

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

PART 2743
GRANT PROGRAM FOR EXONEREES AND THEIR DEPENDENTS

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AUTHORITY: Implementing and authorized by Section 62 of the Higher Education Student Assistance Act [110 ILCS 947/62].

SOURCE: Adopted at 40 Ill. Reg. 1968, effective January 7, 2016; amended at 45 Ill. Reg. 8468, effective July 1, 2021; amended at 50 Ill. Reg. 9451, effective June 25, 2026.

Section 2743.10 Summary and Purpose

- a) The Grant Program for Exonerees and their Dependents (Program) provides direct grant assistance to an individual who has received a pardon from the Governor of the State of Illinois stating that the pardon is issued on the grounds of innocence of the crime for which the individual was imprisoned or an individual who has received a certificate of innocence from a circuit court pursuant to Section 2-702 of the Code of Civil Procedure [735 ILCS 5]. If the individual has not yet exhausted the grant assistance, the Program will provide grant assistance with the unexpended portion to one or more designated dependents. Grants are limited based on funding levels appropriated by the Illinois General Assembly.
- b) This Part establishes rules that govern the Program. Additional rules and definitions are contained in 23 Ill. Adm. Code 2700 (General Provisions).

(Source: Amended at 50 Ill. Reg. 9451, effective June 25, 2026)

Section 2743.15 Definitions

"Dependent" – means *any spouse, natural child, legally adopted child, or child in the legal custody of an individual.*

"Exonerated Person" – means *any individual who has received a pardon from the Governor of the State of Illinois stating that the pardon is issued on the grounds of innocence of the crime for which the individual was imprisoned, or an individual who has received a certificate of innocence from a circuit court pursuant to Section 2-702 of the Code of Civil Procedure.* [110 ILCS 947/62(a)]

"Grant Funds" –

Full or part-time tuition and mandatory fees at an institution that is approved for participation in the Monetary Award Program (MAP) for undergraduate or graduate study. (see 23 Ill. Adm. Code 2735.30)

The costs associated with obtaining a high school equivalency certificate from an Illinois Community College Board-approved provider. These costs shall include payment of the cost of the high school equivalency test and up to one retest on each test module; and

Any administrative fees that may be required in order to obtain an Illinois high school equivalency certificate or an official transcript of test scores after successful completion of the high school equivalency test.

(Source: Amended at 50 Ill. Reg. 9451, effective June 25, 2026)

Section 2743.20 Applicant Eligibility

A qualified applicant shall:

- a) be a resident of Illinois;
- b) have received:
 - 1) *a pardon issued on the grounds of innocence;*
 - 2) *a certificate of innocence from a circuit court;* or
 - 3) a designation as a dependent of an exonerated person; [110 ILCS 947/62(a)]
- c) be an exonerated person or their dependent who:
 - 1) has not yet received a high school diploma or a high school equivalency certificate and is completing a high school equivalency preparation course through an Illinois Community

Board-approved provider and/or is seeking an Illinois high school equivalency certificate; or

- 2) is enrolled for full or part-time study at an institution that is approved for participation in the MAP in an undergraduate degree or certificate program (see 34 CFR 668.8). Beginning with grants awarded for the 2025-26 academic year, a grant under this Section may also be used at any private, not-for-profit college or university in this State that is approved to participate in the Monetary Award Program under Section 35 of the Higher Education Student Assistance Act.
- d) maintain satisfactory academic progress as defined in 110 ILCS 947/62(a); and
- e) not have to demonstrate financial need to receive this grant.

(Source: Amended at 50 Ill. Reg. 9451, effective June 25, 2026)

Section 2743.30 Program Procedures

- a) All applicants must complete annually an ISAC application for the Grant Program for Exonerees and their Dependents.
 - 1) Applications are available at ISAC's website and ISAC's Springfield and Deerfield offices.
 - 2) If the application is incomplete, ISAC will notify the applicant, who will have an opportunity to furnish the missing information. The application will only be considered for processing as of the date the application is complete and received by ISAC.
 - 3) All qualified applicants must also submit any forms required of the Program.
- b) *Benefits are limited to the full-time enrollment equivalent of 8 semesters or 12 quarters of payment for undergraduate or graduate study. [110 ILCS 947/62(b)]* Qualified applicants will be awarded a maximum of 48 eligibility units as set forth on the Program page published on the ISAC website. If the exonerated person has not exhausted their benefits, the exonerated person may designate one or more dependents to use the unexpended portion. The combined benefits used

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by an exonerated person and their dependents are limited to the total benefit for which the exonerated person is eligible.

- c) The Grant Program for Exonerees and their Dependents funds shall be applicable only to tuition and mandatory fees and only for two semesters or three quarters in a regular school year.
- d) ISAC shall select the recipients from among those who have submitted complete applications, including qualified new applicants and those who filed timely renewal applications and have supplied information required.
- e) The total number of grants awarded in a given fiscal year is contingent upon available funding. If funding is insufficient to pay all eligible applicants of the grant, awarding will be based on the date the completed application is received by ISAC. Preference will first be given to renewal applicants, who continue to meet the eligibility requirements, followed by applicants who have been exonerated, and finally applicants who are designated dependents of exonerated persons.
- f) Each qualified applicant who is selected to receive a grant shall be notified by ISAC. Applicants not receiving the grant will be notified as well.
- g) The grant may be used to pay costs associated with obtaining a high school equivalency certificate and up to one retest on each test module.
- h) The grant may be used to pay costs associated with obtaining an official transcript of test scores after successful completion of the high school equivalency test.
- i) The total amount of Grant Program for Exonerees and their Dependents funds awarded pursuant to Section 2743.30(b) to a qualified recipient in a given academic year, when added to other financial aid available to the qualified recipient for that year, shall not exceed the cost of attendance.
- j) *A qualified applicant attending a private institution in Illinois may receive funds sufficient to pay the cost of tuition and mandatory fees, provided the funding does not exceed the maximum amount payable to a student enrolled in the most expensive comparable program of study at a public college or university in this State. [110 ILCS 947/62(a)]*
- k) ISAC pays grant funds directly to the institution of record in the name of the recipient; however, ISAC reserves the right to reimburse costs associated with obtaining a high school equivalency certificate or in obtaining transcripts and test scores (as described in subsection (h)) directly to the qualified applicant.

(Source: Amended at 50 Ill. Reg. 9451, effective June 25, 2026)

Section 2743.40 Institutional Procedures

- a) Institutions shall submit payment requests to ISAC.
- b) Except as otherwise allowed by Section 2743.30(h), funds shall be remitted by ISAC to participating institutions on behalf of the applicant.
- c) Upon receipt of grant funds, the institution shall verify the recipient's enrollment status for the term for which the award was intended.
- d) Upon receipt of the grant funds, if the recipient has withdrawn from enrollment for the terms for which the award was intended or if the grant exceeds the cost of attendance after other available financial aid has been applied, the institution shall return the appropriate amount of the grant payment to ISAC.
- e) To provide sufficient time for processing and vouchering through the State Comptroller's Office in Springfield, all payment requests must be received by ISAC no later than July 1.