

**2015 – 2016
EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATORS (ECE)
SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM**

GENERAL INFORMATION:

In the fall of 2005 the Massachusetts Legislature passed key legislation implementing the Early Childhood Educators Scholarship program to early childhood and out of school time educators earning their associate's or bachelor's degree in early childhood education or a related field. 2008 Legislation: <http://www.mass.gov/legis/laws/seslaw08/si080182.htm>

How do I know if I am eligible for the scholarship?

You are **eligible** for the ECE Scholarship if you meet **ALL** of the following criteria.

- Massachusetts permanent residency;
- [United States citizen or eligible non-citizen](#);
- Currently working in a Massachusetts EEC licensed or authorized program for at least one year as of the priority deadline;
- Continue employment in an EEC licensed or authorized program while earning your degree;
- Register with [EEC'S Professional Qualifications Registry](#) (PQR) and have an active PQR number;
- Matriculate (must enroll and be accepted as a candidate) in an associate's or bachelor's degree program in early education and care or a related field at an eligible Massachusetts institution of higher education;
- Agree to continue working in the field of early education and care or out of school time for a minimum of 6 months for every semester of scholarship funding you receive.

You are **not eligible** for the ECE Scholarship if you meet **ANY** of the following criteria.

- Do not live in Massachusetts;
- Not a United States citizen or eligible non-citizen;
- Do not work in a Massachusetts EEC licensed or authorized early education and care or out of school time program;
- Have previously defaulted on state or federal student loans or owe a refund on any previously received federal or state financial aid;
- Have a prior bachelor's degree in any major;
- Not enrolled in an eligible Massachusetts institution of higher education for an associate's or bachelor's degree in early childhood education, or a related degree.

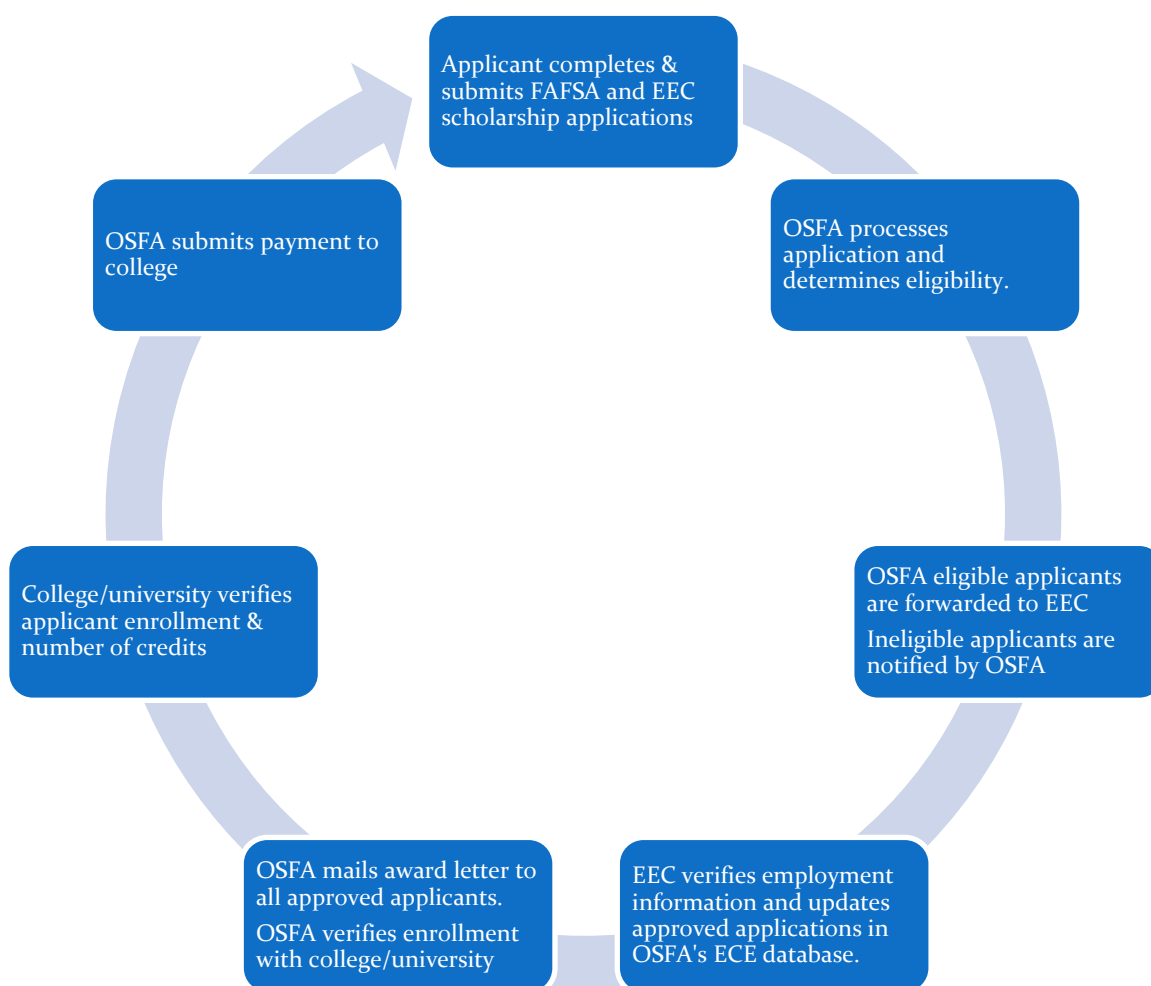
What do I need to do to apply for the Scholarship?

