

2026-27 Illinois Special Education Teacher Tuition Waiver (SETTW) Rights & Responsibilities

The Illinois General Assembly established the Illinois Special Education Teacher Tuition Waiver Program to encourage current teachers and academically talented students to pursue careers as Illinois public, private or parochial elementary and secondary school teachers in any area of Special Education. Tuition waivers are applicable towards credit for any semester/quarter within an academic year*. A recipient shall be exempt from paying tuition and mandatory fees for up to four calendar years. Accepting the tuition waiver means that you understand and agree to fulfill your responsibilities to the State of Illinois. If you fail to do so, you could lose your tuition waiver and/or be required to repay funds waived.

YOU SHOULD READ THIS ENTIRE SHEET AND KEEP IT FOR FUTURE REFERENCE. IT CONTAINS GENERAL INFORMATION REGARDING YOUR RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES AS AN SETTW RECIPIENT. THE COMPLETE TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF YOUR LEGAL OBLIGATION ARE OUTLINED IN THE TERMS AND CONDITIONS SECTION OF THE ILLINOIS SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHER TUITION WAIVER APPLICATION/TEACHING AGREEMENT/MASTER PROMISSORY NOTE.

STUDENT RIGHTS

You have the RIGHT to:

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| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A fair and objective decision without regard to race, creed, gender, or national origin. 2. Appeal an ISAC decision to: Assistant Director, Program Operations, 1755 Lake Cook Road, Deerfield, IL 60015. Include any additional documentation to be presented. Appeals must be submitted within sixty days of the administrative decision made by ISAC. (ISAC must adhere to the rules and statutes governing the SETTW award to be fair and equitable to all applicants.) | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Know that you will not be required to teach or repay the amount of the tuition and fees waived if you become permanently totally disabled, as established by the sworn affidavit of a licensed physician, or if your representative provides ISAC with a death certificate as evidence of your death. 4. Expect prompt and courteous service from ISAC staff. Please contact a Student Engagement Representative at 800.899.ISAC (4722) or email us at isac.studentservices@illinois.gov if you have questions. |
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STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES

It is your RESPONSIBILITY to:

