



2020-21

Frequently Asked Questions For Counselors



The College Bound Scholarship was established by the Washington State Legislature in 2007, and is administered by the Washington Student Achievement Council.

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GENERAL INFORMATION AND MIDDLE SCHOOL APPLICATION

1. What is the College Bound Scholarship Program?

It is an early commitment of state financial aid to eligible 7th or 8th grade students. The scholarship is a state-funded program administered by the [Washington Student Achievement Council \(WSAC\)](#).

2. What are the requirements for middle school students to apply for the College Bound Scholarship?

Students should apply if they are in 7th or 8th grade and meet one of the following requirements:

- Their family meets the income requirements (see the income chart on the application).
- They are in foster care or a dependent of the state (may be auto-enrolled).
- Their family receives SNAP/Basic Food Assistance or TANF benefits.

For full details on the requirements to receive College Bound, please go to the [Eligibility to Receive the College Bound Scholarship](#) section of this FAQ.

3. What are the requirements for 9th grade students to apply for the College Bound Scholarship?

Starting with the 2019-2020 academic year, certain 9th grade students may be eligible to complete a College Bound application. Students must meet eligibility requirements listed below:

- Must have been attending middle school in Washington State during 7th and 8th grade.
- Must not have been eligible during middle school.
- In 9th grade, student meets household income meets requirements, or other eligibility criteria, for College Bound sign-up.

WSAC is partnering with OSPI to provide counselors with pre-populated applications for eligible applicants in October. Counselors will be updated later in the fall regarding the process, materials and other resources for the upcoming year.

4. How do students know what their family income is for their middle school application?

For the middle school application, income is defined by USDA Free and Reduced Price Lunch (FRPL) guidelines as any money received on a recurring basis including gross earned income. Gross earned income means all money earned before deductions (income taxes, Social Security taxes, insurance premiums). Income includes but is not limited to:

- Salaries, tips, commissions
- Unemployment and Workers' Compensation
- Child support and alimony
- Social Security, disability, veterans benefits, Supplemental Security Income
- Net rental income, cash from savings, regular contributions from persons not living in household

Family size is everyone for whom the parent/guardian is responsible and provides more than half of their support.

5. If a family's income is greater than the income requirement, can a student apply anyway?

No. For other ways to pay for a college education, visit www.readysetgrad.org.

6. What if parents are separated or divorced, or the student lives with someone else?

Following Free and Reduced Price Lunch guidelines, if parents are divorced or separated, the student is generally considered part of the household of the parent that has custody. If the student lives with each parent equally and one parent meets the income eligibility, the student is eligible. If a student is in a kinship caregiver situation, they should use the income from their legal parents/guardians. If a student's guardian is unable to sign, please contact program staff.

7. Is there a deadline?

Yes, a middle school student must start an application before June 30 of their 8th grade year. The final deadline to complete the application is August 31 of their 8th grade year.

Eligible 9th grade students must complete their application by August 31 of their 9th grade year.

*Deadline Exception – Due to the COVID-19 state of emergency and statewide school closures a deadline exception has been put into place for students who were eligible to apply during the 2019-20 school year. That deadline has been extended to November 30, 2020 and is for the class of 2024 and class of 2023 (if they were eligible to sign-up in 9th grade).

8. Is there a deadline exception for students impacted by COVID-19 statewide emergency declaration and school closures?

A special exception to the deadline will be made for students required to sign a pledge to establish eligibility during eighth or ninth grade in the 2019-2020 school year. This is due to the statewide school closure that was ordered under the state of emergency declared in response to the coronavirus pandemic.

This deadline exception was established to ensure that students in 8th grade, or 9th grade who were fast approaching the application deadline of August 31, 2020 were given enough time to complete the application process. For these students only, the deadline to complete an application will be extended until November 30, 2020.

9. Which deadline is the right one?

The deadline for the student will be indicated on the Missing Information Letter (MIL). Please refer to the chart below for the appropriate application deadline by class.

