

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATORS (ECE) SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM 2021–2022

GENERAL INFORMATION:

The Early Childhood Educators (ECE) Scholarship Program was funded as a pilot initiative by the Legislature in 2005 for the purpose of increasing the quality and availability of teachers and care providers to work with young children and youth in inclusive settings, including infant/toddler, preschool and school aged programs. The ECE Scholarship Program is designed to provide financial assistance for currently employed early childhood and out-of-school time educators and providers who enroll in a certificate, associate's, or bachelor's degree program in the Early Childhood Education or After School/Out of School Time field. Eligible majors include: Early Childhood Education, Child Development, Family Studies, Child Care Administration or fields that directly name early child development and its specific areas of inquiry.

How do I know if I am eligible for the ECE Scholarship Program?

You are **eligible** for the ECE Scholarship if you meet **ALL** the following criteria:

- Massachusetts permanent residency;
- [United States citizen or eligible non-citizen](#);
- Demonstrated commitment to the field of early care and education
- Currently working in a paid position for at least 20 hours per week in an EEC licensed or authorized program;
- Be currently employed, for at least six months as determined by EEC, in an early education and care program or out of school time program that is licensed or authorized by the Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care (EEC).
- Continue employment in an EEC licensed or authorized program while earning your degree;
- Register with EEC'S Professional Qualifications Registry (PQR) and have an active PQR number.
- Enroll in an approved undergraduate degree program in Early Childhood Education, Child Development, Family Studies, Child Care Administration or fields that directly name early child development and its specific areas of inquiry; and
- Agree to continue working in the field of early education and care or out of school time for a minimum of 2 years.

You are **not eligible** for the ECE Scholarship Program if you meet **ANY** of the following criteria:

- Do not live in Massachusetts;
- Not a United States citizen or eligible non-citizen;

- Do not work in an EEC licensed or authorized early education and care or out of school time program;
- Currently in a default status on state or federal student loans or owe a refund on any previously received federal or state financial aid;
- Have a prior bachelor's degree
- Not enrolled in an eligible Massachusetts institution of higher education;
- Do not meet the established work requirements for role or tenure;
- Not enrolled in a certificate, associate's or bachelor's degree program in Early Childhood Education, Child Development, Family Studies, Child Care Administration or fields that directly name early child development and its specific areas of inquiry.

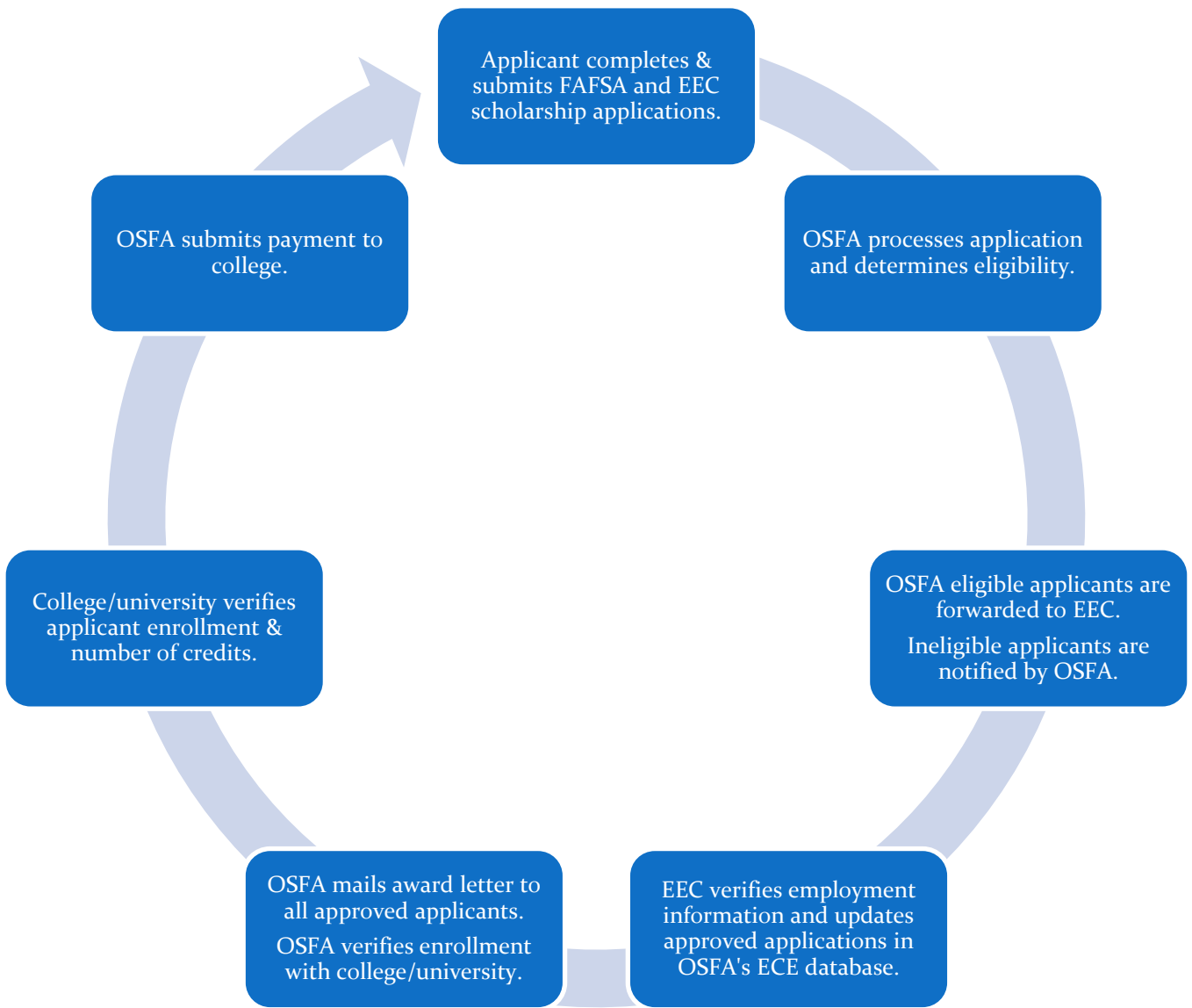
What do I need to do to apply for the ECE Scholarship Program?