- Complete a 2015-2016 [Free Application for Federal Student Aid \(FAFSA\)](#). This is a requirement of the ECE Scholarship program. You cannot file an ECE Scholarship application until you have filed your FAFSA and your FAFSA is received by the Department of Higher Education and OSFA. It takes a minimum of 72 hours for OSFA to receive a completed FAFSA. You do not have to be eligible for financial aid to apply for the ECE Scholarship.
- Complete the 2015-2016 [ECE Scholarship](#) application online annually. Incomplete applications cause a delay in processing and awarding of scholarship funding. Please complete your 2015-2016 application in full. The application is available online at The Massachusetts Department of Higher Education, Office of Student Financial Assistance (OSFA) www.osfa.mass.edu.

- Matriculate (must enroll and be accepted as a candidate) in an associate's or bachelor's degree program in early education and care or a related field at an eligible Massachusetts institution of higher education.
- For the list of eligible colleges and universities for the ECE Scholarship Program, [Log onto www.osfa.mass.edu](http://www.osfa.mass.edu); Click on Financial Aid Programs; Select Early Childhood Educators Scholarship; and scroll down to Eligible Institutions.

For additional information and resources you may also access the [Student Loan Information Network](#) available through the [Bessie Tartt Wilson Initiative for Children, Inc.](#) or contact 617-425-0002.

Scholarship Process for 2015 - 2016



Award Amounts

<i>Institution Type</i>	<i>Award per Credit</i>	<i>Maximum per Semester (9 credits)</i>
<i>Public University</i>	<i>\$500</i>	<i>\$4,500</i>
<i>Private College/ University</i>	<i>\$500</i>	<i>\$4,500</i>
<i>State College</i>	<i>\$400</i>	<i>\$3,600</i>
<i>Community College</i>	<i>\$250</i>	<i>\$2,250</i>

Scholarship Notification

The ECE Scholarship is a multi-agency, collaborative initiative. Applicants are first required to complete the FAFSA (www.fafsa.ed.gov). Once the FAFSA is received by OSFA -- it takes 72 hours for OSFA to receive a completed FAFSA -- the student may complete the online ECE Scholarship application (www.osfa.mass.edu).

OSFA verifies the following information on the application:

1. You have completed your FAFSA (You cannot file your ECE Scholarship application until OSFA has received your FAFSA;
2. You are a Massachusetts resident;
3. You are a U.S. citizen or eligible non-citizen;
4. You are not in default on any previous state or federal student loans and do not owe a refund on any previously received federal or state financial aid;
5. You do not hold a prior bachelor's degree;
6. You are matriculated at an eligible institution of higher education in Massachusetts;
7. You are enrolled in an associate's or bachelor's degree program in early education and care or a related field;
8. You are in good standing at your institution of higher education;
9. You have been working in the field for at least one year from the date of the priority deadline; and
10. Your supervisor has completed the supervisory portion of the scholarship application.

Ineligible Applicants:

If you are found not eligible by OSFA, you will receive notification of your ineligibility once your application has been processed.

Eligible Applicants:

If you have met the requirements verified by OSFA, your application will be sent to EEC for further review and verification. EEC verifies the following information:

1. You are currently working in an EEC licensed or authorized program;
2. You are currently working in a position that is acceptable for the scholarship program;
3. You continue to work in an EEC licensed or authorized program while earning your degree;
4. You are registered in EEC's Professional Qualifications Registry and have an active PQR number;
5. Once you have been approved by both OSFA and EEC, OSFA will send award letters to eligible students. OSFA then contacts the institution listed on your application to verify that you are a matriculated student, enrolled in an eligible degree program, in good academic standing, and the number of credits indicated on your ECE Scholarship application, etc.

Who do I contact if I need help with my...

