



*Louisiana*

**SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM**

# **FAMILY FAQ**



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## 1. OVERVIEW OF THE SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

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### What is the Louisiana Scholarship Program?

The Louisiana Scholarship Program provides thousands of low-income families who would otherwise attend C, D, or F rated public schools with the opportunity to send their child to the participating school of their choice.

Currently, approximately 7,000 students are attending nonpublic schools of their choice.

This Scholarship Program Family FAQ outlines the policies and responsibilities schools, families and the Department have during the Scholarship application and award process. Families should read the entire FAQ carefully and reach out the Scholarship team at [studentscholarships@la.gov](mailto:studentscholarships@la.gov) with any questions or concerns.

## 2. STUDENT ELIGIBILITY

### Who is eligible for the Scholarship Program?

Students must meet certain eligibility requirements in order to participate in the Scholarship program.

STUDENT ELIGIBILITY	
✓	Louisiana resident
✓	Household income that does not exceed 250% of the federal poverty guidelines
✓	Either entering kindergarten or enrolled in a public school with a C, D, F, or T grade on both October 1 and February 1 of the current school year or a continuing Scholarship student

Homeschool students and students in grades K-12 who currently attend nonpublic schools are not eligible.

### How do families prove student eligibility?

Eligibility documentation must be submitted to a participating Scholarship school or, if the family is applying to a school in Orleans Parish, to a Family Resource Center.

PROOF OF RESIDENCY DOCUMENTATION	
✓	Rental lease agreement or mortgage agreement
✓	Electricity/Gas Bill
✓	Telephone Bill (Must be a landline - cellular phone bills will not suffice)
✓	Cable or Internet service bill
✓	Sewage/water bill
✓	Current Official letter from a Government Agency (DSS, DHH)
✓	Homestead Exemption Notice
✓	Property Tax notice

INCOME ELIGIBILITY DOCUMENTATION	
If the parent participates in any one of the programs below, the parent can bring evidence that they participate in the program.	
✓	Placement form from DCFS in the case of foster children
✓	Louisiana Purchase Card
✓	SNAP Benefits
✓	Social Security Benefits
If the parent does not participate in any of the programs listed above, the parent will need to bring proof of income for every income-earning member of their household.	
✓	Most recent Federal Tax Return
✓	Most recent pension statements
✓	Most recent unemployment compensation statement
✓	Most recent Social Security benefits statement

250% OF CURRENT FEDERAL POVERTY GUIDELINES*				
Household Size	Yearly Income	Monthly Income	Bi-Weekly Income	Weekly Income
2	\$42,275	\$3,523	\$1,624	\$812
3	\$53,325	\$4,329	\$2,050	\$1,025
4	\$64,375	\$5,365	\$2,474	\$1,237
5	\$75,425	\$6,285	\$2,900	\$1,450
6	\$86,475	\$7,206	\$3,324	\$1,662
7	\$97,525	\$8,127	\$3,750	\$1,875
8	\$108,575	\$9,048	\$4,174	\$2,087
Add this amount for each additional family member	\$11,050	\$921	\$424	\$212

\*Guidelines are updated annually. 2019 guidelines listed; 2020 guidelines will be available in January.

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### 3. APPLICATION AND ENROLLMENT

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#### When can families apply?

Applications are accepted in the school year prior to the year for which the award would be made. Additionally, there are two different application windows based on school location. Please see timeline below.



Schools are not allowed to implement admissions criteria for Scholarship applicants and may not discriminate against any students – such as students with special needs – during the application and registration processes.

Scholarship awards are made by the Department only. Schools cannot inform families that they have been accepted to their school as a Scholarship student prior to awards being made. Families that have questions about this policy should reach out to [studentscholarships@la.gov](mailto:studentscholarships@la.gov) immediately.

Schools located in Orleans parish participate in OneApp, the parish-wide unified enrollment process. For additional details about OneApp, visit [www.enrollnola.org](http://www.enrollnola.org).

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## Who should submit an application?

### SCHOLARSHIP APPLICANT TYPES

#### NEW STUDENT APPLICANTS

New student applicants are students who do not have a Scholarship award for the current school year.

\* Please note that students who participate in the NSECD PK4 program are considered new student applicants for the Scholarship Program

#### Must submit an application:

- Families applying to schools located outside of Orleans Parish can access the application [online](#).
- Families applying to schools located in Orleans Parish must use the OneApp application. Families can access OneApp [online](#) or at a [New Orleans Family Resource Center](#).

#### Must submit eligibility documentation:

The student must meet the residency and income requirements of the program. Each year, the Department outlines the approved forms of documentation that families may submit to prove eligibility. This information can be found on the application guide as well as page 4 of this document.

#### CONTINUING STUDENT APPLICANTS

Continuing student applicants are students who are currently enrolled in a Scholarship school as a confirmed Louisiana Scholarship Award Recipient. Continuing student applications can fall into 4 categories:

#### Students who wish to remain at their current school:

- Are guaranteed a seat at their current school for the following year, provided they are not in a terminal grade.
- Do not need to submit a new application.

