

Paraprofessional Teacher Preparation Grant

BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION

Massachusetts Office of Student Financial Assistance

PURPOSE

The Paraprofessional Teacher Preparation Grant Program is funded subject to the availability of funds and appropriation from the Massachusetts Legislature M.G.L. c. 15A, Section 16. The program provides financial assistance to Massachusetts residents who are currently employed as paraprofessionals in Massachusetts public schools and wish to become licensed as full-time teachers. This grant is designed to reduce their financial burden and help address the Commonwealth's current teacher shortage. Financial need is not a requirement for the Paraprofessional Teacher Preparation Grant. However, recipients must annually file the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) or, if ineligible to complete the FAFSA, then complete the Massachusetts Application for State Financial Aid (MASFA).

DEFINITIONS

- **Eligible Institution:**
An eligible institution is defined as a state-approved public (as identified in M.G.L. c. 15A, § 5) or private, institution located in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and authorized to grant degrees offering 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.

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

To be eligible for the Paraprofessional Teacher Preparation Grant, the student must:

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- a) be enrolled at an eligible institution, as defined;
- b) (1) be a U.S. Citizen, permanent legal resident, or non-citizen eligible under Title IV regulations and physically reside in Massachusetts for at least one year, as of the start of the enrolled term with an intent to remain in Massachusetts consistent with Board of Higher Education policy; or (2) have an approved eligibility status designated by the Board of Higher Education pursuant to Section 9 of Chapter 15A, as amended by Section 11 of Chapter 28 of the Acts of 2023;
- c) complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) or, if ineligible to complete the FAFSA, then complete the Massachusetts Application for State Financial Aid (MASFA) annually;
- d) comply with financial aid verification requirements;
- e) not be in default on any federal or state student loans or owe a refund for any previous state financial aid programs;
- f) meet satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) according to institution's requirements and federal standards;
- g) have worked, and continue to work, as a paraprofessional in a public school in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts for a minimum of two years or be employed as a paraprofessional and be 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;
- h) maintain eligible employment for a minimum of twenty hours per week, while enrolled full- or part-time in an eligible undergraduate program of study;
- i) complete a minimum of three credits each academic year as part of the application for renewal of the grant;
- j) provide documentation to the Office of Student Financial Assistance of compliance with required program of study and academic progress, as requested;
- k) sign an agreement to teach in a public school in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts upon graduation and certification in accordance with section 38G of

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Chapter 71 M.G.L;

- l) have not earned a baccalaureate or professional degree, or the equivalent; and
- m) not be a recipient of funds under any of the following financial aid workforce programs: Tomorrow's Teachers Scholarship, Early Childhood Educators Scholarship, or the Behavioral Health Workforce Scholarship. Students who simultaneously apply and meet eligibility criteria for more than one of these workforce programs shall only be determined eligible for one program.

AWARD VALUE AND CALCULATION

All students who meet eligibility requirements and are enrolled in an eligible undergraduate program at an eligible institution, as defined, may receive a Paraprofessional Teacher Preparation Grant award. Grant calculations for an eligible student are as follows:

Paraprofessional Teacher Preparation Grant Award = *Number of enrolled credits (multiplied) award amount per credit as determined by institution type*

The award under this program will vary depending on the type of institution and number of enrolled credits. A recipient must be enrolled in a minimum of 3 credits.

Credit values and maximum awards per academic semester should be adjusted and allocated in the following manner:

Community College Students

Up to \$350 per credit – not to exceed a maximum of \$6,300 per academic year or \$3,150 per semester

State University Students

Up to \$550 per credit – not to exceed a maximum of \$9,900 per academic year, or \$4,950 per semester

Independent College or Public University Students

Up to \$750 per credit - not to exceed a maximum of \$13,500 per academic year, or \$6,750 per semester

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

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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 (K12). 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.

AWARD DISBURSEMENT

Participating institutions must verify that each recipient is eligible in accordance with guidelines established for the Paraprofessional Teacher Preparation Grant Program and that the student is enrolled in an approved associate or bachelor's degree program, as applicable.

Institutions are required to refund to the Department any funds that are deemed to have been improperly awarded and disbursed to recipients who are later determined to be ineligible 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, and to students who indicated summer credits on the annual PTPG application. All funds must be disbursed by June 30.

ANNUAL REVIEW

The Department of Higher Education is responsible for evaluating the effectiveness of the Paraprofessional Teacher Preparation Grant program. Institutions that have signed an agreement to participate in the Massachusetts State financial aid programs are required to share data for all students with the Massachusetts Department of Higher Education (DHE)

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or its designee, and the Office of Student Financial Assistance for this purpose. The program may be evaluated annually to determine any immediate impact or to determine if adjustments are required for various processes, such as disbursement of funds.

PARTICIPATION AGREEMENT

All institutions receiving funds under the Paraprofessional Teacher Preparation Grant program must have an active Massachusetts State Financial Aid Participation Agreement on file with the Massachusetts Office of Student Financial Assistance (OSFA).

AUDIT REQUIREMENT

- a) It shall be the responsibility of each college to maintain documentation of a recipient student's eligibility for the Paraprofessional Teacher Preparation Grant.
- b) The Commissioner shall require each college to furnish annually to the BHE a report detailing specific information regarding recipients of the Paraprofessional Teacher Preparation Grant. OSFA will establish the timeline, specifications, 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 Commissioner, the State Auditor or their authorized representatives who shall have access to the premises wherever such books, records, and documents are 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.