Frequently Asked Questions for Students and Families 2026-27

College Bound WASHINGTON

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

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COLLEGE BOUND BASICS

1. What is the College Bound Program?

College Bound is an early commitment of state financial aid to help eligible students pay for education after high school. College Bound funds are based on average tuition (at public college rates), some fees, and a small amount for books. There are more than 60 participating colleges, universities, and technical schools in Washington State that participate in the College Bound program. The state agency, Washington Student Achievement Council (WSAC), administers College Bound.

2. What are the College Bound requirements?

Students must meet eligibility requirements at two points:

1.) When enrolling in College Bound. This is based on the income requirements for Free and Reduced Price Lunch programs.

AND

2.) While attending college.

Students must meet all eligibility requirements to receive their College Bound funds.

COLLEGE BOUND ENROLLMENT

3. How can a student be automatically enrolled in College Bound?

Students who meet one of the following requirements are automatically enrolled in College Bound:

- Students in a Washington State public school who are income-eligible for Free and Reduced-Price Lunch (FRPL) in 7th, 8th, or who become newly income-eligible in 9th grade.*
- Students in Washington state foster care, or a dependent of the state, between 7th grade and high school graduation.

*Families must complete the CNEEB form provided by the student's school and be income-eligible to be automatically enrolled.

Automatic enrollment for public school students happens through a partnership with WSAC and the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI). Automatic enrollment for students in state foster care happens through a partnership with WSAC and the Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF).

Private and homeschooled students do not qualify for automatic enrollment. Please contact our office at 888-535-0747, option 1 to apply.

4. What makes a 9th grader newly eligible?

The requirements for newly income-eligible 9th graders are:

- Be enrolled in a Washington school (public, private, or homeschooled) in 7th or 8th grade.
- Not income-eligible for Free and Reduced-Price Lunch (FRPL) in 7th or 8th grade.
- Newly income-eligible for FRPL in 9th grade.

5. How do private and home school students sign up?

If an income-eligible student is enrolled in a private school or homeschool program in Washington State in 7th or 8th grade or becomes newly income-eligible in 9th grade, the parent/guardian can contact us at 888-535-0747, option 1 to start an application.

The parent/guardian and student must complete, sign, and return a form sent by our program staff to complete the application.

6. How will a student know if they have been enrolled in College Bound?

Students with up-to-date contact information will receive official College Bound notification by mail and/or email letting them know they have been enrolled.

*Please note: A student does not need to receive that information to receive College Bound funds, and it does not guarantee a student will receive College Bound funds. Students must meet the eligibility requirements to receive College Bound funds.

Students and parents can contact the student's school counselor to confirm College Bound enrollment. Counselors have access to our College Bound Portal, which gives a list of current College Bound students at their school.

Our program staff can also confirm a student's enrollment!

7. How does a student apply for College Bound if a use Free or Reduced Price Lunch (FRPL) at their school?

There is no public application for College Bound enrollment. Families must complete the CNEEB form provided by the student's school. Students who meet the sign-up requirements are automatically enrolled in College Bound.

ACCESSING COLLEGE BOUND

8. What are the requirements to receive College Bound funds?

- Graduate from a Washington State high school or approved homeschool program with a cumulative 2.0 GPA or higher if they plan to attend a four-year public or private college directly after high school.
- **OR** receive a GED in Washington State before their 21st birthday.

    - There is no high school GPA requirement for students to receive College Bound at a community college or technical school.
- 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. (Students only need to complete one application each year)
- Be income-eligible based on the information on their FAFSA or WASFA.
- Enroll in college within one year of high school graduation.
- Be accepted to and attend a participating school.
- Meet the program's state residency requirements.

9. What are the income requirements to receive College Bound?

Income reported on the student's financial aid application (FAFSA or WASFA) must be less than 65 percent of the median family income (MFI).

For more information, please review the image below. This number changes each year and is updated in the spring on the College Bound webpage.

Note: Income eligibility is based on annual gross income plus any non-taxable income Dependent students' income is not included when determining College Bound eligibility.

2026-27 Median Family Income Chart	
Household size	**Annual Income***
1	$47,000
2	$61,500
3	$76,000
4	$90,500
5	$105,000
6	$119,500
7	$122,000
8	$125,000

2027-28 Median Family Income Chart	
Household size	**Annual Income***
1	$49,500
2	$65,000

3	$80,000
4	$95,500
5	$110,500
6	$126,000
7	$129,000
8	$131,500

*Household income must be less than or equal to this amount. Note: A student could be eligible for College Bound funding for some years, and not eligible for others, if the family's MFI level exceeded 65 percent in one or more years.

10. What should homeschool families know about the graduation requirements?

Since we do not automatically receive homeschooled students' transcript information the way we do with public school students, homeschool students need to submit documents to our office.

All documents can be sent to collegebound@wsac.wa.gov.

1.) A final high school transcript with their graduation or completion date and final cumulative GPA.
2.) A signed copy of the Letter of Intent to Home School form
3.) One of the following:

- A standardized test score (PSAT, SAT, Plan, ACT, or the Smarter Balanced Assessment test).
- A college placement exam score such as Accuplacer.
- A college transcript showing they completed at least 12 academic credits with a 2.0 GPA or higher.

Please contact College Bound at collegebound@wsac.wa.gov or 888-535-0747, option 1 if you have questions.

11. Are undocumented students eligible for College Bound?

The College Bound Program is a state financial aid program for Washington resident students. Washington residents can be both U.S. citizens and non-citizens, including undocumented students. Students must meet residency requirements.

Undocumented students are encouraged to complete the Washington Application for State Aid (WASFA) instead of the federal FAFSA application during their senior year in high school and each year they attend college. Students who complete the WASFA will only be awarded state financial aid.