#### Students who are in a terminal grade (the last grade a school serves):

- Must submit an application that lists their preferred Scholarship school choices for the next school year. Please note that students in a terminal grade may only apply to Scholarship schools accepting new students.
- Do not need to resubmit eligibility documentation and will automatically be deemed eligible.
- Receive priority in the lottery process but are not guaranteed a new Scholarship seat.

#### Students who are interested in enrolling in a different Scholarship school:

- Must submit an application that lists their preferred Scholarship school choices for the next school year.
- Do not need to resubmit eligibility documentation and will automatically be deemed eligible.
- If a student is not awarded to a Scholarship school listed on their application, they will return to their current Scholarship school provided they are not in a terminal grade.

#### Students who are interested in applying to both Scholarship and Public schools (Orleans Parish Residents Only)

- Families who wish to apply to both Public and Non Public schools may do so on their OneApp application. If a current Scholarship student is awarded to a Public School listed on their application, they will lose their Scholarship award. There are no exceptions to this policy.
- Do not need to resubmit eligibility documentation and will automatically be deemed eligible.

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## How do families apply?

<b>Orleans Parish</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Application opens in November</li><li>• Apply through the OneApp application or by visiting an RSD Family Resource Center</li><li>• Parents must bring eligibility documentation to an RSD Family Resource Center.</li></ul>
<b>Outside of Orleans Parish</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Application opens in December/early January</li><li>• Apply online</li><li>• Parents must bring eligibility documentation to one of the Scholarship schools listed on the student's application.</li></ul>
<b>More information</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• For application information for schools located outside of Orleans Parish: <a href="http://www.louisianabelieves.com/schools/louisiana-scholarship-program">www.louisianabelieves.com/schools/louisiana-scholarship-program</a></li><li>• For application information for schools located Inside of Orleans Parish: <a href="http://www.enrollnola.org">www.enrollnola.org</a></li><li>• For any other questions please e-mail: <a href="mailto:studentscholarships@la.gov">studentscholarships@la.gov</a>.</li></ul>

## Do all students who apply receive a Scholarship?

The Louisiana Department of Education will attempt to place as many applicants as possible in their preferred school choice. When there are more applications than available seats, Scholarship placements are determined through an unbiased lottery process. Unfortunately, this means that not all students will be awarded to the Scholarship school of their choice.

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## 4. LOTTERY PROCESS AND AWARD NOTIFICATION

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### How are students awarded a Scholarship?

Once a student submits an application and is deemed eligible to participate in the program, the application is entered into a lottery. The Louisiana Department of Education will attempt to place as many applicants as possible in their preferred school choice. Scholarship placements are determined through an unbiased lottery process.

The Scholarship lottery process uses the following priorities (listed in order) to make student awards:

1. Students transferring from a closing Scholarship school
2. Current Nonpublic School Early Childhood Development (NSECD) students, if applicable. Only applies to students applying to the same school they attended while enrolled in NSECD.
3. Siblings of current Scholarship students (In order to link students as siblings, all siblings must be listed on each application.) Only applies to children that are applying to a Scholarship school which their sibling already attends.
4. Current Scholarship student applicants that are in a terminal grade
5. Applicants attending a D or F public school or students transferring from a sanctioned Scholarship school
6. Applicants attending a C school
7. Applicants residing in the same parish as the school, if school chose to offer a geographic preference
8. Current Scholarship students who wish to attend a different Scholarship school

While these students receive priority in the lottery process, a Scholarship award cannot be guaranteed.

### How will I be notified of my student's Scholarship award?

The Department will notify families of Scholarship awards through mail and email. Letters will be sent through the U.S. Postal Service to the address included on the student's application.

#### AWARD NOTIFICATION

<b>How do I accept my student's Scholarship award?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Families must complete registration at the awarded school before the deadline stated in the award notification letter.</li><li>• A Scholarship is not accepted until registration is complete. If families fail to register by the deadline, the student will lose their Scholarship award.</li></ul>
<b>What should I do if I am not happy with my student's award?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Students must accept their award at the awarded school as well as resubmit eligibility document prior to the deadline. Once the transfer window opens in the summer, the student may then apply for a transfer to another Scholarship school. The transfer form would be completed at the new school and submitted to the Department for approval.</li></ul>
<b>Why was my student not awarded a Scholarship?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• We receive more applications for the Louisiana Scholarship Program than there are seats available at participating schools. Unfortunately, not all applicants are matched in the of the Louisiana Scholarship Program application process.</li></ul>
<b>Why was my student's application marked ineligible?</b>	<p>There are two reasons an application is typically marked ineligible:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Income Ineligible – Household income was reported to exceed 250% of the federal poverty limit.</li><li>2. Ineligible Prior School – Student was not reported as enrolled in the Louisiana Public School that received a letter grade of “C”, “D”, “F”, or “T” on both October 1st and February 1st of the current school year. Students must be enrolled in a school that meets these requirements on both count dates. Students that are homeschooled are not eligible to receive a Scholarship.</li></ol>



## 5. SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM PROCESSES AND PROCEDURES

### How do families register at their student's awarded Scholarship school?

Families must register at the school to which they were awarded by the deadline included in the award letter. Families who don't register by the deadline will lose their Scholarship award.

