Family, Inc., Scholarship Program, supported through a Fiscal Year 2006 appropriation, provides financial aid for educational expenses to include tuition and fees, and living expenses.

The Board of Higher Education recognizes the significance of the One Family, Inc., Scholarship Program in addressing homelessness in the Commonwealth. This program will serve a diverse group of heads-of-households through programs located in Gloucester, Boston and Malden. Annual reports regarding the success of the scholarship program will be submitted to the Legislature by One Family, Inc., and the Board of Higher Education as required.

## **ONE FAMILY, INC., SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM GUIDELINES**

### **PURPOSE**

The One Family Scholarship Program was established by the Massachusetts Legislature to assist heads of households to achieve their academic goals by offering the opportunity for a permanent path out of poverty through the pursuit of higher education. Recipients of this scholarship receive an integrated network of services through the non-profit organization, One Family, Inc., whose mission is to serve residents of the Commonwealth who are low-income and homeless, or have experienced homelessness within the prior year.

### **DEFINITIONS**

#### **INSTITUTION:**

A public, private, independent, profit or nonprofit postsecondary institution in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts authorized to offer undergraduate degrees or certificate programs. The institution must be accredited and eligible to participate in the Federal Title IV programs.

#### **ELIGIBLE PROGRAM:**

Any undergraduate degree or certificate program offered by an eligible institution.

#### **ELIGIBLE STUDENT:**

To receive scholarship funds, the applicant must meet the following criteria:

- a) Be a Massachusetts resident domiciled in the Commonwealth for at least one year (twelve consecutive months).
- b) Be a U.S. citizen or eligible non-citizen.
- c) Qualify as a head-of-household, with children under age 18.
- d) At risk of homelessness, based on federal poverty standards, or has experienced homelessness within the previous 12 months.
- e) Be an active participant of One Family, Inc., services and activities, including the Leadership Seminar program.
- f) Enroll, full- or part-time, in an eligible certificate or degree program at an eligible institution.

- g) Maintain satisfactory academic progress on all academic work as determined by the institution.
- h) Complete and file the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA).

### **STUDENT AWARD**

The scholarship under this program may be awarded as follows:

- 1) Scholarships may be awarded to cover tuition and fees and related living expenses during the period of enrollment.
- 2) The value of the tuition and fee portion of the scholarship, in combination with other financial aid, may not exceed the recipient's cost of attendance as determined by the institution.

### **DISBURSEMENT OF FUNDS**

- 1) Scholarship expenses paid on behalf of an eligible student shall be reimbursed to One Family, Inc., by the Board of Higher Education each semester, as invoiced.
- 2) One Family, Inc., must supply documentation to support student enrollment and living expenses and documentation to support matching requirements as stipulated by the Massachusetts Legislature. This information provided by One Family, Inc., to the Board of Higher Education shall include the name, Social Security Number, scholarship award, institution enrolled for each scholarship recipient to facilitate the reimbursement and reporting requirements to the Massachusetts Legislature. One Family, Inc., shall notify the Board of Higher Education of any changes to the recipient's scholarship award and enrollment status.
- 3) The Board of Higher Education may require One Family, Inc., to provide additional information to support the reimbursement of administrative and other expenses.

### **PARTICIPATION AGREEMENT**

All institutions participating in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts' One Family, Inc., Scholarship Program must file a Financial Aid Program Participation Agreement to be maintained on file in the Office of Student Financial Assistance.

### **AUDIT REQUIREMENT:**

The Chancellor shall require each participating institution to furnish annually the following:

- a) Documentation of cost of attendance and eligibility status of each recipient.



- b) All financial books, records and documents pertaining to this program shall at all times be open to inspection, review and audit by the Chancellor, the State Auditor or their authorized representatives who shall have access to the premises wherever such books, records and documents are located. The institution shall retain such financial books, records and documents for not less than seven years.

**AUTHORITY**

Chapter 45 of the Acts of 2005, Items 7070-0065.

