

Opportunity Scholarship Program FAQ

The Opportunity Scholarship Program is established by North Carolina General Statute 115C-562. It is administered by the North Carolina State Education Assistance Authority (NCSEAA).

Contact information:

Phone: 1-855-330-3955 (toll-free)
Email: OpportunityScholarships@ncseaa.edu
Fax: 919-248-4687
Website: <http://www.ncseaa.edu/OSG.htm>

Quick Access to FAQ Categories:

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General Questions

What is the Opportunity Scholarship Program?

The Opportunity Scholarship Program expands school choice in North Carolina through scholarship grants for eligible children in kindergarten through 12th grade. This program provides funding of up to \$4,200 per year for eligible children who choose to attend a participating nonpublic school.

Who applies? How does it work?

Parents submit an application for the Opportunity Scholarship on behalf of their children. In order to receive Opportunity Scholarship funds, the student must attend a [participating nonpublic school](#); the parent must arrange for application or enrollment at the school separately from the application for the Opportunity Scholarship. See the [Program Overview](#) for more information about how the Opportunity Scholarship works and the timeline for application and award. Also see the rest of these Frequently Asked Questions for more information about the application process and eligibility requirements.

Who is NCSEAA?

The North Carolina State Education Assistance Authority (NCSEAA) is a state agency which administers the Opportunity Scholarship Program.

How will the SEAA communicate with me about the Opportunity Scholarship?

You will be contacted via email. Information about the status of the application and verification processes will be on your student's Opportunity Scholarship Portal. If you think you have missed an

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email, or if you don't understand something posted on the Student Portal, you can call the Opportunity Scholarship Program at (855) 330-3955.

How do I access the Student Portal?

A few weeks after your application is submitted, you will receive an email with a web link directing you to the portal. There is also a link to the portal on the [Opportunity Scholarship website](#). You should check the Student Portal for messages once a week as long as your student is connected to the Opportunity Scholarship Program.

What else do I need to know about the Opportunity Scholarship Student Portal?

In the email you receive directing you to the portal will be a unique Program ID for your student. You will need this unique Program ID and other basic information (such as your student's birthdate). If you have more than one student in this program, you will need to access the portal for each student individually. Note that the parent applicant on file will be the only authorized person to access the information in the portal.

What do I do if I change my email?

Contact OpportunityScholarships@ncseaa.edu immediately with any updates to your contact information. Opportunity Scholarships should always have your current email address. It is the parent's responsibility to check email regularly.

Eligibility Questions

Who is eligible for an Opportunity Scholarship?

To receive an Opportunity Scholarship, a student must meet the criteria below:

The student must meet *all* of these six criteria:

1. Be a resident of North Carolina
2. Live in a household that meets the Income Eligibility Guidelines established by the Opportunity Scholarship Program;
3. Enroll in a participating nonpublic school in North Carolina;
4. Not have a high school diploma;
5. Be 5 on or before August 31 of the Scholarship year;
6. Be younger than 22 as of the date of the beginning of the Semester.

And the student must meet *one* of the following criteria:

1. Have received Opportunity Scholarship funds during the previous school year;
2. Be assigned to and attend a North Carolina public school or a Department of Defense school located in North Carolina for the full prior spring semester;
3. Have a parent or guardian on full-time active military duty;
4. Will be entering kindergarten or the first grade; or

5. Is a foster child; or
6. Has been adopted within the last year.

Are preschool children eligible for an Opportunity Scholarship?

No. Students must be 5 on or before August 31 of the Scholarship year.

My student already attends school in a nonpublic school setting. Is my student eligible for an Opportunity Scholarship?

Generally, no. Your student is only eligible for an Opportunity Scholarship if he or she received an Opportunity Scholarship the previous school year, will be enrolling in kindergarten or first grade, is a foster child, was adopted within the last year, or has a parent on full-time active duty military status, and meets other Opportunity Scholarship eligibility requirements.

I withdrew my student from public school before the end of the semester. Am I going to be eligible for the Opportunity Scholarship?

It depends. The student must have attended a North Carolina public school for at least 75 school days in the prior spring semester in order to meet the public school enrollment requirement.

My student is a foster child. Does he or she automatically qualify for an Opportunity Scholarship?

No, but a foster child can already be enrolled in a nonpublic school and still be eligible for an Opportunity Scholarship. A foster child's household must meet the Opportunity Scholarship Program Income Eligibility Guidelines.

My student attended kindergarten at a nonpublic school and will be in first grade the following school year. Is he or she still eligible for an Opportunity Scholarship?