Families should follow the school's directions when registering, but families must share their income and residential eligibility information for a final review.

In addition, when completing registration at a Scholarship school, families are required to sign the following three forms in order to participate in the Scholarship program. These forms must be re-signed every year.

FORM	BY SIGNING THIS FORM, PARENTS INDICATE THEY UNDERSTAND THAT:
<b>Parent Waiver for Special Education Services</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Scholarship schools are not required to provide special education and related services.</li> <li>Parents waive their right to any special education and related services their child may have.</li> </ul>
<b>Parent Acknowledgments Regarding Scholarship Funds</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Department pays the school directly and that the family will not receive any funds.</li> <li>There will be no refund to a parent under any circumstances.</li> <li>The family chose to register at the school of their own free will.</li> <li>The parent will update the school in the case of address change or transfer, among other matters.</li> </ul>
<b>Receipt of Rules and Regulations Form</b>	The Scholarship school has informed the family of any and all rules, policies, and procedures of the school, including but not limited to academic policies, disciplinary rules, and procedures of the school.

### Do Scholarship schools provide Special Education services?

Participating Scholarship schools are not required to provide special education or related services to students with disabilities.

Schools are required to accept any eligible student who was awarded to their school, including students with disabilities. During the registration process, all families must review and sign the special education waiver, in which a parent waives any rights to special education and related services.

Schools must accept the student if the family still chooses to enroll their child despite the school's lack of available special education services.

### Can students transfer to other participating Scholarship schools?

Current Scholarship students who wish to transfer from one participating Scholarship school to another during the school year are required to submit a formal Hardship Transfer Request to the Department signed by both the parent/guardian and a representative of the receiving school.

A student is not permitted to enroll at a different participating Scholarship school until the Department has notified the participating school that the transfer has been approved. If a student transfers without a completed transfer form and approval from the Department, he/she may lose their Scholarship. It is the school's responsibility to inform the family when the transfer has been approved.



Transfers will be approved on a case-by-case basis for hardships including but not limited to:

- Sibling unification
- Family relocation
- Student expulsion
- To accommodate a student's special needs

Transfers are only allowed to schools that meet accountability standards and who have not exceeded their new student caps. In order to request a transfer, students must currently be registered at a Scholarship school.

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## How do families withdraw from the Scholarship Program?

If a family wishes to withdraw their student(s) from the Scholarship Program, they should notify the Scholarship school and take the steps to enroll in the school option of their choice. Students with documented medical leave may request a hold on their Scholarship by contacting [studentscholarships@la.gov](mailto:studentscholarships@la.gov).

Students who withdraw from a Scholarship school without transferring to another Scholarship school will lose their Scholarship award for the remainder of the year. If the student would like to apply for a Scholarship seat the following year, the family will need to re-verify income and residential eligibility, and the student must again meet all other eligibility requirements.

## What do families do if their student is expelled from their Scholarship school?

All schools must adhere to the policies outlined in their handbook when implementing expulsions. Families should receive and sign for these policies at the beginning of each school year. In addition, families should request written notification if their child is expelled or asked not to return.

TYPE	WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?	WHAT SHOULD I DO NEXT?
<b>Official Expulsion</b>	Student is officially expelled from their current Scholarship school for the remainder of the school year	Families may reach out to <a href="mailto:studentscholarships@la.gov">studentscholarships@la.gov</a> or another participating Scholarship school for a transfer*

\*Scholarship transfers are not guaranteed.

## Who can families contact with questions?

Families are encouraged to communicate directly with their child's school. The school is the best source of information about school requirements and the Scholarship program.

If you have any questions about your student's Scholarship or the application process, please reach out to your Scholarship school first. If your question is still not answered, do not hesitate to email [studentscholarships@la.gov](mailto:studentscholarships@la.gov) with any questions.

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## 6. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

### Where can families find additional Scholarship resources?

RESOURCE	EXPLANATION	LINK
<b>Louisiana Scholarship Program</b>	Department website for the Scholarship program	<a href="http://www.louisianabelieves.com/schools/louisiana-scholarship-program">www.louisianabelieves.com/schools/louisiana-scholarship-program</a>
<b>BESE Bulletin 133</b>	Outlines the requirements for participation in the Louisiana Scholarship Program for the Department, schools, and families	<a href="#">BESE Bulletin 133</a>
<b>Louisiana School Finder</b>	Search for schools or centers based on what matters most to you.	<a href="http://www.louisianaschools.com">www.louisianaschools.com</a>