Class Of:	Application Deadline	New/Existing Application
2023 (10th graders)	11/30/2020	Existing app from limited 9th grade sign-up.
2024 (9th graders)	11/30/2020	Existing app from middle school.
2024	8/31/2021	New app as a 9th grade from limited sign-up, available in late October
2025	8/31/2021	New or existing
2026	8/31/2022	New this year

10. How do middle school students sign up?

The application for the College Bound Scholarship is a two-step process. Eligible students must start an application in 7th or 8th grade, but no later than June 30 of their 8th grade year. Then, as seniors in high school, students must fulfill the College Bound pledge and complete the [Free Application for Federal Student Aid \(FAFSA\)](#) or [Washington Application for State Financial Aid \(WASFA\)](#) to determine income eligibility before they enroll in college.

There are three ways to start the application process in 7th or 8th grade:

- Schools can upload a list of students eligible for Free and Reduced Priced Lunch to the WSAC portal online. This allows schools to begin the application process for all their eligible students at once. To create a portal account, please contact collegebound@wsac.wa.gov.
- Counselors can enter students individually via the online application (available in English and Spanish) at www.collegebound.wa.gov.
- Students and families can apply on their own at www.collegebound.wa.gov

Regardless of the initial application method, the student and parent/guardian will also need to complete a Missing Information Letter (MIL) to self-certify their income eligibility. This letter needs to be signed by the student and their parent/guardian. Counselors can download the MIL from WSAC's portal to print and give to students. Once the letter is signed by the student and parent, counselors should return them to WSAC.

11. How do 9th grade students sign up?

WSAC will be providing 9th grade counselors with eligible student's pre-populated applications after free and reduced price lunch data is available in October.

12. What makes an application complete?

Generally, a student's application is considered complete when they've marked one of the eligibility requirements and the MIL has been signed by both the student and the parent/guardian. If the parents are unreachable, counselors can follow the process outlined in the Counselor Signature Form section. Eligible foster youth are automatically enrolled and are not required to sign an application.

13. Where is the online application for middle school students?

You can find it by visiting www.collegebound.wa.gov and clicking on the green "click to apply" button.

14. Can eligible homeschool students and private school students apply?

Yes. Write in the name of the school or select "homeschool" for the name of the school when completing the online application.

15. What does "auto-enroll" mean?

Beginning in 2012, students in Washington State foster care between 7th grade and age 21 are automatically enrolled in College Bound because of a data sharing agreement between the Department of Children, Youth and Families (DCYF) and WSAC.

16. Do students have to have a Social Security number (SSN) to apply for College Bound?

No, not to apply in middle school. However, to receive the scholarship, students must be a U.S. citizen, eligible non-citizen, or meet the program's state residency requirements when applying for financial aid.

17. How will students know if their College Bound Scholarship application was accepted?

A certificate will be mailed to the address listed on their application after it has been processed. If a student does not receive a certificate within six weeks of submitting a complete application, call 888-535-0747, option 1, or email collegebound@wsac.wa.gov.

18. If the student’s application was complete in middle school, does it remain complete throughout high school?

Yes – once an application has been completed in middle school, it remains complete throughout high school and college.

19. Do students need the certificate to receive the scholarship?

No – the certificate is not needed to receive the scholarship and does not guarantee receipt of the scholarship. Students must meet the pledge requirements found at <https://readysetgrad.wa.gov/college/College-Bound-Pledge> to receive the scholarship.

20. What is the College Bound Pledge?

As part of the College Bound sign-up process, students pledge to:

- Graduate from a Washington State high school or approved homeschool program with a cumulative 2.0 GPA or higher.
- Have no felony convictions.
- Apply for financial aid by completing the FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) or WASFA (Washington Application for State Financial Aid) beginning their senior year of high school.
- In order to receive the scholarship, students must fulfill the pledge and:
- Be income eligible, as determined by their college with the information from their FAFSA or WASFA.
- Be accepted to college and begin attending within one year of high school graduation. In order to receive College Bound funding you must attend an eligible college: www.readysetgrad.org/eligible-institutions
- Be a U.S. citizen or eligible non-citizen and Washington resident, or meet the program’s state residency requirements.

