DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Early Learning Scholarship – Pathway I Application

Instructions

What is an Early Learning Scholarship?

An Early Learning Scholarship – Pathway I can help your child attend high-quality child care and early education to help your child get ready for kindergarten. The scholarship money will be paid directly to the program of your choice that is participating in Parent Aware. Parent Aware is a rating tool to help parents select high-quality early childhood programs. For more information, visit the Parent Aware website (ParentAware.org).

Note: Children may only receive one scholarship within a 12-month period and cannot receive a Pathway I and Pathway II scholarship at the same time.

Where can my child use a scholarship?

You may use an Early Learning Scholarship – Pathway I at any Parent Aware-participating early childhood program in Minnesota that your child attends on a regular basis.

Your child is not required to be enrolled in or attending a program at the time you apply for an Early Learning Scholarship. To find an eligible program, please contact the Child Care Information Services phone line at Child Care Aware of Minnesota (888-291-9811) or visit the Parent Aware website (ParentAware.org). You may use these same resources if your child is currently attending a program but you would like to explore other options. Be sure to tell the Area Administrator about your program choice if you are awarded a scholarship.

Scholarship amounts are based on the Parent Aware rating level of the program you choose.

Parent Aware Program Rating Level	Scholarship Amount**
Parent Aware Four-Star Rating	Up to $7,500 per child
Parent Aware Three-Star Rating	Up to $5,000 per child
Parent Aware One- or Two-Star Rating*	Up to $4,000 per child
Currently in a Full-Rating Pathway Cohort*	Up to $3,000 per child

*Starting July 1, 2024, Early Learning Scholarships – Pathway I can only be used at programs with a Three- or Four-Star Rating.
**Starting July 1, 2020, children in a priority status will be eligible for a higher cap. Consult with the Area Administrator once awarded.

Is my child eligible?

Children must meet age eligibility requirements in at least one category listed below at the time they are awarded. Children age out of eligibility for the Early Learning Scholarships Program either (a) the day they are age-eligible for kindergarten (age 5 on September 1), or (b) the day the child is enrolled in and attending kindergarten, whichever is earlier. Once a child is awarded a scholarship, they are eligible to continue to receive a scholarship until they age out.

- Children ages 3 to 4 on September 1 of the current school year, or age 5 if not yet aged out of eligibility.
- Children ages 0 to 4 on September 1 of the current school year, or age 5 if not yet aged out of eligibility, who meet one of the following criteria:

Early Learning Scholarship – Pathway I Application, Revised 7/1/2020

- A parent of the child is under the age of 21 and currently pursuing a high school or general education equivalency diploma (GED)*; or
- The child is in foster care or in need of child protective services*; or
- The family has experienced homelessness in the previous 24 months*; or
- The child has a sibling who has already been awarded a scholarship and attends the same program, as long as funds are available. Applications for eligible siblings do not require proof of income eligibility.

*Note: Priority for funding is given to children who meet the eligibility criteria with an asterisk (*). Families must also meet income eligibility requirements after meeting at least one of these priority criteria above.

Awards are made as long as funds are available. If a child is determined to be eligible for an early learning scholarship and funds are not available, they will be added to the waitlist.

Additional Requirements

Only a parent or legal guardian of the child/children may apply for an Early Learning Scholarship – Pathway I, and your family must meet the following requirements:

- **Location:** You must have a Minnesota address (residing in the state of Minnesota).
- **Income:** You must have a family income equal to or less than 185 percent of the federal poverty level or be receiving certain publicly funded assistance in an approved state or federal public assistance program.

The chart below is based on the poverty guidelines published in the Federal Register on January 17, 2020 and is valid for awards from July 1, 2020 through June 30, 2021.

Family Size	Gross Income	Family Size	Gross Income
2	$31,894	6	$65,046
3	$40,182	7	$73,344
4	$48,470	8	$80,346
5	$56,758	9**	$81,622

For family units of more than nine members, add **$8,288 for each additional member.

How do I Apply for an Early Learning Scholarship?

1. Complete the application in ink or electronically. Information that is required is marked with an asterisk (*).
   - If the child is in foster care, the county or tribal social service agency must complete and sign the application. The foster parent cannot apply directly for a scholarship.
2. Attach the required documentation to demonstrate your eligibility. See Page 5 for requirements for Option 1 (proof of participation in a publically funded program) or Option 2 (proof of income).
   - If applying in the parent under 21 eligibility category, the applicant must provide written proof of the parent's pursuit of a high school diploma or GED® on the letterhead of the education organization providing the course(s) of study the parent attends.
3. Read the Agreement to Comply with Requirements and Tennessen Warning.
4. Sign and date the application in ink or electronic signature.
5. Submit your original application to the Area Administrator by following the instructions provided at the bottom of the Application Checklist on the next page.

This form was created by the Minnesota Department of Education and must not be altered or adjusted in any way.
Funding provided by the Minnesota Department of Education using state funding to support administration of early learning scholarships, Minnesota Statutes, section 124D.165.

Early Learning Scholarship – Pathway I Application, Revised 7/1/2020

Application Checklist

Review the checklist below to make sure you have everything you need for your application:

- ☐ Complete all required areas of the application. The items marked with an asterisk (*) are required. All other information is optional.

- ☐ Complete this form in ink or electronically.

- ☐ Carefully read each line of the **Agreement to Comply with Requirements** section and the **Tennessen Warning.**

- ☐ Sign and date the application in ink or electronically.
    - *Optional*: Read the agreement to participate in the evaluation and initial to give consent.

- ☐ Staple all supporting documents to the back of the application. Supporting documents include:
    - For Option 1: Documentation demonstrating current participation in one of the approved public programs listed on Page 5.
    - For Option 2: Income documentation in addition to the *Option 2 Income Verification Form* on Page 6 of the application.
        - ▪ If none of the adult members of your household have any income, the *Household Declaration of No Income* form on Page 11 must be completed by one adult and submitted with your application.
    - If you are a teen parent under 21 and are pursuing a high school diploma or GED[®], you must provide written proof of your pursuit of a high school diploma or GED[®] on the letterhead of the educational organization providing the course(s) of study you attend.

- ☐ Submit the completed, signed application with attached eligibility documentation to the Area Administrator listed below.

- ☐ Keep at least one copy of the application and attachments for your own records.

Submit the Application

Submit your completed application and eligibility documentation to your Area Administrator:

Think Small
ATTN: Early Learning Scholarships
10 Yorkton Court
Saint Paul, MN 55117

Email: ApplyELS@thinksmall.org
Phone: 651-641-6604

The Area Administrator will send you a letter to let you know the status of your child's or children's Early Learning Scholarship – Pathway I. If you have questions, contact the Area Administrator.

Missing documentation such as proof of program participation or income, or missing signatures may cause a delay.