- Complete a [Free Application for Federal Student Aid \(FAFSA\)](#). This is a requirement for the ECE Scholarship Program. Your ECE application cannot be processed without receipt of your FAFSA.
- Complete the [ECE Scholarship](#) application online annually. Incomplete applications cause a delay in processing and awarding of scholarship funding. Please complete your application in full. The online application is available on the Massachusetts Department of Higher Education, Office of Student Financial Assistance (OSFA) webpage: www.osfa.mass.edu.
- Ensure your [Professional Qualifications Registry \(PQR\)](#) is up to date;
- Matriculate (must be accepted as a candidate) in a certificate, associate's, or bachelor's degree program in Early Childhood Education, Child Development, Family Studies, Child Care Administration or fields that directly name early child development and its specific areas of inquiry at an eligible Massachusetts institution of higher education.

For additional information, please contact OSFA at (617) 391-6070.

SCHOLARSHIP PROCESS:

Deadline: October 1st, 2021



Award Amounts:

<i>Institution Type</i>	<i>Award per Credit</i>	<i>Maximum per Semester (11 credits)</i>
<i>Public University</i>	<i>\$500</i>	<i>\$5,500</i>
<i>Private College/ University</i>	<i>\$500</i>	<i>\$5,500</i>
<i>State College</i>	<i>\$400</i>	<i>\$4,400</i>
<i>Community College</i>	<i>\$250</i>	<i>\$2,750</i>

Scholarship Notification:

The ECE Scholarship is a multi-agency, collaborative initiative. Applicants are first required to complete the FAFSA online ECE Scholarship application. Once you have completed the online application, your information is received and reviewed by OSFA. Specifically, OSFA verifies the following information from your application:

1. You have completed your FAFSA (OSFA cannot process your application without this form);
2. You are a Massachusetts resident;
3. You are a U.S. citizen or eligible non-citizen;
4. You are not in default on any previous state or federal student loans and do not owe a refund on any previously received federal or state financial aid;
5. You do not hold a prior bachelor's degree;
6. You are matriculated at an eligible institution of higher education in Massachusetts;
7. You are enrolled in a certificate, associate's, or bachelor's program in Early Childhood Education, Child Development, Family Studies, Child Care Administration or fields that directly name early child development and its specific areas of inquiry;
8. You are in good standing at your institution of higher education;
9. You work a minimum of 20 hours per week;
10. You have been employed for at least six months, as determined by EEC, in an early education and care program or out of school time program that is licensed or authorized by the Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care (EEC); and
11. You and your supervisor, or designated authority has completed the supervisory attestation to your commitment to the field.

Ineligible Applicants:

If you are found not eligible by OSFA, you will receive notification of your ineligibility once your application has been processed.