21. How much is the scholarship award?

The amount labeled “College Bound” will vary for each individual student depending on the school they attend and other state financial aid they receive. The College Bound Scholarship will combine with other state financial aid to cover tuition (at comparable public tuition rates) some fees, and a small book allowance. Colleges may offer additional financial aid for expenses beyond these costs. This additional aid may be in the form of federal grants, work study, scholarships, and loans. Students will receive the scholarship through their college or university as part of their financial aid award.

The College Bound Scholarship fills the gap after other state aid has been awarded to reach the maximum CBS award amounts listed below.

Maximum CBS Award* 2020-21		
Institutions		Award
Public Research	University of Washington	\$11,540
	Washington State University	\$11,235
Public Comprehensive	Western Washington University	\$7,881
	Central Washington University	\$7,677
	The Evergreen State College	\$7,667
	Eastern Washington University	\$7,197
	Applied Bachelor's	\$7,264
Private Four-year Colleges & Universities		\$11,904
WGU-Washington		\$6,280
Public Community & Technical Colleges		\$4,719
Private Career Colleges		\$4,719

*When combined with other state financial aid such as Washington College Grant (<https://readysetgrad.wa.gov/college/washington-college-grant>).

22. Where can students use the College Bound Scholarship?

Students can earn an approved certificate or degree at Washington's two- or four-year public colleges, an approved independent college or university, or a private career school that participates in the Washington State Need Grant program. For a complete list, visit <http://www.readysetgrad.org/eligible-institutions>.

23. What will the income requirement be to receive the scholarship when students graduate from high school?

To receive the scholarship, the family's income must fall within 65 percent of the state's median family income. Eligibility will be determined by the college's financial aid office when the student completes the FAFSA or WASFA when applying to college. You can visit <http://www.readysetgrad.org/cbs-mfi> to look at the income chart.

THE COUNSELOR SIGNATURE FORM

24. What is the purpose of the Counselor Signature Form?

Beginning with the 2018-19 academic year, a counselor or administrator may sign this form to complete a student's College Bound Scholarship application if a parent/guardian is unreachable after multiple attempts.

25. Who can use the Counselor Signature Form?

Any staff person who is responsible for College Bound sign-up completion may complete the form. This includes counselors, administrators, success coaches, and any other school staff member assisting in this process.

26. When Can I use the Counselor Signature Form?

When you have not been able to reach the parent/guardian to complete the student's application. The form is to be used as a last resort to ensure eligible students can access the College Bound Scholarship.

27. Where can I find the Counselor Signature Form?

The Counselor/Administrator Signature Form can be found online at <https://readysetgrad.wa.gov/college/CBS-Resources>

28. What is considered a complete form?

A completed form provides:

- Student information.
- Counselor contact information.
- Documentation of all contact attempts, with outcomes noted.
- Eligibility option marked.
- Missing Information Letter (MIL) with student signature.

The form should then be initialed and signed and provided to the College Bound program.

29. What counts as a contact attempt?

Contacts made directly from the school to the student's parents or guardians by mail, email, or fax. Mass mailings, emails or robocalls from the school can count, as long as they are specifically about completing the College Bound Scholarship application. Mailings to the student's home from the Washington Student Achievement Council do not count as a contact attempt.

*The MILs sent directly to students during the COVID-19 School closures does count as a contact attempt for the 2019-2020 academic year. Please refer to question 81.

30. How many contact attempts are required?

At least one attempt at each available contact type (phone call, email, or mail). If there is only one contact type available, you must make multiple attempts using the single contact type.

31. What does “a reasonable amount of time” mean?

The timeframe will vary, due to the June 30 application deadline and when the student’s application was started. Generally speaking, the guidance is:

Application Start Date	Contacts Start	Time Between Contacts
September – December	After January 1	1 Month
January – April	After April 1	1 Month
May – June	After May 1	2 Weeks

32. Where can I find when the student’s College Bound application was started?

This can be found in the portal in the student’s information. It is listed at the bottom of the screen under the demographic information.