➤ FAFSA

- Visit www.fafsa.ed.gov **OR**
- Contact the American Student Assistance Planning Center in your area (<http://www.asa.org/plan/>) **OR**
- Contact your local college/university **OR**
- Contact the Educational Opportunity Center in your area (<http://www.massedco.org/educational-opportunity-center>) **OR**
- Contact Jean Szymaniak at the Office of Student Financial Assistance

- 617-391-6083 or JSzymaniak@bhe.mass.edu
- My scholarship notification letter or payment to my college/university
 - Contact Jean Szymaniak at the Office of Student Financial Assistance 617-391-6083 or JSzymaniak@bhe.mass.edu
 - My employment information and eligibility
 - Annette Lamana at the Department of Early Education and Care 413-881-1523 (direct line) or annette.lamana@massmail.state.ma.us or EEC's main number at 617-988-6600.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS:

1. Do I need to apply for the scholarship every year?

Answer: **Yes**, for each year that you would like to receive assistance from the scholarship program you are required to complete a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and then complete the ECE Scholarship application.

2. When will the 2015-2016 ECE Scholarship application be available?

Answer: The 2015-2016 ECE Scholarship application will be available on or around April 1, 2015. Applicants interested in applying for the ECE Scholarship must first complete the FAFSA in preparation for filing the ECE Scholarship application. The FAFSA is available at www.fafsa.ed.gov.

3. What is the deadline to apply for the 2015-2016 ECE Scholarship application?

Answer: The priority deadline is June 1, 2015.

4. What does it mean to be matriculated?

Answer: A matriculated student has been accepted for admission to the college, has registered and is pursuing courses toward a degree.

5. What is an eligible non-citizen?

Answer: You are considered an eligible non-citizen if you meet ONE of the following criteria:

- You are a U.S. permanent resident with an Alien Registration Card (I-551).
- You are a conditional permanent resident with an I-551C card.
- You have an Arrival Departure Record (I-94) from the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) with any of the following designations:
 - refugee
 - asylum granted
 - parole
 - Cuban-Haitian entrant
 - A citizen of the Republic of Palau, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, or the Federated States of Micronesia

6. Have the ECE Scholarship eligibility requirements changed for the 2015-2016 application?

Answer: The Scholarship eligibility requirements for academic year 2015-2016 have not changed. All requirements are still in effect including the requirement for registration in EEC's Professional Qualifications Registry (PQR). Your PQR number must be active.

7. What is considered to be a “related” field?

Answer: To be eligible for the ECE Scholarship applicants must be enrolled in an associate’s or bachelor’s degree program in early childhood education or a related field. Related fields include: child development, elementary education, child guidance, human services, psychology, physical education, recreation, child psychology, the arts, social work, and sociology.

8. If I am approved for the scholarship when will I receive my award?

Answer: Once an applicant is approved by both OSFA and EEC, OSFA will contact the college listed on your application to verify that you are a matriculated student, enrolled in an eligible degree program, in good academic standing, and the number of credits indicated on your ECE Scholarship application. Once the college submits verification to OSFA, payment will be made to the college.

9. I have already paid my bill for the semester, or my bill is due before I hear about my scholarship determination. What should I do?

Answer: If you have already paid your semester bill you should contact your Bursar’s Office for a reimbursement once the school has received your scholarship award. If your bill is due prior to the scholarship approval you should contact the Bursar’s Office at your institution. Many schools allow students to begin classes prior to payment of tuition, but withhold credit until the tuition is paid.

10. I have a bachelor’s degree in an unrelated field, am I eligible for this program?

Answer: **No**, having any bachelor’s degree in any field disqualifies you from participating in the program. If you hold a bachelor’s degree in an unrelated field and are looking for additional coursework in early childhood education you may be able to find coursework on EEC’s [Online Professional Development Calendar](#) and [Educator and Provider Support Grantees Professional Development Course Catalogue](#) or by contacting the Educator and Provider Support Grantee in your area:

➤ **Western Region 1**

Preschool Enrichment Team, Inc.

Contact: Kimm Quinlan 413-736-3900 ext.159 or KQuinlan@valleyopp.com

➤ **Central Region 2**

Family Services of Central MA

Contact: Joanne Gravell at 508-757-1503, 211 or jgravell@cccfsdm.org

➤ **Northeast Region 3**

North Shore Community College

Contact: Kathy Gallo at 781-593-6722 x 6249 or kgallo@northshore.edu

➤ **Southeast Region 5**

Child Development and Education, Inc.

Contact: Elizabeth A. Reedy at 508-369-3673 or seepp@cdedu.us

➤ **Metro Boston Region 6**

ABCD, Inc.

