

FINANCIAL AID GUIDANCE MEMO

REFERENCE: **FA 25-003**
TOPIC: **THE COLLEGE ADOPTION GRANT**
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RELEVANT STATUTE: **OHIO REVISED CODE, SECTION 3333.128**

Following is important information for the College Adoption Grant program which is included in the guidance memos provided at <https://highered.ohio.gov/educators/financial-aid/sgs-guidance-memos>.

Overview

The College Adoption Grant provides a one-time award of \$2,500 to students who were adopted and choose to attend a qualifying college or university in the state of Ohio.

Qualified Institutions

The College Adoption Grant award can be used at qualifying Institutions of Higher Education (IHE) at the following institution types:

- State institutions of higher education, as defined in section 3345.011 of the Revised Code;
- A nonprofit private institution holding a certificate of authorization pursuant to Chapter 1713. of the Revised Code;
- An institution holding a certificate of registration from the state board of career colleges and schools and program authorization for an associate or bachelor's degree program issued under section 3332.05 of the Revised Code.
- A private institution exempt from regulation under Chapter 3332. of the Revised Code as prescribed in section 3333.046 of the Revised Code.

Student Eligibility

To be eligible to receive the Ohio College Adoption Grant, an applicant must:

- Be an Ohio resident pursuant to Rule 3333-1-10 of the Ohio Administrative Code
- Be adopted in accordance with Chapter 3107 of the Ohio Revised Code, including any of the following types of adoptions:
 - An adoption arranged by an attorney;
 - An adoption arranged by a public children services agency, private child placing agency, or private noncustodial agency;
 - Interstate adoption in accordance with section 5103.23 of the Ohio Revised Code;
 - Foreign adoption in accordance with section 3107.18 of the Ohio Revised Code.
- Not be adopted by a stepparent
- Have a finalized adoption date on or after January 1, 2023;
- Be enrolled at a qualifying institution.

Student Awards

- Students receive a one-time grant of \$2,500.
- Grant award is applicable to eligible expenses included within the qualifying IHE's published cost of attendance and may be refundable to the student.
- If an institution does not have a published cost of attendance, eligible expenses will be capped at tuition and student fees.
- If there are any leftover funds after cost of attendance, the qualifying institution shall apply that remaining amount to the student's cost of attendance for any other academic year in which the student is enrolled in the institution.
- Any remaining funds after this time should be returned to the chancellor.

Utilization

Students must be enrolled full-time or part-time in an undergraduate program of study. Part-time is considered anything less than 12 credit hours per term.

Study Abroad

The home school needs to maintain documentation showing course(s) being taken, and student charges at the study abroad institution (if not recorded on transcript and account statement). The total charges must not be more than the cost of attending the home institution during that term. In keeping with federal guidelines, the home school must keep this documentation in the event of an audit.

Certification

After a student applies directly to ODHE and is awarded the College Adoption Grant;

- Institutions will be sent a student Eligibility and Certification form listing their eligible student(s), via the secure file transfer site (HEIFX), which can be found at: <https://heifx.ohiohighered.org>.
 - The log-in information is the same as your HEI log in. If you've forgotten your password, go here <https://hei.ohiohighered.org/> and select forgot password. The username is your e-mail.
- After enrollment is verified, institutions will need to complete the certification section of the Eligibility and Certification form and return to the Ohio Department of Higher Education (ODHE) via HEIFX (select Adoption Student Grant under the Associate with Program dropdown.)
- Fields on the certification form include cost of attendance; enrollment status; program of study; satisfactory academic progress, if applicable and as determined by the institution; and Selective Service registration, if applicable.
- Institutions must wait a **minimum** of 15 days after the start of the term before funds can be requested.
- Funds will be transferred to the institution in the same form as other financial aid funds.

Posting of Funds

In alignment with federal policy, the institution should apply the funds requested as soon as administratively feasible, but no later than three business days after the date the institution received those funds. College Adoption Grant funds may be applied to the student's cost of attendance and are refundable to the student, if applicable. If College Adoption Grant funds exceed these charges, the institution may retain the excess to be applied to the applicant's charges for the subsequent term. If the applicant does not enroll in the subsequent term, the institution will need to refund the excess funds to ODHE.

Refunds

It is possible that a College Adoption Grant applicant may disenroll from an institution, or an applicant may not make use of their full \$2,500 award toward their cost of attendance. If this occurs, funds may need to be returned to ODHE, depending on the timing of the withdrawal.

1. If the student drops before the 100% refund withdrawal date, then the institution should return the funds (see process below).

2. If the student drops after financial aid awards have been applied to their account and refunds issued, then funds do not need to be returned.

To return funds, first contact ODHE through the College Adoption Grant email (collegadoptiongrant@highered.ohio.gov). Funds may be returned via check or ACH payment. Checks should be payable to Treasurer, State of Ohio and mailed to the address below.

A refund check, along with a revised Eligibility and Certification form, must be submitted to our office within 30 days of graduation or disenrollment. If after 45 days the refund check is not submitted, the amount owed plus interest and any additional fees may be turned over to the Ohio Attorney General's office for collection.

Refund checks can be made out to the Ohio Department of Higher Education and mailed to:

Ohio Department of Higher Education
ATTN: College Adoption Grant
Office of Financial Aid, 7th Floor
25 South Front Street
Columbus, OH 43215-4183

Selective Service

Ohio Revised Code (ORC) section 3345.32 still requires compliance with the selective service law for a student to be eligible for any of Ohio's state grants and scholarships, subsidy, and in-state tuition. ORC 3345.32 *Student Noncompliance with Selective Service* can be found here: <https://codes.ohio.gov/ohio-revised-code/section-3345.32>.

As such, ODHE still requires that students comply with selective service registration before funds are requested for the term, and documentation maintained as part of the audit process. If a student falls into one of the exceptions according to ORC for selective service, the documentation for this exception must be provided to ODHE in the case of an audit. For birthdays that fall after the FAFSA filing and before a term start date, an institution is required to check registration prior to requesting any state aid for a term after the 18th birthday.

If Ohio legislation is changed, ODHE will inform the campuses.

Financial Aid Audits

The Ohio Revised Code authorizes the Chancellor to conduct financial aid audits of state-supported colleges and universities, proprietary, and non-profit private colleges and universities. All Ohio institutions with financial aid errors based on their prior year audit results will automatically be audited in an upcoming calendar year. Additional institutions may be audited by random selection to maintain our goal of auditing a set number of institutions yearly. Every institution will be audited *at least* once every three years.

Financial aid personnel should direct any questions to CollegeAdoptionGrant@highered.ohio.gov.