



## Frequently Asked Questions

### **Who is eligible for Tennessee Promise?**

A high school senior who graduates from an eligible high school, completes a Tennessee home school program, or, prior to his or her 19<sup>th</sup> birthday, obtains a GED or HiSET diploma. Students must apply by the November deadline of their high school senior year or the year in which he/she will obtain the GED/HiSET and complete all other eligibility requirements detailed [HERE](#).

### **If students and their families haven't filed taxes by the deadline, can they still file the FAFSA before the Tennessee Promise deadline?**

Yes. Students can file the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) anytime between October 1 and the deadline and still be eligible for Tennessee Promise. Beginning in the 2017-18 academic year, students and families file the FAFSA using "prior-prior year" tax information, meaning that 2015 tax information was used for the 2017-2018 FAFSA. Student can use the IRS Data Retrieval tool when filling out the FAFSA to gather the 2015 tax information.

Some students may also be asked to verify their FAFSA information. If a student is selected for verification, he or she must provide the necessary documentation to the institution in order to be awarded the Tennessee Promise scholarship. Some partnering organizations may ask students to provide verification documentation to institutions by July 15.

### **How long after high school graduation will students have in order to be eligible for Tennessee Promise?**

To be eligible for the scholarship, a student must enroll in an eligible postsecondary institution and participate full-time in the fall term following graduation from an eligible high school or homeschool program, or completion of a GED/HiSET diploma, provided that the GED/HiSET diploma was earned before the student reached nineteen years of age. A student placed on a waitlist at a TN College of Applied Technology (TCAT) after satisfying all initial program eligibility requirements will remain eligible until space is available in their chosen program.



## Frequently Asked Questions

### **Are GED/HiSET recipients eligible for Tennessee Promise?**

Yes. Students who complete a GED or HiSET diploma must complete the application by the November deadline, complete all additional eligibility criteria and enroll in an eligible postsecondary program in the fall term immediately following receipt of their diploma, provided that the diploma was earned before the student reached nineteen years of age.

### **How do students renew this scholarship?**

Once in the program, students must do the following to retain their scholarship:

- Maintain full-time enrollment and participation if at a community college or in an eligible program at a participating four-year institution or continuous enrollment and satisfactory academic progress if at a TN College of Applied Technology
- Complete and submit eight (8) hours of community service per term enrolled, by the deadlines communicated in Rule and by the partnering organization
- Complete the FAFSA by the deadline each year the student participates in the program.

### **What about adults?**

The Tennessee Promise program is only available starting with the high school graduating class of 2015. However, Tennessee Promise is just one of the many new initiatives aimed at helping Tennesseans attain postsecondary credentials as part of Governor Haslam's Drive to 55. For working adults in Tennessee, Governor Haslam established Wilder-Naifeh Reconnect, which also began in fall 2015. Wilder-Naifeh Reconnect will provide a last-dollar scholarship for adults to attend a Tennessee College of Applied Technology to earn a certificate or diploma. Finally, the Tennessee Reconnect Grant is now available for adult learners to pursue an associate degree at an eligible institution free of tuition and fees. Learn more about adults going back to school in Tennessee [HERE](#).

Also, there are many federal and state financial aid opportunities, such as the Pell grant, TN Education Lottery Scholarship programs, and TN Student Assistance Award, which you may explore [HERE](#). To be eligible for any and all of this aid, you must fill out the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) [HERE](#).



## Frequently Asked Questions

### **Military Leave**

Tennessee Promise regulations allow for a student to delay initial enrollment or take a leave from continued enrollment to fulfill required military training. These students are required to complete all initial eligibility requirements. Upon completion of all required military training, the student will submit documentation of her/his completion of service, i.e. DD214, as well as the TSAC Appeals and Exceptions Cover Form, found [HERE](#).

Once the necessary documentation has been received and approved, the student will be eligible to enroll in the next available term at the eligible institution.

### **Bordering School**

A Tennessee resident who attends a high school in a county which borders TN may qualify for the Tennessee Promise Scholarship. Students must satisfy all initial eligibility requirements.