Eligible Applicants:

If you have met the requirements verified by OSFA, your application will be sent to EEC for further review and verification. Specifically, EEC verifies the following information:

1. You are currently working in a paid position in an EEC licensed or authorized program;
2. You are currently working in a position that is acceptable for the scholarship program;
3. You continue to work in an EEC licensed or authorized program while earning your degree or meet the previously established work requirements;
4. You are registered in EEC's Professional Qualifications Registry (PQR) and have an **active** PQR number.
5. Once you have been approved by both OSFA and EEC, OSFA will contact the institution of higher education listed on your application to verify your enrollment information.

Who do I contact if I need help with my...

- FAFSA
 - Visit www.fafsa.ed.gov

OR

- Contact your local college/university

OR

- Contact the Office of Student Financial Assistance
617-391-6070 or Clantha McCurdy at CMcCurdy@dhe.mass.edu
- My scholarship notification (sent by email) or payment to my college/university:
 - Contact Clantha McCurdy at the Office of Student Financial Assistance
617-391-6070 or CMcCurdy@dhe.mass.edu
- My employment information and eligibility:
 - Allison Comport at the Department of Early Education and Care
617-720-8513 (direct line) or Allison.Comport@mass.gov or
EEC's main number at 617-988-6600.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS:

1. Do I need to apply for the scholarship every year?

Yes, for each year that you would like to receive assistance from the scholarship program you are required to complete the FAFSA and the ECE Scholarship application.

2. When will the 2021-2022 ECE Scholarship application be available?

The 2021-2022 ECE Scholarship application will be available on April 1, 2021. Individuals interested in applying for the ECE Scholarship should complete the FAFSA

in preparation for the scholarship application. The FAFSA is available at www.fafsa.ed.gov.

3. What is the deadline to apply for the 2021-2022 ECE Scholarship application?

The deadline is October 1st, 2021.

4. What does it mean to be matriculated?

A matriculated student has been accepted for admission to the college, has registered, and is pursuing courses toward a certificate or degree.

5. What is an eligible non-citizen?

You are considered an eligible non-citizen if you meet ONE of the following criteria:

- *You are a U.S. permanent resident with an Alien Registration Card (I-551).*
- *You are a conditional permanent resident with an I-551C card.*
- *You have an Arrival Departure Record (I-94) from the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) with any of the following designations:*
 - *Refugee*
 - *Asylum Granted*
 - *Parole*
 - *Cuban-Haitian Entrant*
 - *A citizen of the Republic of Palau, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, or the Federated States of Micronesia*

6. Have the ECE Scholarship eligibility requirements changed for the 2021-2022 academic year?

The work requirement is 20 hours per week, down from the pre-COVID requirement of 25 hours per week. Additionally, applicants are now eligible for the ECE Scholarship if they choose to pursue a certificate degree. Additionally, the work requirements have been modified from a one year minimum to a six-month minimum, as determined by EEC.

7. What is a Professional Qualifications Registry (PQR) ID number? Is this a requirement of the ECE Scholarship?

If you are currently working in early education or out-of-school time in an EEC-licensed center-based program or family child care home in Massachusetts, you will need to register to have an active [Provider Qualification Registry](#) (PQR) account. Your PQR ID is your unique account number, and represents your professional profile.

8. What programs of study are allowed for the Scholarship?

To be eligible for the ECE Scholarship Program, applicants must be enrolled in an certificate, associate's, or bachelor's degree program in Early Childhood Education, Child Development, Family Studies, Child Care Administration or fields that directly name early child development and its specific areas of inquiry.

9. If I am approved for the scholarship when will I receive my award?

Once an applicant is approved by both OSFA and EEC, OSFA will contact the college listed on your application to verify that you are a matriculated student, enrolled in an eligible degree program, in good academic standing, and the number of credits indicated on your ECE Scholarship application. Once the college submits verification of your enrollment status to OSFA, payment will be made to the college. As a rule, most colleges will complete the verification process after the Drop/Add date ends for registration – which could be three weeks after the semester begins.

10. I have already paid my bill for the semester, or my bill is due before I hear about my scholarship determination. What should I do?

If you have already paid your semester bill, you should contact your bursar's office for a reimbursement once the school has received your scholarship award. If your bill is due prior to the scholarship approval you should contact the bursar's office at your institution and/or the financial aid office. Many schools allow students to begin classes prior to payment of tuition but withhold credit until the tuition is paid.