### **III. PARAPROFESSIONAL TEACHER PREPARATION GRANT PROGRAM**

#### **Background Information**

The Paraprofessional Teacher Preparation Grant Program was established by the Massachusetts Legislature in Fiscal Year 2003 for the purpose of encouraging and assisting paraprofessionals who wish to become certified to teach full-time in Massachusetts' public schools to pursue their higher education credentials. In its initial appropriation language, only paraprofessionals enrolled in public colleges and universities were eligible to receive grant assistance. The appropriation language for Fiscal Year 2006 incorporates Massachusetts independent (private) colleges and universities into the list of eligible colleges that paraprofessional may attend and participate in the grant program.

The Paraprofessional Teacher Preparation Grant helps to reduce financial barriers that often become obstacles for many paraprofessionals, particularly those from low-income and disadvantaged populations. The guidelines, as amended, provide grants to support the educational expenses of paraprofessionals who choose to enroll full- or part-time during the academic year, including summer terms. Since its inception, an average of 400 paraprofessionals receives financial support through this program each year. This number is expected to increase with the participation of paraprofessionals who enroll in eligible programs at independent colleges. This grant will facilitate the successful pathway for paraprofessionals attempting to achieve teacher certification.

The attached guidelines have been modified to reflect the Fiscal Year 2006 appropriation language.

## **PARAPROFESSIONAL TEACHER PREPARATION GRANT PROGRAM**

### **DEFINITIONS:**

#### **INSTITUTION:**

Any regionally accredited public or independent college or university in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts that offers a teacher preparation program leading to licensure, approved by the Massachusetts Department of Education (MDOE); or a two-year college that has a signed articulation or joint admissions agreement with a four-year college or university for a teacher preparation program.

#### **ELIGIBLE PROGRAM:**

Any undergraduate baccalaureate degree program, offered by an eligible institution, with a teacher preparation program approved by the Massachusetts Department of Education or a program at a two-year college with a signed articulation or joint admissions agreement with an institution offering an MDOE approved program.

#### **ELIGIBLE STUDENT:**

An eligible student is an undergraduate student enrolled full- or part-time and meeting the following requirements:

- a) Is a permanent legal resident of Massachusetts for at least one year prior to the start of the academic year and who is a U.S. citizen or a non-citizen eligible under Federal Title IV regulations.
- b) Is in compliance with applicable law regarding Selective Service Registration.
- c) Is not in default with applicable law regarding any federal or state student education loans for attendance at any institution or owes a refund for any previous financial aid received.
- d) Is enrolled full-time (12 semester credits or the equivalent) or part-time (3 to 11 credits or the equivalent) in a traditional academic semester.
- e) Has worked, and continues to work, as a paraprofessional in a public school in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts for a minimum of two years or is employed as a paraprofessional and is enrolled in and pursuing courses of study that will lead to certification as a teacher in bilingual education, special education, math, science, or foreign language, while working as a paraprofessional in a public school in the Commonwealth.
- f) Maintains satisfactory academic progress in accordance with institutional standards.

- g) Annually files the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and completes a minimum of credits each academic year as part of the application for renewal of the grant.
- h) Provides documentation to the Office of Student Financial Assistance of compliance with required program of study and academic progress, as requested.
- i) Signs an agreement to teach in a public school in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts upon graduation and certification in accordance with section 38G of Chapter 71 M.G.L.
- j) Has not earned a baccalaureate or professional degree or the equivalent.

### **STUDENT AWARD VALUES**

The award under this program shall be as follows:

- a) up to \$625 per credit at an independent college or public university, not to exceed \$7,500 per academic year, or \$3,750 per semester.
- b) up to \$450 per credit at a public four-year college, not to exceed a maximum of \$6,000 per academic year, or \$3,000 per semester
- c) up to \$250 per credit for public two-year colleges, not to exceed a maximum of \$4,000 per academic year, or \$2,000 per semester

Awards may not exceed the recipient's cost of attendance for any academic term of study.

The Board of Higher Education will annually review the public university and college tuition and fee charges and adjust the program award values, as it deems necessary.