### **Community service**

Students are required to complete and submit eight (8) hours of community service for each term in which he/she is enrolled. Please click [HERE](#) to be directed to the correct partnering organization to submit your community service.

### **For students who lose eligibility:**

Although Tennessee Promise may no longer be an option, please know that there are many other scholarship and financial aid programs including Pell, HOPE, and TSAA among others that students can apply for to help pay for college. In many cases, the Pell grant will cover the entire cost of tuition and fees (plus some money for cost of attendance) for students with low expected family contributions. For students meeting the academic requirements, the HOPE scholarship alone provides students up to \$4,500 per year to attend community college. Feel free to explore all the possibilities for financial aid [HERE](#).

Please don't hesitate to reach back out to us should you have any questions navigating the financial aid and college admissions processes.



## Frequently Asked Questions

### **I missed the application deadline. Can I still apply?:**

One of the requirements of the Tennessee Promise program is that students submit their application by the November deadline in the fall semester preceding high school graduation. The application period lasted for approximately three months, from August 1- November 1. Unfortunately, if students missed the deadline, they will not be able to participate in the program in the future.

There are many other federal and state financial aid opportunities, such as the Pell grant, HOPE Lottery Scholarship, Wilder-Naifeh grant, and TSAA funds, which can help students pay for college. You can learn more about these programs [HERE](#). I strongly suggest the student submit the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) [HERE](#) as soon as possible to determine eligibility for federal and other state financial aid.

### **Issues with application/login portal OR Change of Institution**

In order to update the institution of choice in your TSAC Student Portal, a student must log into their TSAC Student Portal account [HERE](#).

If you are experiencing difficulties with the login process, please contact the Tennessee Student Assistance Corporation help line for assistance at 1.800.342.1663 or live chat between 8 AM and 4:30 PM Monday-Friday [HERE](#).

### **Will I receive a confirmation email?**

Once the application is completed, a confirmation screen will appear. All students will receive a confirmation email at the email address provided. Additionally, if a parent email address was provided, a confirmation email will be sent to this address as well. After the November application deadline, partnering organizations will reach out to students to assign mentors and supply information about mandatory meeting dates and other requirements.

### **Can you tell me more about this program?**

Tennessee Promise is both a scholarship and mentoring program that began in the fall of 2015. It will provide students a last-dollar scholarship, meaning the scholarship will cover



## Frequently Asked Questions

tuition and fees not covered by the Federal Pell grant, the TN Education Lottery Scholarship, and the TN Student Assistance Award; students may use the scholarship at any of the state's 13 community colleges, 27 colleges of applied technology, or other eligible institutions offering an associate's degree program. Please note the award will not cover the balance of tuition and fees at a public four-year or private institution. While removing the financial burden is key, a critical component of Tennessee Promise is the individual guidance each participant will receive from a mentor who will assist the student as he or she navigates the college admissions process. In addition, Tennessee Promise participants must complete eight hours of community service per term enrolled, as well as maintain satisfactory academic progress (2.0 GPA) at their institution. Please click [HERE](#) for more detailed information on the program.

### **What if the Pell grant covers the full cost of tuition and mandatory fees?**

Tennessee Promise is a last-dollar scholarship, meaning it will cover tuition and mandatory fees not covered by the federal Pell grant, the HOPE scholarship, Wilder-Naifeh Technical Skills grant, or the Tennessee Student Assistance Award. It will not cover books or other expenses. If a student receives enough federal or state financial aid to cover tuition and mandatory fees, he/she will not receive Tennessee Promise dollars. However, that student may still participate in the program, benefitting from the mentorship and community service components.

### **Are there funds for dual enrollment classes?**

Students may receive Dual Enrollment Grants from the Tennessee Lottery. More information on those grants can be found [HERE](#).

### **Is there a list of eligible institutions?**

Students may use Tennessee Promise at any of Tennessee's 27 colleges of applied technology (TCATs), 13 community colleges, or any HOPE eligible independent or public four-year university offering an associate's degree or certificate. A complete list of schools may be found [HERE](#).