33. Should I wait until the end of the year to submit the form?

No. We recommend submitting the form as soon as it is complete. Waiting until the last few weeks of the school year may become an issue if the form is incomplete or requires additional information. In order to meet application deadline, please try to submit the form with at least two weeks before the end of the school year.

34. Can I use this form to sign for the parent/guardian if they give me permission?

No. This form is only to be used if the parent/guardian is unreachable after multiple attempts. Please do not ask parents for permission to complete the form. If you are able to correspond with them regarding their eligibility, the goal should be that they complete the College Bound application.

35. How do I submit the form?

The form can be submitted to the College Bound Scholarship office via the secure portal, fax, or mailed to our office. You can find this information on the form instructions.

36. Can I use the Counselor Signature Form if the student may not be eligible or the parent/guardian has indicated that they are not interested or eligible?

No, this form is to be used for eligible students who would otherwise miss out on the opportunity to complete the application because their parent/guardian is unreachable. If the parent/guardian or student has indicated they are not interested or not eligible, this form should not be used.

37. Who can I contact if I have questions about the Counselor Signature Form or process?

For any questions about the form or process, please contact the College Bound Scholarship program office at 888-535-0747, option 1 or collegebound@wsac.wa.gov.

COUNSELORS AND THE TOOLBOX

38. What is the Toolbox?

The toolbox is housed within the WSAC secure portal. The Toolbox allows schools to start applications with the upload process, track application progress and print forms (ex. MILs). The Toolbox displays live data, once an application is entered the student will appear on your school's list. OSPI provides weekly updates on current enrollment information for students with complete applications.

There are two types of access to the Toolbox; middle school or high school. Both provide access to track applications, but the high school side can also track FAFSA completion.

39. How do I get access to the Toolbox?

The Toolbox is part of our secure portal. For access to the portal, email College Bound at collegebound@wsac.wa.gov with your name, title, school, and district.

40. How do I log in to the portal?

Visit www.wsac.wa.gov and click on the link for The Portal under the Administration tab, or go to portal.wsac.wa.gov.

41. How do I change my password for the portal?

Click the "forgot it?" button on the portal login page.

42. How do I upload my eligible students?

Click on the "import students" button in the top right corner of the Toolbox.

43. Which students should I upload into the portal?

We recommend only uploading those who are currently eligible for FRPL. You may want to check with your district to see if they are currently doing so. If your school participates in the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) or Provision 2 program ("100% FRPL"), please visit www.readyssetgrad.wa.gov for guidance on who should be included.

44. Do FRPL privacy regulations prohibit me from uploading eligible students?

No. Per guidance from OSPI and WSAC's legal counsel, as well as Washington's Attorney General's Office:

"It is permissible for a school official to share additional identifying information regarding a FRLP-eligible student with WSAC—not just the student's name and eligibility status. As we understand it, the additional identifying information does not come from the student's FRLP application. Instead, it's

information that the school official maintains or has access to outside of the FRLP program. Therefore, that additional information is not subject to the FRLP privacy rule.

We don't think this is a "loophole". The general reason that eligibility information can be shared with school or health officials is so that education and health programs can combine the program status information with other information for the purpose of providing services. It wouldn't make sense if the FRLP privacy rule limited their ability to do that.

Having said this, any additional student information disclosed by a school official may be subject to the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), and schools should be careful to make sure that the disclosure complies with FERPA requirements."

WSAC has data share agreements available should your district want to file one regarding uploading to WSAC. A recommended best practice is to have a data share agreement between your district's food nutrition services office and whomever will be doing the CBS upload. A template for that agreement can be found at: <http://www.k12.wa.us/ChildNutrition/Programs/NSLBP/FreeReduced.aspx> (it is the last item on the page). Please contact CBS program staff with any questions.

You can create your list of eligible students by using the Free/Reduced Priced Meals Demographic report found in the Attributes and Programs tab in CEDARS.

45. Why are there duplicate applications?

An application could have been uploaded and created through an online application or multiple online applications were completed. All information must be identical when uploading multiple times to be sure duplicates are not created.

46. Can you remove duplicate applications?

Yes – if one of the applications is complete, please email College Bound with the student's full name and birthdate at collegebound@wsac.wa.gov.