11. I have a bachelor's degrees in an unrelated field, am I eligible for this program?

No, having any bachelor's degree in any field disqualifies you from participating in the program. If you hold a bachelor's degree in an unrelated field and are looking for additional coursework in early childhood education you may be able to find credit bearing coursework through the [Career Pathways Grant Program](#) and non-credit coursework on [EEC's Online Professional Development Calendar](#) and [StrongStart Professional Development Centers \(PDC's\)](#). The Career Pathways grant provides individual seats as well as cohort courses for those pursuing credentials and degrees through Massachusetts Community Colleges. The Professional Development Centers (PDC's) are tasked with providing professional development and coaching support to the early care and education field throughout Massachusetts. PDC grantees are tasked with providing professional development opportunities and services which support adults to gain knowledge and skills which they can apply to practice through completion of multiple learning opportunities.

12. Are staff working in EEC licensed or authorized school age child care programs eligible for this scholarship program?

Yes, individuals working in an EEC licensed or authorized school age program are eligible.

13. Are paraprofessionals currently employed in public schools eligible for the ECE Scholarship Program?

Public school paraprofessionals that are working in an EEC authorized (preschool) program are eligible to participate in the ECE Scholarship Program. There is a separate grant program, the [Paraprofessional Teacher Preparation Grant Program](#),

designed specifically for paraprofessionals who wish to become certified as full time teachers and are not working in an EEC authorized program. This program is available to paraprofessionals working with all age and grade levels within public schools. Individuals cannot participate in both programs.

14. Are staff living in another state but working in an early education and care program in Massachusetts eligible for this scholarship program?

No, applicants must be legal Massachusetts residents for at least one year prior to the start of the academic year.

15. Are staff living in Massachusetts but working in an early education and care program in a neighboring state eligible for the scholarship?

No, applicants must be working in Massachusetts in an EEC licensed or authorized program to be eligible for the ECE Scholarship Program.

16. I have not been at my current place of employment for at least 6 months, but I have been in the field for at least 6 months. Am I eligible for the scholarship?

If you have not been at your current place of employment for at least 6 months but have demonstrated working in a program previously for at least six months, you are eligible to apply. Your previous employment information should be included in the "Proof of Employment/ Professional Recommendation" section of the application and allows you to include multiple employers within your application. The ECE Scholarship program Legislatively requires eligible applicants to have a demonstrated commitment to the field. As a result, applicants must plan to obtain employment in the field of ECE for at least a two year period.

17. Is there a minimum number of hours each week I must be employed in Early Education and Care to be eligible for this program?

Currently, recipients are required to work a minimum of 20 hours per week.

18. What if I have previously defaulted on a state or federal student loan?

If you have previously defaulted on a state or federal student loan, then you are not eligible for the ECE Scholarship Program. However, you do have the ability to change your default status. Please contact the agency that services your loan, or your college financial aid office for more information.

19. What expenses is the scholarship intended to cover?

The amounts awarded are intended to fund tuition and fees but may also include funding for related expenses such as textbooks and school supplies.

20. If I do not use any or my entire scholarship award will it carry over to the next semester?

No, scholarship funding does not carry from one semester to the next. Recipients are only awarded an ECE Scholarship for courses/credits for which they have indicated on their ECE Scholarship application and have been certified as eligible by the school.

21. If I do not use my fall scholarship, am I still eligible for my spring award?

Spring awards for ECE Scholarship recipients who do not register for courses for the fall semester or are not able to be certified by the college for a fall award, are automatically cancelled. Recipients must notify OFSA in writing of plans to enroll for the spring semester as soon as possible. Scholarship funds are not guaranteed for the spring semester.

22. Can the ECE Scholarship be used to support master's level coursework?

No, not at this time.

23. I am my own supervisor; who should complete the supervisor portion of my application?

If you are a family child care provider or center director and you do not have an immediate supervisor, you may have a CCR&R, FCC System, Licensor, coach or mentor, or staff person with whom you work with complete the required supervisor section of your application. EEC will use data related to your program to support confirmation of these requirements.

24. What happens if I change colleges or employment during the course of the scholarship?

ECE Scholarship recipients are required to notify EEC and OSFA in writing if there are any changes to their personal information, employment, or college. If a recipient changes college during the course of the academic year, there is no guarantee that funding will be available to support a greater award amount. Changes in information should be sent to Clantha McCurdy at CMcCurdy@dhe.mass.edu or Allison Comport at Allison.Comport@mass.gov.

25. Does a preliminary award notification from OSFA ensure that I will receive the ECE Scholarship?

No, EEC verifies work history and PQR status for each applicant before final approval. Following EEC's review, OSFA verifies enrollment with your higher education institution. Scholarship awards may be cancelled or adjusted, based on the verification information received from the institution.