Yes, if the student meets all the other eligibility criteria.

Can my student receive an Opportunity Scholarship if we plan to home school?

No.

We received the Opportunity Scholarship last year. What eligibility requirements apply to us?

A student must continue to live in a household in North Carolina which meets the Income Eligibility Guidelines established by the Opportunity Scholarship Program.

The student's parents have joint custody and the student lives with both parents. How is eligibility determined?

When joint custody has been awarded by a court, the student is considered part of the household where he or she resides. If the student resides in more than one household, or has recently changed his or her residence, the student is eligible for an Opportunity Scholarship if either parent's income meets the

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Opportunity Scholarship Program Income Eligibility Guidelines. Income eligibility for an Opportunity Scholarship will be based on the income of the household that is reported on the application.

Does the sibling of an Opportunity Scholarship recipient have priority over other new students?

No.

Does my student's school have to be located in North Carolina?

Yes. The school must be located in North Carolina.

How do I know what schools are participating in the Opportunity Scholarship Program?

You can find a list of participating schools [here](#).

Do I have to apply to the school too?

Yes. The Opportunity Scholarship application is only for the Opportunity Scholarship.

What does a school have to do to be on the list of participating schools?

The school must first be registered with the Division of Nonpublic Education and then also complete the Opportunity Scholarship registration process.

Do I have to be a North Carolina resident?

Yes.

Does the student have to be a North Carolina resident?

Yes.

Are homeless students eligible to apply for an Opportunity Scholarship?

Yes. A parent must apply for the student. You can see who qualifies as a parent [here](#). Contact the Opportunity Scholarship staff for help in completing your application, especially if you need help providing an address.

Can my student be eligible for both a grant from the Disabilities Grant Program and an Opportunity Scholarship?

Yes, if the student meets the eligibility criteria for each program. Information about the Disabilities Grant program is available [here](#).

My student receives a scholarship from the school. Is my student still eligible for an Opportunity Scholarship?

Yes, if you are responsible for tuition and required fees which are more than the school scholarship will cover. The amount of the Opportunity Scholarship cannot exceed the amount of tuition and required fees which you must pay.

My student receives free or reduced lunch. Does he or she automatically qualify for an Opportunity Scholarship?

No, not automatically. The student's household must meet the Opportunity Scholarship Program Income Eligibility Guidelines (posted on the [website](#)).

Application Questions

When can I apply for an Opportunity Scholarship?

Applications for new and renewal students will be available by February 1.

Is there more than one application for the Program?

Yes. Students who did not receive Opportunity Scholarship funds this year are new students and should complete a new student application. The application for new students is on the [website](#). There is a renewal process for students who received Opportunity Scholarship funds the previous school year. The renewal process is available on the student's Opportunity Scholarship Portal.

I filled out a new student application last year and my student was awarded, but didn't use the Opportunity Scholarship after all. Can I renew?

No. If your student did not receive Opportunity Scholarship funds at a participating nonpublic school this school year, you should complete a new student application for next school year.

My student received Opportunity Scholarship funds the year before last. Can I renew?

Only if your student continued to receive Opportunity Scholarship funds this year. Students who received funds in the current school year can renew for the next school year. Families of students who did not receive Opportunity Scholarship funds this year should complete a new student application for next school year.

I filled out an application last year but funds were exhausted before the application was reviewed. Do you keep those applications?

No. You will need to submit a new student application.

- **NEW STUDENTS**

- **How do I apply for an Opportunity Scholarship?**

- Complete the online application available on the website: <http://www.ncseaa.edu/OSG.htm>

- **Is there a deadline for new students to apply for the Opportunity Scholarship?**

- The priority application deadline is March 1. All Opportunity Scholarship Program applications that meet the eligibility criteria and are submitted by midnight on March 1 will be entered into a lottery and recipients will be randomly selected from that pool of applications. If a parent

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submits an application for more than one student; the parent's name will be entered once and, if the parent's application is selected, all eligible students included on that application will be eligible for funding.

- **What happens if I do not complete an application by March 1?**

Eligible students from applications received after March 1 will be placed on a waitlist. If there are any remaining funds after the lottery, awards will be made on a first-come, first-serve basis from the waitlist.

- **When does the new student application close?**

The application will close when funds are exhausted.

- **RENEWALS**

- **Do I need to complete the renewal process for each student in my household?**

Yes. You must renew separately for each of the students in your household who received Opportunity Scholarship funds the previous school year. Sign on to the Opportunity Scholarship student portal for each of your students who received funds and click on the link to renew.

