

Early Learning Scholarships Frequently Asked Questions

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Scholarship Application and Award

Child's Age - Eligibility Requirements

To qualify, a child's age must be 3 or 4 years old on September 1 of the current school year and not yet enrolled in kindergarten.

OR

Children not yet 3 years by September 1 of the current school year may be considered if at least one of the following is met:

- The child is the younger sibling of a currently awarded child: and attends the same program, if funds are available,
- The child is in foster care or in need of child protective services,
- The family has experienced homelessness in the past 24 months,
- The parent is under the age of 21 and currently pursuing a high school or general education equivalency diploma (GED)

Income Qualifications

A family **must** income qualify to receive a scholarship. Families may choose Option A or Option B.

OPTION A

Families provide paystubs, W2s, Taxes, child support payments, etc. To qualify, the family's annual gross income must be no more than 185% of Federal Poverty Income Guideline (below).

Family Size	Gross Income	Family Size	Gross Income
2	\$33,874	6	\$68,802
3	\$42,606	7	\$77,534
4	\$51,338	8	\$86,266
5	\$60,070	9**	\$94,998

For family units of more than nine members, add **\$8,732 for each additional member. **
Guidelines are through June 30, 2023 and change on July 1 of each year.

OPTION B

Families prove with a dated participation document listing one of the following programs:

- MFIP
- CCAP
- Free and Reduced-Price Lunch Program (FRLP)
- CACFP (by income)
- Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations
- SNAP
- Head Start
- Foster Care (Note: applications for children in foster care must be signed and submitted by the county worker)

Who should complete an Early Learning Scholarship Application?

Applications and Renewal Forms **must be completed by the family** on the approved MDE application and Renewal Form. The most recent forms are available to families on Northland Foundation's website (<https://www.northlandfdn.org/special-initiatives/>). In addition, when there are changes to the forms, we will send an electronic copy to child care providers.

Applications for foster families must be completed and signed by the Social Worker as the legal guardian. No income verification is necessary.

For children under Child Protective Services (CPS), the legal guardian must complete the application. The parent should include contact information for the CPS county worker to ensure the application is put into priority status. Income verification is required.

Teen parents, age 20 or younger, must complete the application and income is required for anyone sharing expenses in the household. The parent must include proof of obtaining a GED or school attendance.

When is the best time to apply?

There is no best time to apply for an Early Learning Scholarship. We encourage families to apply as soon as their child is eligible. If a child is awarded but does not plan to start attending the program until later in the year, indicate that on the Award Planning Agreement or have a conversation with our staff. We can delay the start of a scholarship.

When may we apply for a child who is not age eligible this year, yet turned 3 during the current school year?

We may accept applications for children who turned 3 during the current school year beginning May 15 of each year. Applications will be reviewed and put in Hold status. All Hold applications are processed together in early July when the new funding year begins. Families will be notified of the status of their application (wait list or awarded) by mid-July.

Can a provider check the status of an application?

All communication regarding scholarship application status is communicated to the family members listed on the application.

Why might an application be denied?

The main reasons a scholarship application is denied are listed below:

- Age Ineligible – a child's age must be 3 or 4 years old on September 1 of the current school year and not yet enrolled in kindergarten. **OR** Children not yet 3 years by September 1 of the current school year may be considered if they are:
 - the younger sibling of a currently awarded child: and attends the same program
 - The child is in foster care or in need of child protective services
 - The family has experienced homelessness in the past 24 months
 - The parent is under the age of 21 and currently pursuing a high school or general education equivalency diploma (GED)
- Income Ineligible – the family's annual gross income must be no more than 185% of the Federal Poverty Income Guideline.
- Non-Resident – child is not a resident of Minnesota.
- Has Pathway II Scholarship – a child may only utilize one scholarship at a time.

Award Planning Agreement

What is an Award Planning Agreement?

This is a form created by MDE and must be completed and returned to the Northland Foundation before payment can be made to the child care provider. This form is an important tool that helps us to manage the funds we receive each year from the State of Minnesota to award scholarships to as many children as possible. The purpose of the agreement is two-fold.

1. It tells the family, provider, and the Northland Foundation how much of a scholarship will be awarded for the scholarship period. Not all families need the full scholarship amount they qualify for, which opens funds for other families in need.
2. It tells the family and provider if the scholarship will not cover the entire cost of care for the scholarship year. The family can make payment arrangements with the provider on the front end instead of having any surprises later.

When does a provider need to complete an Award Planning Agreement?

For every new award or renewal, we must have an updated Award Planning Agreement on file before we may pay the first submitted invoice.

Who completes and signs the Award Planning Agreement?

The Award Planning Agreement and Family Payment Worksheet are sent to the family with the award letter. They should bring the agreement and worksheet with them to their child care provider and complete and sign the form together. We are happy to provide you with a copy of these forms to use.

Scholarship Renewals

Do I need to reapply each year?

Once awarded, scholarships are renewed on the one-year anniversary of the award date. Renewal notices are mailed 90, 60, and 30 days before the renewal date. Families must complete and return the renewal notice within 30 days after the last award date. Failure to submit the renewal paperwork will result in automatic cancellation of the scholarship.

Invoicing

Can a child have an Early Learning Scholarship and CCAP?

Yes, we encourage families who are eligible, continue to use CCAP in partnership with their Early Learning Scholarship.

How do I invoice using CCAP and Early Learning Scholarships?

Scholarships may pay any difference between the regular cost of care and what CCAP pays. This includes paying the family co-pay.

How often do you pay invoices?

We pay 2 times per month. Invoices submitted by the 10th of the month are paid on the 15th and invoices received by the 25th of the month are paid on the last day of the month.

How many absent days are covered?

Scholarships will pay for up to 25 absent days during a 12-month period. If there are extenuating circumstances we will work with families, please reach out directly to our staff. *MDE is currently waiving this requirement. We will contact child care providers when the policy is reinstated.*

Are late fees covered by Early Learning Scholarships?

Fees for late payment or late pickup, such as late pickup fees, outstanding balances, or fees incurred prior to the awarding of the scholarship are unallowable uses of scholarship funds.