12. Where can students use College Bound funds?

Students may use their College Bound funds at more than 60 eligible schools in Washington State. The list includes public community or technical colleges, public four-year universities, approved independent colleges or universities, and approved private career colleges or universities.

Students can also use College Bound funds for online classes, summer classes, or study abroad programs at participating schools. Students should contact the financial aid office at their college or university for questions about funding a specific term or program.

If a student attends an eligible private college or university, the tuition may only be covered at public tuition rates. Private schools usually have higher tuition, so it's important for students and their families to explore additional financial aid options.

13. How many years can students receive College Bound?

College Bound can be used for up to six years (18 full-time quarters/12 full-time semesters) or until they earn their first bachelor's degree, whichever comes first.

Students must enroll in college within one year of high school graduation.

- For example, if the student graduates by June 2025, they must enroll in college by Fall 2026 to meet the enrollment deadline.
    - A student does not need to enroll in an eligible school to meet the enrollment deadline.
    - The enrollment deadline can be met by attending an out-of-state/country school – as long as the student receives college credits.

*Please note that College Bound funding can only be used at an eligible school.

14. How much College Bound funding can a student receive?

The amount listed as "College Bound" on the financial aid package will look different at each college and for each student.

The award is based on three specific costs.

- Tuition at public school rates
- Allowable fees
- A small amount for books.

The costs will be covered by state financial aid, such as College Bound and/or the Washington College Grant (WA Grant).

A student's College Bound amount is determined after the WA Grant and other state aid and/or scholarships have been awarded. The student may receive a reduced or no College Bound award when their tuition *need* (award amount) has been met with other state aid/scholarships because the commitment of state funding has been fulfilled.

The image below shows the 2025-26 Maximum College Bound Award Amounts when combined with the Washington College Grant.

2026-27 Maximum CB Award Amounts when Combined with the Washington College Grant for 3 Quarters/2 Semesters		
Institutions		Award
Public Research	University of Washington	$13,730
	Washington State University	$13,200
Public Comprehensive	Western Washington University	$9,304
	Central Washington University	$9,115
	The Evergreen State College	$9,140
	Eastern Washington University	$8,535
	CTC Applied Bachelor's	$8,634
Private Four-year Colleges & Universities		$13,452
WGU-Washington		$8,800
Public Community & Technical Colleges		$5,595
Private Career Colleges		$5,595

15. Why isn't College Bound listed on the student's financial aid award letter?

Their tuition need may be met by other state financial aid.

College Bound combines with other state aid, like the Washington College Grant (WA Grant/WCG) to cover the cost of tuition (at public rates), some fees, and a small book allowance. If the student's tuition need is covered by other state aid, there isn't room for, or a need for, College Bound. College Bound cannot be awarded over the tuition need.

16. How will colleges know students have a complete College Bound application?

This will happen automatically. Our participating schools can access WSAC's secure portal to determine if students are College Bound. Students must list every school they are considering on their financial aid application.

Students who forget to list a school on their FAFSA can log in at studentaid.gov and add the information. Students completing the WASFA can call 888-535-0747, Option 2 or email wasfa@wsac.wa.gov for help.

17. How do students make sure they keep receiving College Bound once they're in college?

Students must be income eligible each year they attend college.

College Bound is a renewable commitment of state financial aid, but it is not guaranteed for every year students continue their education. Since College Bound is a need-based program, the college must review a student's financial aid application each year to confirm that they meet the income requirements

Students must also maintain Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) based on the rules at their college – this varies among schools but is typically a 2.0 GPA.

18. Do College Bound funds need to be paid back?

College Bound is a Washington State grant and does not have to be paid back under normal circumstances. However, if students do not maintain Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) or withdraw from classes past the allowable withdrawal date at their college, they may have to repay the College Bound funds. Students who are in financial aid repayment to their college may also have to repay the College Bound funds.

Students should contact their college or university with questions about repayment policies.

19. Can College Bound funds be used for Running Start?

Students will not receive College Bound funding for Running Start classes. They must graduate from high school before they can begin using College Bound.

20. Can students attend college part-time?

Students must be enrolled in enough credits to receive financial aid based on the rules of their college.

Students' award amounts are adjusted based on their enrollment. Other factors could include the type of school (private, public, technical school), additional financial aid awarded, and family income.

21. Can students receive College Bound if their family's income is slightly higher than the requirement?

Students must mee the income requirements to receive College Bound funding.

Most College Bound-eligible students could qualify for the Washington College Grant (WA Grant). The WA Grant has a higher income limit and provides eligible students with more funding for. To see if you're eligible or for more information, please visit wsac.wa.gov/wcg.

FINANCIAL AID

22. What else do students need to do after submitting their financial aid application (FAFSA or WASFA)?

The participating WA college(s) will see that the student has a College Bound application. The college(s) will use the information on the student's financial aid application to verify that students are income-eligible for College Bound. College Bound funds will then be automatically included in the financial aid package if all eligibility requirements are met and a there is a need for them.

The financial aid office at the students' school of interest is the best place for questions about their financial aid package, College Bound funds, or award amounts.

The financial aid office at the school may require more paperwork before the student can receive funding. Students can contact the financial aid office at their college to find out what is needed. Be sure to complete all paperwork before any deadlines the college has.

23. Where can students get help if they don't understand their Award Letter?

The Understanding Your Award Letter worksheet is a tool for reviewing and comparing financial aid award letters. Comparing award letters is recommended when deciding what college to attend. Use our Key Components to Understanding Your Award Letter worksheet for help.

Students should contact the financial aid office at their college if they have more questions—they are the experts!

More information can be found in our digital College and Career Knowledge booklet, which is available in seven languages.