

**BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION
MASSACHUSETTS FOSTER CHILD GRANT PROGRAM**

DEFINITIONS

ELIGIBLE INSTITUTION:

An eligible institution shall mean a public, private, independent, for profit or nonprofit institution in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and the continental United States authorized to offer undergraduate degrees or certificate programs. The institution must be accredited and eligible to participate in Federal Title IV programs.

ELIGIBLE PROGRAM:

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

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

To be eligible for the Foster Child Grant program, the student must:

- a) be enrolled in an eligible institution, as defined;
- b) 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 (BHE) policy;
- c) have been placed in the custody of the Department of Children and Families through a Care and Protection Petition;
- d) be under the age of twenty-five (25) at the start of the academic year;
- e) have signed a voluntary agreement with the Department of Children and Families establishing the terms and conditions for receiving such aid;
- f) be a U.S. Citizen, lawful permanent resident, or non-citizen eligible under Title IV regulations; or have an approved eligibility status designated by the BHE pursuant to the Massachusetts Tuition Equity Law annually;
- g) enroll, as matriculated student, on a full-time basis (minimum of 12 credits, or the equivalent) in an eligible undergraduate program of study;
- h) complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) or the Massachusetts Application for State Financial Aid (MASFA) as applicable for eligible students under the Massachusetts Tuition Equity Law annually;

- i) comply with financial aid verification requirements;
- j) not be in default on any federal or state student loans for attendance at any institution, or owe a refund for any previous state financial aid program; and
- k) meet Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) according to institution's requirements and federal standards.

AWARD VALUE

The award under this program shall be as follows:

- a) maximum of \$6,000 per academic year for eligible students enrolled in public institutions for no more than 5 consecutive years
- b) maximum of \$6,000 per academic year for students enrolled in private non-profit or private for-profit institutions for no more than 5 consecutive years. In all cases, funds must be awarded as "last dollar" grants, with eligibility determined after consideration of all other state, federal and institutional scholarship and grant resources. Institutions may not use the Foster Child Grant to supplant other state, federal or institutional aid previously awarded to the student. Wherever possible, institutions are encouraged to use the Foster Child Grant to reduce student education loan debt.

AWARD DISBURSEMENT

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

ANNUAL REVIEW

The Department of Higher Education is responsible for evaluating the effectiveness of the Foster Child Grant program. 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 participating in the Foster Child Grant Program 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 adequate documentation of a recipient student's eligibility for the Foster Child Grant Program.
- b) The Commissioner shall require each college to furnish annually to the BHE a report detailing specific information regarding recipients of the Foster Child 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 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.