- **Is there a deadline to complete a renewal?**

Yes. To receive renewal priority for an Opportunity Scholarship, you must complete the renewal process by midnight March 1.

- **What happens if I do not complete the renewal process by midnight on March 1?**

Your student will not be guaranteed to receive an Opportunity Scholarship. Eligible applicants who complete a renewal after the deadline will be put on a waitlist on a first-come, first-served basis.

- **My student's household changed this year. Who should renew?**

Contact OpportunityScholarships@ncseaa.edu if your student is no longer living in the same household. Opportunity Scholarship staff will assist you.

Who can complete the application or a renewal for an Opportunity Scholarship?

A parent or guardian with whom the student resides must complete the new student application. You can read the definition of who qualifies as a parent [here](#). The parent who submitted the new student application originally should complete the renewal.

I am the student's grandparent. Can I fill out the application / renewal for my grandchild?

Yes, if you are acting in the place of a natural or adoptive parent and the student lives with you. You may read the definition of parent [here](#).

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What information do I need to apply?

You will need to provide your annual household income, which includes the income for all members of your household. This [worksheet](#) will help you calculate your household income.

Who should I include as members of my household?

You must include all people living in your household, related or not (such as grandparents, other relatives or friends) who share income and expenses. You must include yourself and all children living with you. If you live with other people who are economically independent (for example, people who you do not support or who do not share income with you or your children), do not include them.

We are in the military. Do we include our housing allowance as income?

If you get an off-base housing allowance, it must be included as income. However, if your housing is part of the Military Housing Privatization Initiative, do not include your housing allowance as income.

My spouse is deployed to a combat zone. Is her combat pay counted as income?

No, if the combat pay is received in addition to her basic pay because of her deployment and it was not received before she was deployed, combat pay is not counted as income.

Do I have to know which school my student will attend when I complete the application?

No. The application asks for the school that your student will attend, if known. If you do not know what school your child will attend, choose “unknown” and continue with the application. You will need to choose a school by the summer deadline or your Opportunity Scholarship may be canceled. All deadlines are posted on the Opportunity Scholarship Student Portal.

My student’s school is not listed on the application. Why not?

Your school is not participating in the Program. Contact your school and ask the school why it is not participating.

I made a mistake on the application. What should I do?

Contact OpportunityScholarships@ncseaa.edu. The Opportunity Scholarship Program will make an eligibility determination based on the application information you provide. If you feel that the eligibility determination is incorrect due to errors you made on the application, you should contact Opportunity Scholarships immediately.

Award Questions

What happens if there is not enough money for all of the applicants?

If the number of eligible applications exceeds the amount of funding, a lottery will be used to choose recipients.

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How will I find out if my student is selected to receive an Opportunity Scholarship?

The Opportunity Scholarship lottery will be held in March. Families will be notified of the results by email beginning March 31. You can check the Opportunity Scholarship Student Portal at any time for information about your application. The lottery results will be posted on the Opportunity Scholarship Student Portal.

Will my student get an Opportunity Scholarship every year?

First priority will be given to students who received an Opportunity Scholarship during the previous school year, reapply by March 1, and continue to meet the eligibility criteria. In addition, funding for the Opportunity Scholarship Program is contingent upon sufficient appropriations by the North Carolina General Assembly.

Are there other priorities for selecting Opportunity Scholarship recipients?

Yes. The Opportunity Scholarship statutes establish a series of priorities. First priority is for students who received an Opportunity Scholarship the previous school year. Certain priority is given to applicants who have the most financial need. There are limitations on the percent of Opportunity Scholarships for kindergarten and first grade students.

Where is the Opportunity Scholarship Portal?

You will receive an email with a link to the Opportunity Scholarship Student Portal and directions for accessing it. If you did not receive that email message, contact the Program at OpportunityScholarships@ncseaa.edu for help.

Where is the Opportunity Scholarship ID I need to access the portal?

You will receive your Opportunity Scholarship ID in an email which will direct you to the portal. If you do not receive that email, or cannot find it, contact OpportunityScholarships@ncseaa.edu.

What is the amount of the Opportunity Scholarship?

The maximum amount of the Opportunity Scholarship is \$2,100 per semester (\$4,200 per school year). The amount of the Opportunity Scholarship depends on household income, the amount of the student's tuition and required fees, and any other financial aid the student receives. The Opportunity Scholarship will be paid twice a year, so if the student's maximum amount is \$4,200, the school will receive two payments of \$2,100 on behalf of the student.

