FINANCIAL AID GUIDANCE MEMO

REFERENCE:	**FA 27-006**
TOPIC:	**OHIO SAFETY OFFICERS COLLEGE MEMORIAL FUND**
AUTHOR:	**CLEONE BRANDY, PROGRAM MANAGER**
DATE:	**JULY 02, 2026**
RELEVANT STATUTE:	**OHIO REVISED CODE, SECTION 3333.26**

Ohio Revised Code

The Ohio Revised Code for the Ohio Safety Officers College Memorial Fund (OSO) can be found at: https://codes.ohio.gov/ohio-revised-code/section-3333.26.

Update Eligiblity

This program provides undergraduate level and certificate program (including graduate level non-degree certificate programs) tuition assistance to a child, spouse, and qualified former spouse of peace officers, fire fighters, and certain other safety officers who are killed in the line-of-duty, anywhere in the United States. It also provides undergraduate level and certificate program (including graduate level non-degree certificate programs) tuition assistance to the children and spouses of a member of the armed services of the U.S., who has been killed in the line of duty during Operation Enduring Freedom, Operation Iraqi Freedom, or a combat zone designated by the President of the United States.

The student is eligible for this program if he/she is an Ohio resident and does not qualify for the Ohio War Orphan & Severely Disabled Veterans' Children Scholarship Program.

Dependent children of deceased peace officers, fire fighters, and certain other safety officers, must also be under the age of twenty-six or under thirty years of age if the resident has been honorably discharged from the armed services.

Residency

Recipients are required to be current Ohio residents as described in the Ohio Student Residency Administrative Rule, found at: http://codes.ohio.gov/oac/3333-1-10/. Recipients, however, are not required to have been Ohio residents at the time a service member was killed in the line of duty.

Update 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 institutions verify that students comply with selective service registration before requesting state grant and scholarship funding for the term, submitting to be included in the subsidy calculations (publics only), and charging in-state tuition (publics only).**

The institution must keep this documentation in the event of an audit. If a student falls into one of the exceptions according to ORC for selective service, the documentation for this exception must also 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.

***Update* Award Amount - Undergraduate Level**
For the 2026-2027 academic year, for students in an associate or bachelor's degree program, the Fund will provide benefits which cover 100% instructional and student fee charges at public colleges and universities and **$11,287** per year at private (non-profit and for-profit) post-secondary institutions. As required in statute, the private award amount is derived from the prior year's average public award amount.

Award Amount - Certificate Level
Statute includes benefits available to students in a certificate program at an approved post-secondary institution. For the 2026-2027 academic year, the Fund will provide benefits not to exceed $8,000 per academic year for instructional and student fee charges at public and private (non-profit and for-profit) post-secondary institutions.

Influence of other Tuition Specific/Student Fees Aid
OSO funds are available to be used toward tuition and student fees. Student fees are defined as general fees, course fees, and special fees.

For students receiving any tuition/student fees-specific aid, a simple calculation should be performed to determine final OSO eligibility. This other tuition/fees-specific aid must be applied prior to the OSO award. Tuition/student fees minus tuition/student fee-specific aid equals OSO eligibility.

Consortiums
The combined number of credits under a financial aid consortium can be counted toward determining a student's enrollment status for Ohio Safety Officer Scholarship if the other institution is an approved Ohio institution. For example, a student enrolled in 6 credits at their 'home' school and 6 credits at their 'visiting' school would be eligible for a full-time enrollment and award. This applies to consortium agreements with community colleges or regional campuses as well.

Study Abroad

The home school needs to maintain documentation showing course(s) being taken, tuition charges at the study abroad institution (if not recorded on transcript and account statement), and that funds were used for tuition and student fees only. The total expense of tuition and fee 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.*

Utilization

Students in an undergraduate program are required to be Ohio residents and may receive tuition waivers for a maximum of the equivalent of four academic years of full-time or part-time undergraduate study. Part-time status is considered anything less than 12 credit hours and would be considered as a full term of eligibility.

Students in a certificate program are required to be Ohio residents and may receive tuition waivers for up to two certificate programs, not to exceed the equivalent of four academic years of full-time or part-time undergraduate study. Part-time status is considered anything less than 12 credit hours and would be considered as a full term of eligibility.

Certification

The child or spouse of a peace officer, fire fighter, and certain other safety officers must have a letter from the Policemen and Firemen's Pension Board or a letter from the police chief or fire chief indicating that the parent or spouse was killed in the line of duty. The child or spouse of a member of the armed services of the US must have a copy of the marriage certificate and a copy of the Report of Casualty. *Please do not forward any documentation to ODHE.* In keeping with federal guidelines, the institution must keep this documentation in the event of an audit.

The institution will need to notify the Ohio Department of Higher Education (ODHE) of any *new* eligible students. **This student list, which should include the students name and social security number, must be sent to our office via the HEI secure file transfer site (HEIFX), which can be found at: https://heifx.ohiohighered.org. (Select Safety Officer's under the Associate with Program dropdown.)**

Once ODHE is notified, institutions will be sent a certification roster and certification of eligibility form via the HEI secure file transfer site for each term in the academic year, which must be reviewed, completed, and returned to the ODHE Program Manager. Please keep in mind that schools must wait a ***minimum*** of 15 days after the start of the term before funds can be requested. Also, please indicate on the roster if the student is obtaining a degree or certificate, and if he/she is earning a second certificate.

***Update* 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 and Pennsylvania 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. Separate guidance can be found here: https://highered.ohio.gov/educators/financial-aid/sgs-guidance-memos.

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 following the date the institution received those funds. OSO funds must be applied to a student's account for tuition and student fees and cannot be refunded to the student. If OSO exceeds these charges, the institution will need to refund the overage to ODHE.

Refunds

If a student becomes ineligible anytime in the academic year due to a reduction of credit hours, withdrawal, or receiving other tuition/fee-specific aid, and all or a portion of tuition is refunded, that same percentage will need to be returned to ODHE. A refund check must be submitted to our office within 30 days. 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. Refunds should be sent by check to the attention of the OSO Program Manager and payable to:

Ohio Department of Higher Education
Office of Financial Aid
25 South Front Street
Columbus, Ohio 43215-4183

TO SUMMARIZE, FOR THE 2026-2027 ACADEMIC YEAR, THE AMOUNT OF THE SAFETY OFFICERS COLLEGE MEMORIAL FUND IS:

BACHELOR/ASSOCIATE PROGRAMS

PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS **100% OF TUITION/STUDENT FEES**

PRIVATE (NON-PROFIT OR FOR-PROFIT): ***11,287.00 (ANNUAL AWARD)**

****$5,643.50 per semester*** ***OR*** ****$3762.33 per quarter***

CERTIFICATE PROGRAMS

PRIVATE AND PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS: **UP TO $8,000 (ANNUAL AWARD)**

Financial aid personnel should direct questions to Cleone Brandy, Program Manager, at 614.752-9481 or cbrandy@highered.ohio.gov