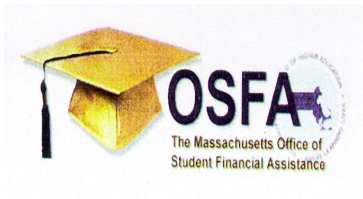


# The Massachusetts Office of Student Financial Assistance



## ***ACTION LETTER***

Action Letter #2  
December 2008

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### **2008-2009 PROGRAMS GUIDELINES UPDATES**

Dear Colleague:

This Action Letter publishes revised guidelines for the following Massachusetts State financial aid programs:

1. Massachusetts Department of Social Services Foster Children Tuition Waiver
2. Massachusetts Department of Social Services Adopted Children Tuition Waiver
3. Math and Science Teachers Scholarship Program

You will note that the Massachusetts Department of Social Services Foster Children Tuition Waiver and the Massachusetts Department of Social Services Adopted Children Tuition Waiver have been re-named the Department of Children and Families Foster Children Tuition Waiver and Fee Assistance Program and the Department of Children and Families Adopted Children Tuition Waiver Program and Fee Assistance, respectively. The three (3) revised programs' guidelines were approved by the Board of the Massachusetts Department of Higher Education at its November 21, 2008 meeting.

Please do not hesitate to contact the Massachusetts Office of Student Financial Assistance at 617.727.9420 if you have questions about these revised guidelines.

Thank you.

Massachusetts Office of Student Financial Assistance

## **SECTION Q: DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES**

### **FOSTER CHILD TUITION WAIVER AND FEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM**

#### **PURPOSE:**

In July 2008, the Massachusetts Legislature amended Chapter 15A, Section 19 - Public Education Tuition Waiver, of the General Laws. This law provides for full tuition and fee waivers for foster children in the custody of the Department of Children and Families and children adopted through this agency that choose to attend a Massachusetts public institution of higher education, and it requires the Board of Higher Education to establish guidelines for these waivers. Section 19 also states, "The commonwealth, not the institutions of public higher education, shall bear the cost of these waivers, after all reimbursement from the federal government have been exhausted."

#### **DEFINITIONS:**

##### ***ELIGIBLE INSTITUTION:***

An institution within the system of public higher education under Section 5 of Chapter 15A of the General Laws.

##### ***ELIGIBLE PROGRAM:***

Any eligible state supported undergraduate degree or certificate program offered by the institution.

##### ***ELIGIBLE STUDENT:***

Shall mean a student who has not earned a baccalaureate degree and meets the following conditions:

- Is a current or former foster child placed in the custody of the Department of Children and Families and remained in custody through age 18 without subsequently being returned home, or
- Is a child whose guardianship was sponsored by the Department of Children and Families through age 18;
- and who meet the following criteria:
  - a) Is a permanent legal resident of Massachusetts or was a permanent legal resident at the time of the Department of Children and Families sponsored guardianship

- b) Is a US Citizen or noncitizen eligible under Title IV Regulations
- c) Was in the custody of the Department of Children and Families for at least six months before age of 18
- d) Has applied for financial aid, using the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), and
- e) Is enrolled full time, half time, or part time in an eligible program or is taking an eligible course as defined
- f) Is in compliance with applicable law regarding Selective Service
- g) Is not in default of any Federal or State Student Loans for attendance at any institution or owes a refund for any previous financial aid received
- h) Is in good standing and meets the institution's requirements for Satisfactory Academic Progress

***ELIGIBLE COURSE:***

Any state-supported course offered by an institution at a public college or university, excluding all graduate courses and courses in the M.D. program at the University of Massachusetts Medical Center. Eligible courses include those toward an undergraduate degree program, certificate program, short-term certificate program, and non-credit courses. Institutions are encouraged to develop waiver programs for eligible students that would provide 50 percent tuition waiver for any non-state supported course and/or certificate program.

***AWARD VALUE:***

The award under this program shall be equal to 100 percent of all billed tuition and fees, at the resident rate, as follows:

- a) a waiver of tuition for all students who qualify for tuition waivers under this section of the Commonwealth Tuition Waiver Guidelines, plus 100 percent of all fees for all state-supported courses or program of study.

In all cases, assistance under this program is awarded after consideration of all other federal scholarship and grant resources. Institutions may not use this tuition and fee assistance program to supplant other state, federal or institutional aid previously awarded to the student. Wherever

possible, institutions are encouraged to use the Tuition and Fee Assistance Program to reduce student education loan debt.

***INSTITUTIONAL DISBURSEMENT OF GRANT:***

Each participating institution must provide information to the Massachusetts Department of Higher Education regarding the student's financial aid award for the current academic year. This information will be used to determine the student's Tuition and Fee assistance. Institutions must disburse funds in compliance with guidelines governing all state financial aid programs.