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| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Meet ALL requirements and obligations. You must: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. be a U.S. citizen or an eligible non-citizen or meet the "undocumented student" criteria of the RISE Act; b. be a resident of Illinois; c. meet one of the following conditions: be a graduate (or scheduled to graduate) from an approved high school in the 2025-26 academic year and rank in the upper half of your graduating class; or have graduated from an approved high school prior to the 2025-26 academic year and you do not hold a valid teaching license; or hold a valid teaching license that is not in the area of special education. d. be enrolled, or accepted for enrollment, as an undergraduate or graduate student seeking initial licensure in any area of Special Education; e. enroll at one of the Illinois public 4-year colleges (providing the institution offers a concentration in Special Education) within ten days after the beginning of the term immediately following the receipt of the tuition waiver. If you delay your college registration, your tuition waiver will be forfeited and will be awarded to another applicant; f. not have received SETTW in the past; g. meet the satisfactory academic progress criteria established by the college you attend; | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> h. complete your course of study within six years including leaves of absence. You must remain enrolled on a continuous basis during the regular school year** for four years, unless granted a leave of absence. However, a leave of absence granted for military service shall not be considered part of the six years within which a recipient must complete a degree. Failure to continue in college or continue in the special education program major, as defined by your college policy, will make your tuition waiver invalid; i. (if necessary) apply to the Financial Aid Office at the school for a Leave of Absence (LOA). You may be granted a LOA by the president of the university or a designee, for the following reasons: 1) earning funds to defray your educational expenses; 2) illness of you or a member of your immediate family, as established by a sworn statement from a licensed physician; or 3) military service. If you interrupt your studies and fail to obtain an approved leave of absence, your tuition waiver becomes invalid. If so, you must forfeit the waiver for current and subsequent years; j. notify the appropriate college office and ISAC immediately, in writing, if you decide not to use the tuition waiver, transfer to one of the other eligible colleges, withdraw from a course of study leading to initial licensure in an area of Special Education, change your name, or change your address; |
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<p>k. provide ISAC with evidence of compliance with the SETTW program regulations (response to requests for information, etc.);</p> <p>l. begin teaching on a full-time basis, in the field of Special Education, within one year following graduation from or termination of enrollment in a teacher education program, at a nonprofit, public, private, or parochial preschool or elementary or secondary school in Illinois and continue teaching for at least 2 of the 5 years immediately following.</p> <p>The five-year time period during which the teaching requirement must be fulfilled may be extended if you:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> serve, for not more than three years, as a member of the Armed Forces of the United States; are enrolled full-time in an academic program related to the field of teaching, leading to a graduate or postgraduate degree; are temporarily totally disabled for a period of time not to exceed three years, as established by the sworn affidavit of a qualified physician; are actively seeking but unable to find full-time employment as a teacher at an Illinois public, private, or parochial preschool or elementary or secondary school for one continuous period not to exceed two years, and are able to provide evidence of that fact; or are taking additional courses, on at least a half-time basis, needed to obtain licensure as a teacher in Illinois. <p>2. Know, if the teaching requirement is not fulfilled, that the tuition waiver converts to a loan and you must repay the entire amount of the tuition waiver (prorated according to the fraction of the teaching obligation not completed) within ten (10) years, plus interest at the rate equal to 5% per year. It is recommended that you monitor your college billing statements to keep track of the amount waived, in the unlikely event it converts to a loan. You can estimate the loan payments by accessing the Monthly Payment Estimates Calculator on our website at isac.org.</p> <p>a. You will enter repayment status on the earliest of the following dates:</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> the first day of the calendar month after you cease to pursue a course of study leading to your initial special education licensure, but not until a six-month grace period has elapsed, after the cessation of at least half-time enrollment in such a course of study the date you inform ISAC that you do not plan to fulfill the teaching obligation; or the latest date which you must have begun teaching in order to complete the teaching obligation within the five years after completing your postsecondary education for which ISAC awarded the tuition waiver. <p>b. You may request to defer your repayment obligation if you:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> serve as a member of the Armed Forces of the United States for not more than three years; are temporarily disabled, for not more than three years, as established by the sworn affidavit of a licensed physician; are pursuing a graduate or postgraduate degree and enrolled on a full-time basis for one continuous period of time not to exceed three years; are seeking and unable to find full-time employment for one continuous period not to exceed two years and are able to provide evidence of that fact; withdraw from a course of study leading to your initial special education major, but remain enrolled on a full-time basis in another academic discipline; or are fulfilling teaching requirements associated with other programs administered by ISAC and cannot concurrently fulfill the requirements in a period of time equal to the length of the teaching obligation. <p>c. During the time that you qualify for any of the deferment categories listed in 2.b. above, you need not make the payments and interest will not accrue.</p> <p>d. ISAC may extend the ten-year scholarship repayment period by a period equal to the length of time you meet any of the conditions of deferment listed in 2.b. above.</p> <p>e. Your repayment obligation will still be due and payable beginning on the date indicated above even if you do not receive a notice, coupon book or monthly statement from ISAC.</p>
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OTHER INFORMATION

- You can cancel the tuition waiver before registering, without any cost, by declining the tuition waiver awarded to you.
- The tuition waiver will be cancelled if your college notifies ISAC that you are not eligible.
- All potential new applicants are eligible provided that the SETTW was not received in the past.
- In any academic year in which you accept or receive financial assistance through the Teachers of Illinois Scholarship, Early Childhood Access Consortium for Equity Scholarship, or Golden Apple Scholars of Illinois programs, you shall not be eligible for the Illinois Special Education Teacher Tuition Waiver.
- If you are eligible for SETTW and grant assistance under the Monetary Award Program (MAP), SETTW must be used first.

The tuition waiver can be used at the following colleges; providing the college offers a concentration in Special Education. Please consult with your college regarding their Special Education program.

001694 Chicago State University	001693 Northeastern Illinois University	001776 University of Illinois at Chicago
001674 Eastern Illinois University	001737 Northern Illinois University	009333 University of Illinois at Springfield
009145 Governors State University	001758 Southern Illinois University at Carbondale	001775 University of Illinois at Urbana
001692 Illinois State University	001759 Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville	001780 Western Illinois University

*Academic year – In relation to scholarship and grant programs, a twelve-month period, normally from August or September of any year through August or September of the ensuing year. (An academic year includes summer terms).

**Regular school year – An eight-to-nine-month period that includes two semester terms or three-quarter terms. The regular school year excludes summer terms. Terms that begin after April 15 and end before September 16 are considered summer terms.