47. Why does a student have a complete application and an incomplete application?

The student could have duplicate applications and one was completed. You can email us at collegebound@wsac.wa.gov with the student's full name and birthdate and we will remove the duplicate incomplete application.

48. Can I change info in the Toolbox – if so, how?

Yes, by clicking on the individual student's record, you can then click the edit button to make the appropriate changes. Be sure to save the changes after editing the information.

49. How do I remove a student from my school's list?

We can remove students if their application is incomplete and they no longer attend your school. You can email us at collegebound@wsac.wa.gov with the student's name and birthdate and new school (if known) and we will update the information. If the student's application is complete, we are unable to update the school information as it is enrollment data received by OSPI.

50. Can you remove students from our school if a parent refuses to sign?

No. The application will remain "incomplete" until we receive a completed MIL. If the MIL is not received by the time the student begins 9th grade, they will be marked "ineligible."

51. Why is a particular student marked "ineligible" or "not interested"?

The student's application was marked "not eligible", "not interested" or the student did not complete the application by the deadline.

52. Can I mark "ineligible" if the parent informs me that they are, and I contact you?

No. The parent/guardian must mark "not eligible" on the MIL and sign to confirm the information.

53. How do I print MILs?

You can print a student's individual MIL by going into the student's record in the MS Toolbox and clicking the Print MIL link. To print all of your MILs, go to the main screen in the MS Toolbox. Once there go to the red box and click the link Print Missing Information Letters here.

54. Why can't I print on colored paper?

Our system cannot read the information when it is scanned, which delays processing applications.

55. Why can't we have a paper application?

College Bound transitioned to an electronic application in 2016 to track applications more effectively. Paper applications were frequently lost or not trackable and caused many duplicates. Transitioning to electronic formats allows our office and schools to track when applications were started, and who started the application. This has simplified the process for schools and the College Bound office.

You can upload students into our secure portal or complete the applications online at www.collegebound.wa.gov. For questions regarding portal access or the upload process, contact us at collegebound@wsac.wa.gov or 888-535-0747, opt. 1.

56. Do you have MILs in other languages?

Yes – the MIL is currently available in Spanish, Russian and Vietnamese. If Spanish, Russian or Vietnamese is selected as the home language when the application is entered, the MILs will be printed in Spanish, Russian or Vietnamese. You can change the home language in the Toolbox for a student, if necessary. We are hoping to have MILs available in additional languages in the future.

57. How can I send MILs to you?

They can be sent via the mail, fax, or the secure portal message system – all contact information is located on the MIL.

When sending MILs to our office via email, please use the MS Toolbox secure messaging system.

Instructions are as follows:

1. Click on the Secure Messages button in the upper right corner.
2. Click Create a new secure message to WSAC.
3. In the To section, select College Bound Scholar.
4. Insert a subject (suggested is MILs).
5. Choose the scanned MIL file from your computer. Once you located the file, first click OK, and next click Attach.
6. Above the To line, click Send Message.

You can use this feature to send any message to College Bound with or without attachments.

58. Should I send MILs multiple ways (i.e. email, fax, and mail)?

No - please only send once to prevent delays in processing.

59. How long does it take to process MILs?

It takes up to two weeks to process MILs.

ELIGIBILITY TO RECEIVE THE COLLEGE BOUND SCHOLARSHIP

60. What is the income requirement to receive the scholarship?

To receive the scholarship the family's income must fall within 65 percent of the state's median family income. Eligibility will be determined by the college's financial aid office when the student completes the FAFSA or WASFA when applying to college. The income chart is available online at www.readysetgrad.org/cbs-mfi.

61. Can a student graduate out-of-state?

Students are required to graduate from a Washington State high school or approved homeschool program. If you have questions about a student's specific situation, please contact College Bound.

62. Can undocumented students receive College Bound?

Yes, if they meet both program requirements (i.e. the College Bound pledge, income eligibility, etc.) and state residency requirements. Students can do this via the DACA standard of HB 1079 standard and should complete a WASFA. More information on these residency standards is available at www.readysetgrad.org/wasfa.