***PARTICIPATION AGREEMENT:***

All institutions receiving funds under the Massachusetts Foster Child Tuition and Fee Assistance Program for eligible Foster Children must have an active State Financial Aid Participation Agreement on file with the Office of Student Financial Assistance.

***AUDIT REQUIREMENTS:***

- a) The Commissioner of Higher Education shall require each campus to furnish annually by August 31 a report detailing the number of Foster Children assisted for the previous year and the corresponding amount of tuition waived.
- b) All financial books, records and documents pertaining to this program shall at all times be open to inspection, review and audit by the Commissioner of Higher Education, the State Auditor or their authorized representatives who shall have access to the premises wherever such books, records and documents are located. The institutions shall retain such books, records and documents 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.

## **SECTION P: DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES**

### **ADOPTED CHILDREN TUITION WAIVER AND FEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM**

#### **PURPOSE:**

In July 2008, the Massachusetts Legislature amended Chapter 15A, Section 19 - Public Education Tuition Waiver, of the General Laws. This law provides for full tuition and fee waivers for foster children in the custody of the Department of Children and Families and children adopted through this agency that choose to attend a Massachusetts public institution of higher education, and it requires the Board of Higher Education to establish guidelines for these waivers. Section 19 also states, "The commonwealth, not the institutions of public higher education, shall bear the cost of these waivers, after all reimbursement from the federal government have been exhausted."

#### **DEFINITIONS:**

##### ***ELIGIBLE INSTITUTION:***

An institution within the system of public higher education under Section 5 of Chapter 15A of the General Laws.

##### ***ELIGIBLE PROGRAM:***

Any eligible state-supported undergraduate degree or certificate program offered by the institution.

##### ***ELIGIBLE STUDENT:***

Eligible students shall include children who were in the custody of the Department of Children and Families who were:

- adopted by an eligible Massachusetts state employee through the Department of Children and Families; or
- adopted by an eligible Massachusetts resident through the Department of Children and Families;
- and who meet the following criteria:
  - a) Is a permanent legal resident of Massachusetts or was a permanent resident of the Commonwealth at the time of adoption

- b) Is a U.S. citizen or non-citizen eligible under Title IV regulations
- c) Is under the age of twenty-five (25) at the start of the academic year
- d) Is enrolled in an undergraduate degree, certificate or short-term certificate program, or is taking noncredit courses
- e) Has applied for financial aid, using the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and,
- f) Is in compliance with applicable law regarding Selective Service
- g) Is not in default of any Federal or State Student Loans for attendance at any institution or owe a refund for any previous financial aid received
- h) Is in good standing and meets the institution's requirements for Satisfactory Academic Progress

***ELIGIBLE STATE EMPLOYEE AND RESIDENTS:***

Eligible state employees shall include all individuals determined to be Massachusetts state employees at the time of adoption of the eligible student including:

- All full- and part-time employees employed at the time of the adoption by Massachusetts state government at least six months,
- Employees who are working for the state at the time of the adoption and who continue to be employed by the state for at least six months after the adoption.

Eligible Massachusetts residents shall include:

- All individuals determined to be Massachusetts state residents at the time of the adoption of the eligible student.

***ELIGIBLE COURSE:***

Any state-supported course offered by an institution at a public college or university, excluding all graduate courses and courses in the M.D. program at the University of Massachusetts Medical Center. Eligible courses include those toward an undergraduate degree program, certificate program, short-term certificate program, and non-credit courses.

***AWARD VALUE:***

The award under this program shall be equal to 100 percent of all tuition and fees at the resident rate as follows:

- a) a waiver of tuition for all students who qualify for a waiver of tuition under this section of the Commonwealth Tuition Waiver Program, plus 100 percent of all fees for all state-supported courses or program of study.

In all cases, assistance under this program is awarded after consideration of all other federal scholarship and grant resources. Institutions may not use this tuition and fee assistance program to supplant other state, federal or institutional aid previously awarded to the student. Wherever possible, institutions are encouraged to use the Tuition and Fee Assistance Program to reduce student education loan debt.

***INSTITUTIONAL DISBURSEMENT OF GRANT:***

Each participating institution must provide information to the Board of Higher Education regarding the student's financial aid award for the current academic year. This information will be used to determine the student's Tuition and Fee assistance. Institutions must disburse funds in compliance with guidelines governing all state financial aid programs.

***PARTICIPATION AGREEMENT:***

All institutions receiving the Massachusetts Tuition and Fee Assistance funds for eligible Adopted and Foster Children must have an active State Financial Aid Participation Agreement on file with the Office of Student Financial Assistance.

***AUDIT REQUIREMENTS:***

- a) The Commissioner shall require each campus to furnish annually by August 31 a report detailing the number of Department of Children and Families recipients for the previous year and the corresponding amount of tuition waived.
- b) 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 located. The institution shall retain such financial books, records and documents for seven years. An institution may retain such records and documents for a period of five years if approval is received from the Records Conservation Board in accordance with General Laws, Chapter 30, and Section 42.

**COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS  
MATH AND SCIENCE TEACHERS SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM**

**DEFINITIONS:**

**INSTITUTION**

Any regionally accredited public or private college or university in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts that offers an approved educator preparation program for an initial license in Mathematics or Science or a program of study or related coursework leading to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education licensure in Mathematics or Science.

**ELIGIBLE STUDENT**

To be eligible for the Math and Science Teachers Scholarship Program, an applicant must:

- be employed, full or part time, as an educator in a Massachusetts public school or school that provides publicly-funded special education, and
- be currently teaching Mathematics or Science (including Technology or Engineering) under a preliminary license, waiver, or outside their licensed area; and meet the following criteria:
  - (a) be a permanent legal resident of Massachusetts
  - (b) be a United States citizen or eligible non-citizen
  - (c) be enrolled in up to three higher education courses per academic semester in fulfillment of degree or program requirements in a state-approved educator preparation program for the initial license in the Mathematics or Science field and level of interest.
  - (d) sign an agreement to continue teaching Mathematics or Science (including Technology/Engineering) in a Massachusetts public school for a term of service after completion of courses or program (no longer teaching out-of-field) or repay funds as defined below
  - (e) be eligible under Title IV Regulations and not in default of a state or federal education loan or grant



(f) annually file the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)

Priority consideration will be given to applicants meeting the above criteria who are teaching full or part time in a high-need district. A high-need district is a district that has been identified for corrective action in which there are one or more schools identified for corrective action or restructuring or districts in which the percentage of low-income students is 40 percent or greater.

Preference will be given to applicants who are identified by superintendents or principals as highly talented educators, who have demonstrated a commitment to education and to instructional excellence.

### **AWARD VALUE**

The award for eligible applicants under this program shall include the cost of tuition, fees, and related expenses as determined by the Board of Higher Education and the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education for up to three eligible courses per academic semester at an eligible institution of higher education in Massachusetts. Eligible applicants may receive a scholarship award for all academic semesters, including summer terms, based on availability.

Priority will be given to teachers employed in high-need districts. Teachers in high-need districts are eligible to receive full funding for tuition, fees, and related expenses. Teachers employed in non-high-need districts are eligible for partial funding (75 percent) of the cost of tuition, fees, and related expenses.

The Board of Higher Education, in consultation with the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, will annually review the tuition and fee charges at Massachusetts public and private colleges and universities and adjust the program award values, as it deems necessary.

### **TEACHING OBLIGATION**

Recipients of the Mathematics and Science Teachers Scholarship Program must sign a Terms and Conditions Statement acknowledging their obligation to provide service as a full-time teacher in a Massachusetts public school (K-12). The service commitment will range from a minimum of one and a maximum of four years of employment as a full-time teacher, depending on the number of courses taken with scholarship assistance, as follows:

|              |             |
|--------------|-------------|
| 1-2 courses  | one year    |
| 3-4 courses  | two years   |
| 5-7 courses  | three years |
| 8-10 or more | four years  |

Teachers in high-need districts are expected to fulfill their term of service in a high-need district. If a teacher in a high-need district fulfills the term of service in a non-high-need district, the teacher must repay the difference between the full scholarship rate and the partial scholarship rate.

A teacher who benefits from the scholarship and fails to provide the required service in a Massachusetts Public School will be responsible for repayment of the scholarship award received, prorated on the length of service provided, as defined in the Terms and Conditions Statement and as determined by the Massachusetts Board of Higher Education, in consultation with the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

### **INSTITUTIONAL DISBURSEMENT OF GRANTS**

Each participating institution must certify that the recipient is eligible in accordance with guidelines established for the Mathematics and Science Teachers Scholarship Program.

All funds appropriated for this program must be expended by June 30 of each fiscal year or as otherwise determined by the Legislature.

### **PARTICIPATION AGREEMENT**

Each institution participating in the Pilot Scholarship Program for Mathematics and Science Teachers must file a State Financial Aid Program Participation Agreement to be maintained on file in the Massachusetts Office of Student Financial Assistance.

### **AUDIT REQUIREMENTS**

- a) It shall be the responsibility of each institution to maintain documentation of a recipient student's eligibility.
- b) The Commissioner of Higher Education shall require each campus to furnish to the Board of Higher Education a report detailing specific information regarding recipients. The Office of Student Financial Assistance will coordinate specification 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 of Higher Education, the State Auditor or their authorized representatives, who shall have access to the premises wherever such books, records and documents are located. The institution shall retain such financial books, records and documents 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.

### **AUTHORITY**

Chapter 139 of the Acts of 2006, line item 7061-9804.