How will I receive the money from the Opportunity Scholarship?

The Opportunity Scholarship will be sent directly to your student's school. The student's parent or guardian is required to restrictively endorse the payment in person at the student's school before the electronic fund transfer process is complete. Opportunity Scholarships provides an Endorsement Form to the student's school for the parent to sign.

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How can I endorse the payment if I cannot go to my student's school?

You may designate someone else as your attorney-in-fact to endorse the payment for you so long as your attorney-in-fact is not associated with the school. When the school official submits the Endorsement Form on behalf of your student, that person will also submit a copy of your Power of Attorney.

How does the Opportunity Scholarships Program know the required tuition, fees and other costs at the student's school?

Each school is required to provide the Program with documentation of its tuition, fees, and other required expenses. Ask your contact at the school for more information about costs reported by the school.

My student receives an Opportunity Scholarship. Can he transfer to a different school and still receive the Opportunity Scholarship?

A student who transfers to another [participating school](#) may be eligible for a pro-rata share of the Opportunity Scholarship. Contact OpportunityScholarships@ncseaa.edu before your student transfers to determine if your student is eligible for any additional funds. It is to your advantage to transfer your student at the end of a semester rather than in the middle of a semester.

Verification Questions

What happens if I do not want to share private and confidential information with the Program?

You may not receive Opportunity Scholarship funds if you do not allow the staff to verify your household income and other information on your application.

Will the information I give be checked?

All applications will be reviewed to see if students meet the eligibility criteria. In addition, a percentage of the applications will be randomly selected to be verified, requiring families to provide documentation for items such as income, school enrollment, and household members.

How do I know if I have been randomly selected to be verified?

You will receive an email informing you that you have been selected for verification and asking you for additional information. In addition, you can look on the Opportunity Scholarship Student Portal to see if you were selected for verification, and if so, what documents are needed. There will be a deadline posted on the Student Portal. If you do not submit verification documents by the deadline, your student's Opportunity Scholarship may be canceled.

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I was selected for verification of public school enrollment. What document do I send and where do I send it?

Submit a copy of your student's final report card or transcript from the previous spring semester from the North Carolina public school where the student attended. Alternatively, you could ask the public school to create a document on school letterhead to send to the OpportunityScholarships@ncseaa.edu directly. This document should state the dates of your student's enrollment. The most secure way to send us your documents is by uploading them in the Opportunity Scholarship Student Portal. You can also email them to OpportunityScholarships@ncseaa.edu or fax them to (919) 248-4687.

I was randomly selected for Income Verification. What tax information does the Program need?

You must submit a copy of your last federal tax return. You can get a free copy of your tax return online at <http://www.irs.gov/Individuals/Get-Transcript> . Any member of the household who filed taxes must submit these documents to the Program. You must also submit either W-2s or 1099s. Again, all household members must submit these documents. Other documents may also be required.

I was randomly selected for Income Verification. I didn't file any taxes. What should I do?

If you were not required to file taxes, please note that in the comments section of the verification form (Section 4 – Comments). Be sure to upload any W2s or 1099s. Remember that for verification purposes, we need tax information from **all** members of your household. Opportunity Scholarship staff may follow up with additional questions. Check your email every day.

How can I be sure the Program has received my documents?

After you upload a document in the Student Portal, you receive an automated email. When you next access the Opportunity Scholarship Student Portal, you will also see the name of the document you uploaded and the date you uploaded it. Check the Student Portal regularly for updated information and contact OpportunityScholarships@ncsu.edu if you have not heard about the resolution of your verification process.

Additional Questions

What happens after the Opportunity Scholarship is awarded?

Parents of new students need to log on to the Opportunity Scholarship Student Portal and accept the Scholarship which is offered. Portal access information will be emailed to the family with award notification.

For new or renewal students, verification may be required before funds are released. Information about additional requirements are posted on the Student Portal.

Parents of both new and renewal students should check the Student Portal weekly as long as their student is connected to the Opportunity Scholarship Program.

Does the Program have a discrimination policy?

The Program statutes provide that participating schools may not discriminate with respect to race, color, or national origin.

Are Program records a public record?

No. Personally identifiable information from applications and schools are not a public record. Personally identifiable information means any information directly related to a student or a member of the student's household, including the name, birthdate, address, Social Security number, telephone number, e-mail address, financial information, or any other information or identification number that would provide information about a specific student or members of a specific student's household.

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