## Frequently Asked Questions

### **Can Tennessee Promise be used toward a four-year program?**

No. Tennessee Promise funds can only be used toward an associate degree, diploma, or certificate. However, the Tennessee Transfer Pathways ensure that students can apply credits from an associate's degree to easily transfer to a four-year program at a public institution without duplicative course requirements. Please click [HERE](#) to learn more about the TN Transfer Pathways.

### **Must a student be a Tennessee resident to apply?**

A student must be a Tennessee resident to be eligible for the Tennessee Promise Scholarship. For purposes of the program, a student's residency (domicile) is that of his or her parent, but ultimately this is a determination made by the institution the student will attend.

### **Are online courses covered by Promise?**

The Tennessee Promise Scholarship will pay for a portion of the costs associated with online courses offered by an eligible institution. However, fees charged above and beyond the tuition and mandatory fees charged to all students are not covered.

### **How does the last-dollar scholarship work?**

Tennessee Promise is a last-dollar scholarship that funds any remaining tuition and mandatory fees at a public two-year institution or TN College of Applied Technology once Pell, TELS, TSAA have all been applied.

Students who attend a four-year public or independent university offering an associate degree will receive an award not to exceed the average tuition and mandatory fees at a Tennessee public community college. This will often result in a remaining balance of tuition and mandatory fees at the four-year public or Independent university.

### **What is a partnering organization?**

A partnering organization is an organization that will work with TSAC and postsecondary institutions to administer the Tennessee Promise program. Partnering organizations will



## Frequently Asked Questions

be responsible for providing mentoring services, conducting meetings for students regarding various college topics (financial aid, application process, FAFSA completion, etc.), and approving/reporting community service performed by students. These organizations will operate independent of state funding. Partnering organizations will also establish local Tennessee Promise advisory councils to advocate for the program in each county. Please click [HERE](#) to learn more about your partnering organization.

### **Must students have a social security number to be eligible?**

To be eligible, students must be able to complete the FAFSA, qualify for in-state tuition, and possess a valid Social Security number. The DACA number is NOT a valid entry on the Tennessee Promise application or the FAFSA, and a student using this number will not be eligible to participate in the program.

Per Federal Student Aid rules, a student must be a U.S. citizen or an eligible noncitizen possessing a valid Social Security Number in order to receive federal (and state) student aid. For financial aid purposes, an eligible noncitizen is one of the following:

- A U.S. permanent resident who has a Permanent Resident Card (I-551 or I-151) (also known as a green card)
- A conditional permanent resident with a conditional Green Card (I-551C)
- A noncitizen with an Arrival-Departure Record (I-94) from the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) (specifically, the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services) showing any one of the following designations: "Refugee," "Asylum Granted," "Paroled" (the I-94 must confirm 'paroled for a minimum of 1-year and status' has not expired), "Conditional Entrant" (valid only if issued before April 1, 1980) or "Cuban-Haitian Entrant, status pending"
- A student also may qualify as an eligible noncitizen if he or she holds a T-visa (for victims of human trafficking) or if his or her parent holds a T-1 visa.
- A Canadian born Native American under terms of the Jay Treaty.

If the student meets one of the eligible non-citizen criteria then he/she will be eligible for Tennessee Promise. If the student does not meet one of the criteria then he/she is ineligible. Please email us at [tn.promise@tn.gov](mailto:tn.promise@tn.gov) if you have additional questions.



## Frequently Asked Questions

### **What does Pending School Certification mean?**

This is the standard eligibility status for all students who have met the initial eligibility requirements of the program. Your status will not update until the institution has determined your final eligibility and certified an award amount in our processing system. This may not occur until a few weeks into the term.

### **If I graduate early, may I use the Tennessee Promise Scholarship in the spring semester, immediately following graduation?**

Yes, a student who graduates from high school or home school, or completes a GED/HiSET program in the fall semester may complete the eligibility process and enroll in the spring semester. Please email us at [tn.promise@tn.gov](mailto:tn.promise@tn.gov) to learn more about this process.