Contact: Donna Jasak 617-348-6314 or 617-348-6287 or

Donna.Jasak@bostonabcd.org or <http://region6eps.bostonabcd.org>

11. Are staff working in EEC licensed or authorized school age child care programs eligible for this scholarship program?

Answer: Yes, individuals working in an EEC licensed or authorized school age program are eligible.

12. Are paraprofessionals currently employed in public schools eligible for the ECE Scholarship Program?

Answer: Public school paraprofessionals that are working in an EEC authorized (preschool) program are eligible to participate in the ECE Scholarship program. There is a separate grant program, the [Paraprofessional Teacher Preparation Grant](#), designed specifically for paraprofessionals who wish to become certified as full time teachers. This program is available to paraprofessionals working with all age and grade levels within public schools. Individuals cannot participate in both programs.

13. Are staff living in another state but working in an early education and care program in Massachusetts eligible for this scholarship program?

Answer: No, applicants must be legal Massachusetts residents for at least one year prior to the start of the academic year.

14. Are staff living in Massachusetts but working in an early education and care program in a neighboring state eligible for the scholarship?

Answer: No, applicants must be working in Massachusetts in an EEC licensed or authorized program to be eligible for the ECE Scholarship.

15. I have not been at my current place of employment for at least 1 year, but I have been in the field for at least 1 year. Am I eligible for the scholarship?

Answer: If you have not been at your current place of employment for at least 1 year but have previously worked in a Massachusetts EEC licensed or authorized program within the past 6 months you are still eligible for the ECE Scholarship. Your previous employment information should be included in the "Proof of Employment/ Professional Recommendation" section of the application. If you have not been in the field for at least 1 year then you are not eligible for the ECE Scholarship at this time.

16. Is there a minimum number of hours each week I must be employed in Early Education and Care to be eligible for this program?

Answer: No, a minimum number of hours have not been established. However, the legislation requires that applicants have demonstrated a commitment to the field. OSFA and EEC have the ability to question whether an applicant who is working very limited hours has demonstrated the required commitment.

17. Are substitute teachers eligible to receive scholarship funding?

Answer: The ECE Scholarship program is intended for staff that has made a commitment to the field, substitutes who work in early education and care programs on an occasional and infrequent basis are not eligible. Staff who substitute often, for example, some child care programs have regular or permanent substitutes and meet the other scholarship requirements are eligible.

18. What if I have previously defaulted on a state or federal student loan?

Answer: If you have previously defaulted on a state or federal student loan then you are not eligible for the ECE Scholarship. However, you do have the ability to change

your default status. Please contact the Office of Student Financial Assistance for more information at 617-391-6070.

19. What expenses is the scholarship intended to cover?

Answer: The amounts awarded are intended to fund tuition and fees but may also include funding for related expenses such as textbooks.

20. If I do not use any or my entire scholarship award will it carry over to the next semester?

Answer: **No**, scholarship funding does not carry from one semester to the next. Recipients are only awarded an ECE Scholarship for courses/credits for which they have indicated on their ECE Scholarship application and have been certified as eligible by the school.

21. If I do not use my fall scholarship, am I still eligible for my spring award?

Answer: The availability of spring awards is dependent on available funding. ECE Scholarship recipients who do not register for courses for the fall semester, or are not able to be certified by the college for a fall award, must notify the Office of Student Financial Assistance (OSFA) in writing of plans to enroll for the spring semester. Scholarship funds are not guaranteed for the spring semester.

22. Can the ECE Scholarship be used to support master's level coursework?

Answer: **No**, at this time the ECE Scholarship does not support graduate/masters level coursework. Please visit EEC's Online Professional Development Calendar to see if there are any master's level courses to meet your professional development needs. The calendar is available at www.mass.gov/eec.

23. I am my own supervisor; who should complete the supervisor portion of my application?

Answer: If you are a family child care provider or center director and you do not have an immediate supervisor, a current or former parent of the child care program, or staff person with whom you work with from a Family Child Care System, Child Care Resource and Referral Agency, or a Coordinated Family and Community Engagement (CFCE) grantee program may complete the required supervisor section of your application.

24. What happens if I change colleges or employment during the course of the scholarship?

Answer: ECE Scholarship recipients are required to notify EEC and OSFA in writing if there are any changes to their personal information, employment, or college. If a recipient changes colleges during the course of the scholarship there is no guarantee that funding will be available to support a greater award amount. Changes in information should be sent to Jean Szymaniak at JSzymaniak@bhe.mass.edu or Annette Lamana at annette.lamana@massmail.state.ma.us.

25. When will I be notified of the status of my ECE Scholarship?

Answer: Once your FAFSA and ECE applications have been reviewed, you will receive notification of the status of your ECE Scholarship.