### **TEACHING OBLIGATION**

Recipients of the Paraprofessional Teacher Preparation Grant must sign a Terms and Conditions Statement acknowledging their obligation to provide service as a full-time teacher in a Massachusetts public school (K-12). The service commitment will range from a minimum of two and a maximum of four years, depending on the number of semesters of grant assistance received.

Failure to provide the required service may result in a repayment of funds received, prorated on the length of service, as defined in the Terms and Conditions Statement and as determined by the Massachusetts Office of Student Financial Assistance.

## **INSTITUTIONAL DISBURSEMENT OF GRANTS:**

Each participating institution must certify that the recipient is eligible in accordance with guidelines established for the Paraprofessional Teacher Preparation Grant Program. Academic year awards will be disbursed in equal payments for the fall and spring semesters.

Grants may be awarded for summer terms only if funds are available. All funds must be disbursed by June 30.

## **PARTICIPATION AGREEMENT:**

All institutions participating in the Paraprofessional Teacher Preparation Grant Program must file a State Financial Aid Program Participation Agreement to be maintained on file in the Office of Student Financial Assistance.

## **AUDIT REQUIREMENTS:**

- a) It shall be the responsibility of each college and university to maintain adequate documentation of a recipient student's eligibility for the Paraprofessional Teacher Preparation Grant Program.
- b) The Chancellor shall require each campus to furnish annually to the Board of Higher Education a report detailing specific information regarding recipients of the Paraprofessional Teacher Preparation Program. The Office of Student Assistance will coordinate specification and procedures for this report to Financial Assistance (OSFA).
- c) All financial books, records and documents pertaining to this program shall at all times be open to inspection, review and audit by the Chancellor, the State Auditor or their authorized representatives who shall have access to the premises wherever 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.

## **AUTHORITY**

MGL Chapter 15A S-19  
C. 45 of the Acts of 2005, Item 7070-0065

#### **IV. HURRICANE KATRINA EMERGENCY TUITION WAIVER**

##### **SECTION U: COMMONWEALTH HURRICANE KATRINA EMERGENCY TUITION WAIVER (AMENDED NOVEMBER 17, 2005)**

##### **TUITION WAIVER FOR STUDENTS DISPLACED BY HURRICANE KATRINA**

##### **DEFINITIONS:**

##### **ELIGIBLE 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 state-supported course offered by an institution at a public college or university, excluding all graduate courses and courses in the medical degree program at the University of Massachusetts Medical Center. Eligible courses include those toward an undergraduate degree program, certificate program, short-term certificate program, and non-credit courses. Institutions are encouraged to develop waiver programs for eligible students that would provide a 100 percent tuition waiver for any non-state supported course and/or certificate program.

##### **ELIGIBLE STUDENT**

An undergraduate student who is unable to attend an institution due to the effects of Hurricane Katrina and provides as documentation one of the following:

- Verification of admission to or enrollment in an institution of higher education for fall semester, 2005 and/or spring semester, 2006; or
- A signed Commonwealth Hurricane Katrina Emergency Tuition Waiver affidavit attesting admission or enrollment in an academic program leading to a degree, certificate or other recognized credential for the 2005-2006 academic year at an institution

##### **AWARD VALUE**

Students eligible under this program will be entitled to a tuition waiver equal to 100 percent of the resident or non-resident tuition rate for eligible state-supported courses offered at the participating public higher education institution.

The waiver may be awarded to eligible students for the fall semester 2005 and/or the spring semester, 2006.

## **AWARD PROCEDURE**

Tuition waiver recipients shall be responsible for submitting documentation of eligibility to the institution where he/she will enroll. The institution shall award a waiver equal to the value of required tuition.

## **AUDIT REQUIREMENTS**

- a) It shall be the responsibility of each college and university to maintain documentation of a recipient student's eligibility.
  
- d) The Chancellor shall require each campus to furnish to the Board of Higher Education a report detailing specific information regarding tuition waiver recipients. The Office of Student Financial Assistance will coordinate specification and procedures for this report.
  
- d) All financial books, records and documents pertaining to this program shall at all times be open to inspection, review and audit by the Chancellor, the State Auditor or their authorized representatives who shall have access to the premises wherever 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.