

23 ILLINOIS ADMINISTRATIVE CODE 2751 CH. XIX, SEC. 2751
EARLY CHILDHOOD ACCESS CONSORTIUM FOR EQUITY (ECACE) SCHOLARSHIP
PROGRAM

TITLE 23: EDUCATION AND CULTURAL RESOURCES
SUBTITLE A: EDUCATION
CHAPTER XIX: ILLINOIS STUDENT ASSISTANCE COMMISSION

PART 2751
EARLY CHILDHOOD ACCESS CONSORTIUM FOR EQUITY (ECACE)
SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

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AUTHORITY: Implementing Section 65.125 and authorized by Section 20(f) of the Higher Education Student Assistance Act [110 ILCS 947/65.125 and 20(f)].

SOURCE: Adopted at 49 Ill. Reg. 14291, effective October 16, 2025.

Section 2751.10 Summary and Purpose

- a) The Early Childhood Access Consortium for Equity (ECACE) Scholarship Program was created to address the shortage of qualified early childhood educators by encouraging the pursuit of credentials and advancement of already-held degrees in early childhood education, with an aim toward building a strong, well-prepared workforce.
- b) This Part establishes the rules which govern the Early Childhood Access Consortium for Equity (ECACE) Scholarship Program. Additional rules and definitions are contained in General Provisions, 23 Ill. Adm. Code 2700.

Section 2751.15 Definitions

"Incumbent workforce" means an individual or a group of individuals working or having worked in the early childhood industry, including family child care and center-based care settings, Preschool for All school-based settings, and Head Start, that serves children from birth to age 5 and includes teachers, assistant teachers, directors, family child care providers, and assistants. [110 ILCS 28/10]

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"Licensed facility" means a program or a facility that is licensed by the State to provide child care or day care services.

"License-exempt facility" means a program or facility that is not required to be licensed by the State to provide child care and day care services and may include programs operated by public or private elementary school systems, high schools or institution of higher learning; and programs conducted on federal government premises.

Section 2751.20 Applicant Eligibility

A qualified applicant shall:

- a) be a U.S. citizen or an eligible noncitizen or meet the undocumented student criteria of the RISE Act;
- b) be a member of the incumbent workforce, currently working or having worked in the early childhood field in a licensed or license-exempt facility that serves children from birth to age 5;
- c) be enrolled or accepted for enrollment, on a full- or part-time basis (at least 3 credit hours), at the undergraduate level at a public or non-profit private 2- or 4-year Gateways-entitled and Early Childhood Access Consortium for Equity member institution;
- d) be pursuing at least one of the following:
 - 1) an Associate of Applied Science degree (or related certificate) in early childhood education or an associate degree with a concentration in early childhood education;
 - 2) a bachelor's degree in early childhood education, with or without a Professional Educator License; and
- e) be maintaining satisfactory academic progress as determined by the institution.

Section 2751.30 Program Procedures

- a) An application for the scholarship must be submitted annually and an applicant must also complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA®) or the Alternative Application to receive a valid Student Aid Index (SAI). The

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ECACE application is available on ISAC's website. In order to receive priority consideration for an award, both applications, including all required documentation, must be completed and received by a priority date established each year by the Commission that will precede the academic year for which the scholarship is being requested.

- b) If the scholarship application is incomplete, ISAC will notify the applicant. The applicant will then have an opportunity to furnish the missing information; however, the application will only be considered for processing as of the date when the application is complete and received by ISAC.
- c) Award funds shall be applicable to an applicant's total cost of attendance for an award year after other financial aid received, up to a maximum of \$7,500.
- d) Within the constraints of annual appropriation levels, two semester or three quarter term payments are made directly to the institution.
- e) ISAC shall select recipients from among those who have submitted complete applications and have supplied required information, including qualified timely renewal and new applicants.
- f) Awarding priority shall be given to renewal applicants, meaning those who were paid an ECACE benefit in the previous award year, who continue to meet the eligibility requirements. Applicants will be prioritized for awarding based on their SAI from the FAFSA or Alternative Application, from lowest to highest.
- g) The total number of awards in a given fiscal year is contingent on available funding. If funding is insufficient to pay all eligible applicants, awards will be based on the date the completed application is received by ISAC.
- h) Each qualified applicant who is selected to receive an award shall be notified by ISAC. Applicants not receiving the award will also be notified.
- i) The total amount of funds awarded to a qualified recipient in any given academic year, when added to other financial aid available to the qualified recipient for that year, shall not exceed the cost of attendance. If the amount of financial aid to be awarded to a qualified student exceeds the institution's cost of attendance, the ECACE scholarship shall be reduced by the amount by which the cost of attendance is exceeded.

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- j) ISAC pays award funds directly to the institution of record in the name of the recipient.
- k) *Prior to receiving scholarship assistance for any academic year, each qualified recipient must sign an agreement to pledge to continue or return to teaching or providing direct services in the early childhood care and education field in the State of Illinois after completion of their program of study. [110 ILCS 947/65.125(e)]*

Section 2751.40 Institutional Procedures

- a) The institution shall submit eligibility information for qualified applicants in sufficient time for ISAC to make award announcements.
- b) ISAC awards funds paid directly to the approved institution of record that certifies to ISAC that the applicant is an eligible recipient.
 - 1) ISAC will annually establish priority claim dates for the submission of payment requests and inform schools of the required priority dates.
 - 2) Late payment requests will result in delayed processing of payments. Payment requests are processed in the sequence of receipt by ISAC and as funds are available.
 - 3) Institutions may submit their payment requests beginning 10 days prior to the start of classes for the term for which payment is being requested.
- c) ISAC shall disburse funds in two or three installments, depending on the number of terms financed by the scholarship. Multiple disbursements shall not be required in cases where the applicant's eligibility is not determined until the final term of the academic year for which the scholarship is being awarded or when a student is attending only one term and the maximum award does not exceed the student's cost of attendance.
- d) Funds shall be remitted by ISAC to institutions on behalf of the recipients.
- e) Upon receipt of the funds, the institution shall verify the recipient's enrollment status for the term for which the award was intended. If enrolled, the institution may credit the scholarship funds to the recipient's account for expenses due and payable. The balance of the disbursement shall be released to the recipient.

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- f) Upon receipt of the funds, if the recipient has withdrawn from enrollment for the terms for which the award was intended, the institution shall return the amount of the scholarship payment to ISAC.
- g) The scholarship is applicable toward the applicant's full cost of attendance. The total amount of scholarship assistance awarded to a qualified applicant in an award year, when added to other financial aid available to the qualified applicant for that year, cannot exceed the cost of attendance.
- h) To provide sufficient time for processing and vouchering through the State Comptroller's Office, all payment requests must be received by ISAC no later than July 1.