63. Can a student earn a GED and receive College Bound?

Generally, no. Beginning in the fall of 2017 (Senate Bill 5890), students who experienced foster care at any point between 7th grade and the age of 21 may be able to receive College Bound after earning a high school equivalency certificate. Students should contact program staff at collegebound@wsac.wa.gov or 888-535-0747, opt. 1 to discuss their specific situation and next steps, but generally:

Students need to have been auto-enrolled into the College Bound Scholarship (see question 10).

- They will need to provide a copy of their high school equivalency certificate (currently in WA, this is the GED exam) to program staff.
- Students will need to have earned the GED prior to their 21st birthday.
- Students will need to enroll in college within one year of receiving their GED.
- Students must not have been convicted of a felony.
- Students must also be income-eligible, as determined by completing the FAFSA or WASFA.

64. Where can a student use the scholarship?

The scholarship can be used at over 60 eligible institutions in Washington. You can find the current list at www.readysetgrad.org/eligible-institutions.

65. Can College Bound be used in another state?

No – College Bound is specific to Washington.

66. Can College Bound be used for Running Start?

No. Students must graduate from high school before they can use the scholarship.

67. Can a student graduate from high school earlier or later than expected?

Yes. If the graduation dates change, contact College Bound to ensure the student’s record is accurate.

68. Can a student take two years off after high school for a mission trip or military service?

No, the student must enroll in college within one year of completing high school to maintain eligibility.

69. Why doesn’t the CBS award cover all college costs?

Per state statute, College Bound Scholarship is an early commitment of state financial aid for eligible students that covers three specific costs: tuition at public college rates, some fees, and a small book allowance.

70. Why did a student only receive \$X for College Bound?

Institutions may meet the costs covered by the College Bound commitment using different state financial aid programs, such as State Need Grant. The specific “College Bound” amount will differ at each institution and for each student. Additional financial aid for college expenses beyond tuition may be available. This additional aid may be in the form of federal grants, work study, scholarships, and loans. Students should connect with the financial aid office at their colleges early in the process.

71. Is the scholarship transferrable?

Yes, to other eligible institutions in Washington State.

72. Can the scholarship be used for a master’s degree?

No, it is for undergraduate programs only. A bachelor’s degree is the highest degree a student can earn using the scholarship.

APPEALS

73. Can a student appeal if their College Bound Application is not found?

Yes, have them contact College Bound program staff.

74. Can a student appeal the diploma requirement?

No. It is written into the statute for the program requirements.

75. Can a student appeal the GPA Requirement?

No. It is written into the statute for the program requirements.

76. Can a student appeal the one-year enrollment deadline?

No. It is written into the statute for the program requirements.

77. Can a student appeal the five-year deadline?

No. It is written into the statute for the program requirements.

78. Can a student appeal the number of quarters they can use it?

No. It is written into the statute for the program requirements.

COVID-19 School Closure Exceptions

79. Is there a deadline exception for 8th and 9th grade students in the 2019-20 academic year due to the COVID-19 school closures?

A special exception to the deadline will be made for students required to sign a pledge to establish eligibility during eighth or ninth grade in the 2019-2020 school year. This is due to the statewide school closure that was ordered under the state of emergency declared in response to the coronavirus pandemic.

This deadline exception was established to ensure that students in 8th or 9th grade who were fast approaching the application deadline of August 31, 2020 were given enough time to complete the application process. For these students only, the deadline to complete an application will be extended until November 30, 2020.

Please refer to the chart on question 9 for the appropriate deadlines.

80. What happens if I started a Counselor Signature Form for a student in 8th or 9th grade in the 2019-2020 academic year who is now in high school/different grade in high school?

The Counselor Signature Form can follow the student to their next school/grade, to be completed by the deadline extension of November 30, 2020.

81. Do the MILs that were sent directly to student from the College Bound office count as a contact attempt for the Counselor Signature Form during the closures?

Yes, the specific batches sent home in April, June, and October of 2020 can be considered as mailed contact attempts. Please refer to the contact attempts on question 29 for other questions related to this topic.