

Public Service Grant

BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION

Massachusetts Office of Student Financial Assistance

PURPOSE

In recognition of the hardship that a family experiences upon the loss of a parent and/or spouse who is killed or missing in the line of public service duty in the Commonwealth, a grant program has been established to provide educational opportunity to the remaining family members. This important program is the only Grant Program not based on demonstrated financial need, but rather on entitlement.

DEFINITIONS

- **Eligible Institution:**
A Massachusetts public institution of higher education college within the public system of higher education as identified in Section 5 of Chapter 15A of the General Laws, or a Massachusetts independent higher education institution that is authorized by the Commonwealth to offer undergraduate degree programs
- **Eligible Program:**
Any approved undergraduate degree or certificate program offered by an eligible institution, as defined.

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

To be eligible for the Public Service Grant program, the student must:

- 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;

Guidelines Effective August 1, 2026 (BHE 27-05)

- 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) not have earned a prior bachelor's degree (or the equivalent);
- g) enroll, as a matriculated student, on a full-time basis (minimum of 12 credits, or the equivalent) in an eligible undergraduate program of study; and
- h) meet satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) according to institution's requirements and federal standards.

PUBLIC SERVICE GRANT CONDITIONS

- Student will provide the necessary documentation to evidence one of the following conditions:
 - Child or widowed spouse of a Massachusetts Police Officer, Firefighter or Corrections Officer who was killed or died from injuries received while performing their duties. This shall also include authorized training duty.
 - Child of a Prisoner of War or Military Service Person Missing In Action in Southeast Asia whose war time service was credited to the Commonwealth and whose service was between February 1, 1955 and the termination of the Vietnam campaign.
 - Child of a Veteran whose service was credited to the Commonwealth and who was killed in action or died as a result of such service.
- If enrolled in a clock hour program, the student must:
 - Complete a minimum of 24 clock hours per week a minimum of 320 hours during the period of July 1 – December 31 to qualify for a Fall disbursement.
 - Complete a minimum of 320 hours during the period of January 1 – June 30 to qualify for a Spring disbursement.

Guidelines Effective August 1, 2026 (BHE 27-05)

- The institution is required to report recipient, programmatic, and other data to the Department of Higher Education (DHE) upon request.
- Institutions shall facilitate access to on-campus support services to students who receive assistance under the Public Service Grant to promote persistence in and completion of their program of study.
- The institution is responsible for verifying student eligibility.
- Funds may be awarded to support summer enrollment that occurs prior to the end of the corresponding fiscal year, if funds are available.
- Institutions are required, upon request, to submit data to the Department of Higher Education to demonstrate maintenance of fiscal effort in their commitment to institutional aid to students, while participating in the program.
- The BHE shall annually establish the tuition rates for the community colleges and state universities and monitor the mandatory fees set by colleges' respective Boards of Trustees.

STUDENT ELIGIBILITY BY ENROLLMENT INTENSITY AND DEGREE TYPE

Eligible students may be awarded Public Service Grants funds as follows:

Bachelor's Degree

Full-Time	Maximum of 4 years, 8 semesters for full-time (minimum of 12 enrolled credits per academic term)
-----------	--

Associate Degree

Full-Time	Maximum of 2 years, 4 semesters for full-time (minimum of 12 enrolled credits per academic term)
-----------	--

Guidelines Effective August 1, 2026 (BHE 27-05)

AWARD VALUE

For a student attending a Massachusetts Public College or University, the award shall be equal to the cost of the institution's full time annual tuition and mandatory fee charges.

For a student attending a Massachusetts Independent College or University, the award shall be equal to the full-time annual tuition charge to the University of Massachusetts, Amherst.

AWARD DISBURSEMENT

Participating institutions must verify that each recipient is eligible in accordance with guidelines established for the Public Service Grant, and that the student is enrolled in an approved certificate or 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 Public Service Grant.

ANNUAL REVIEW

The Department of Higher Education is responsible for evaluating the effectiveness of the Public Service Grant. 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) 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 Public Service Grant 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 Public Service Grant.

Guidelines Effective August 1, 2026 (BHE 27-05)

- b) The Commissioner shall require each college to furnish annually to the BHE a report detailing specific information regarding recipients of the Public Service 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.

APPLICATION PROCEDURES

- a) Complete a Public Service Grant Application and submit the necessary documentation.
- b) Applicant must also file a Free Application for Federal Student Aid Application (FAFSA) or another state-approved equivalent form.
- c) For a child or widowed spouse of a Massachusetts Police Officer, Firefighter, or Corrections Officer whose death occurred in the line of duty, submit a certificate from the Massachusetts Retirement Board.
- d) For a child of a Prisoner of War, Military or Service person missing in action in Southeast Asia between February 1, 1955 and the termination of the Vietnam campaign, or veteran was killed in action or who died as a result of such service, submit the following:
 - Copy of your birth certificate
 - Copy of Veteran's death certificate
 - DD214 Form to show Veteran's service was credited to Massachusetts. You may obtain this form from your local Veterans Administration Office.
 - Proof that Veteran's death was service connected. You may obtain this from:
The Veterans Administration Regional Office
J.F.K. Federal Building
100 Cambridge Street
Boston, Massachusetts 02203

Guidelines Effective August 1, 2026 (BHE 27-05)

FIRST TIME APPLICANTS ONLY

All first-time applicants must complete the application and provide all the supporting documentation that is requested. It is the applicant's responsibility to provide all the necessary information. The Office of Student Financial Assistance reserves the right to request additional documentation if necessary. **Application Deadline: May 1, 2027.**

RENEWAL APPLICANTS ONLY

To renew the Public Service Grant, recipients must annually, contact the Office of Student Financial Assistance for a renewal application for the Public Service Grant Program.

The application and all supporting documentation must be submitted to:

DEPARTMENT OF HIGHER EDUCATION
Office of Student Financial Assistance
Massachusetts Public Service Grant Program
135 Santilli Highway
Everett, MA 02149