

Early Learning Scholarship – Pathway I Application

You can apply for an Early Learning Scholarship – Pathway I Scholarship online! Visit earlylearningscholarshipshub.mn.gov to apply online. Note: If your child is in foster care, your foster care case worker must apply online. Foster parents cannot apply for a scholarship themselves.

Instructions

What is an Early Learning Scholarship?

An Early Learning Scholarship – Pathway I can help your child attend high-quality childcare and early education to ensure your child enters kindergarten ready to succeed. The scholarship money will be paid directly to the program of your choice that is participating in Parent Aware. Parent Aware is a rating tool to help parents select high-quality early childhood programs. For more information, visit the [Parent Aware website](https://parentaware.org) (ParentAware.org).

Note: Children may only receive one scholarship between July 1 and June 30 each year and cannot receive a Pathway I and Pathway II scholarship at the same time.

Where can my child use a scholarship?

You may use an Early Learning Scholarship – Pathway I at any Parent Aware-participating early childhood program in Minnesota that your child attends on a regular basis.

Your child is not required to be enrolled in or attending a program at the time you apply for an Early Learning Scholarship. To find an eligible program, please contact the Child Care Information Services phone line at Child Care Aware of Minnesota (888-291-9811) or visit the [Parent Aware website](https://parentaware.org) (ParentAware.org). You may use these same resources if your child is currently attending a program, but you would like to explore other options. Be sure to tell the Area Administrator about your program choice if you are awarded a scholarship.

What are the maximum scholarship award amounts?

The maximum scholarship award amount available depends on your child's age, county, program type, and Parent Aware status. Learn about maximum scholarship award amounts on the [Early Learning Scholarships webpage](https://dcyf.mn.gov/sites/default/files/2025-07/els-fy26-maximum-award-amounts.pdf): <https://dcyf.mn.gov/sites/default/files/2025-07/els-fy26-maximum-award-amounts.pdf>

What are the eligibility requirements?

1. **Age:** Children birth through age 4 are eligible, and 5-year-olds are eligible if they turned 5 after September 1 of the current school year. (Children age out of eligibility if they are age 5 on September 1 or are enrolled in and attending kindergarten, whichever is earlier.)
2. **Address:** The child resides in Minnesota (they have a Minnesota address.)
3. **Income:** The family has a household income equal to or less than 85 percent of the State Median Income (SMI) or is receiving assistance from an approved state or federally funded program.

See income eligibility guidelines on page 12.

Priority Populations

Children receive priority status for Early Learning Scholarship funds if they meet one or more of the following criteria. Families must also meet income requirements to be eligible, unless noted below.

- Are in foster care or have a parent/guardian who is in extended foster care up to age 21 (no income documentation required).
- Have been referred as in need of child protection services (no income documentation required).
- Have a parent under age 21 who is pursuing a high school diploma or GED.
- Have experienced homelessness in the last 24 months.
- Have a parent currently in jail, prison, detention center or on active supervision.
- Are in or have a parent currently in a substance use treatment program.
- Are in or have a parent currently in a mental health treatment program.
- Have experienced domestic violence.
- Currently have an individualized education program (IEP, ages 3 to 5) or an individualized family service plan (IFSP, ages birth to 3).

In addition,

- Children birth to 3 years of age should be prioritized over 4-year olds.
- Children in families at or below 47 percent of the State Median Income (SMI) should be prioritized over higher income families (As of July 1, 2025).

How do I Apply for an Early Learning Scholarship?

1. Complete the application in blue/black ink or electronically. Information that is required is marked with an asterisk (*).
 - If the child is in foster care, the county or tribal social service agency must complete and sign the application. The foster parent cannot apply directly for a scholarship.
2. Attach the required documentation to demonstrate your eligibility. See Page 6 for requirements for Option 1 (proof of participation in a publicly funded program) or Page 7 for requirements for Option 2 (proof of income).
 - If applying in the “parent under 21 eligibility” category, the applicant parent must provide written proof of their pursuit of a high school diploma or GED® on the letterhead of the education organization providing the course(s) of study the parent attends.
3. Read the Agreement to Comply with Requirements and Tennessean Warning.
4. Sign and date the application in blue/black ink or electronic signature.
5. Submit your original application to the Area Administrator by following the instructions provided at the bottom of the Application Checklist on the next page.

This form was created by the State of Minnesota Early Learning scholarship program and must not be altered or adjusted in any way.

Funding is provided by the State to support administration of early learning scholarships, Minnesota Statutes, section [142D.25](#).

Application Checklist

Review the checklist below to make sure you have everything you need for your application:

- Complete all required areas of the application. The items marked with an asterisk (*) are required. All other information is optional.
- Complete this form in blue/black ink or electronically.
- Carefully read each line of the **Agreement to Comply with Requirements** section and the **Tennessean Warning**.
- Sign and date the application in blue/black ink or electronically.
 - *Optional:* Read the agreement to participate in the evaluation and initial to give consent.
- Staple all supporting documents to the back of the application. Supporting documents include:
 - For Option 1: Documentation demonstrating current participation in one of the approved public programs listed on Page 6.
 - For Option 2: Income documentation in addition to the *Option 2: Adults in the Household and their Income* table on Page 7 of the application.
 - If none of the adult members of your household have any income, the *Household Declaration of No Income* form on Page 8 must be completed by one adult and submitted with your application.
 - If you are a teen parent under 21 and are pursuing a high school diploma or GED[®], you must provide written proof of your pursuit of a high school diploma or GED[®] on the letterhead of the educational organization providing the course(s) of study you attend.
- Submit the completed, signed application with attached eligibility documentation to the Area Administrator listed below.
- Keep at least one copy of the application and attachments for your own records.

Submit the Application

Submit your completed application and eligibility documentation to your Area Administrator.

Please do not send this application to the Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF).

Northland Foundation
202 West Superior Street, Suite 800
Duluth, MN 55802
218.260.2736

Please do not email applications. Contact Northland Foundation for a link to our secure portal.

The Area Administrator will send you a letter to let you know the status of your child's or children's Early Learning Scholarship – Pathway I. If you have questions, contact the Area Administrator.

Missing documentation such as proof of program participation or income, or missing signatures may cause a delay.