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# About Tennessee Promise

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# OVERVIEW OF TENNESSEE PROMISE

## What is Tennessee Promise?

Tennessee Promise is a financial aid program offering Tennessee high school graduates two years of tuition-free community or technical college. The program began with the high school graduating Class of 2015. It provides eligible students a last-dollar scholarship, meaning the scholarship will cover tuition and mandatory fees not covered by the Pell grant, the Tennessee Education Lottery Scholarship (TELS), or the Tennessee Student Assistance Award (TSAA).

While removing students' financial burden is key, a critical component of Tennessee Promise is the individual guidance each participant will receive from a mentor as the student enters higher education. Three organizations, the Ayers Foundation, REDI, and tnAchieves, serve as local partners and administer the mentorship component of the program.

## Student Eligibility

To be eligible to receive a Tennessee Promise Scholarship, a student must:

- Be a Tennessee resident as defined by the Tennessee Board of Regents
- Complete the Tennessee Promise application at [www.TNPromise.gov](http://www.TNPromise.gov)
- Be able to complete the FAFSA and possess a valid Social Security number
- Graduate from an eligible Tennessee high school, complete a Tennessee home school program, or, prior to reaching 19 years of age, obtain a GED or HiSET diploma
- Enroll in an eligible postsecondary program at an eligible college and attend full-time in the fall semester after graduation (students attending a TCAT may enroll the summer following their high school graduation)

Additional information about student eligibility can be found on page 7.

## Program Requirements

In order for students to participate in the program, they must meet the following deadlines beginning in their senior year of high school:

- **By November 1:** Apply for the Tennessee Promise scholarship at [www.TNPromise.gov](http://www.TNPromise.gov)
- **By January 16:** Complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) at [www.fafsa.gov](http://www.fafsa.gov)
- **Before May 1:** Attend mandatory meeting(s) coordinated by partnering organization
- **In the spring:** Apply to and register for classes at an eligible institution (partnering organizations may recommend applying by February 15)
- **By July 1:** Complete and report 8 hours of community service (*April 1 community service deadline for students enrolling at a TCAT the summer after high school graduation*)
- If selected for FAFSA verification, provide all documentation when requested by the institution so verification can be completed (*Your partnering organization may recommend you provide documentation by July 15*)

Once in the program, students must do the following to retain their scholarship:

- Enroll full-time and maintain a 2.0 GPA at a community college or four-year institution or satisfactory academic progress at a Tennessee College of Applied Technology
- Complete and report 8 hours of community service per term enrolled (by July 1 for fall semester, December 1 for spring semester, April 1 for summer semester)
- Complete the FAFSA by the January deadline every year of the program

## Administration of Funds

The Tennessee Promise scholarship is administered by the Tennessee Student Assistance Corporation (TSAC), while meetings, mentoring, and community service portions of the program are coordinated by the local partnering organization. Once a student applies for Tennessee Promise through [www.TNPromise.gov](http://www.TNPromise.gov), his or her respective partnering organization will be responsible for contacting the applicant regarding program requirements and mentor assignments.

Students will never directly receive funds from Tennessee Promise. Once Pell, TELS, and TSAA have been applied, TSAC will send scholarship funds covering the remaining costs of tuition and mandatory fees directly to institutions for students who have met all eligibility requirements.

## Partnering Organizations

Tennessee Promise's mentoring component distinguishes the program from any other state financial aid program across the country. Partnering organizations, designated by the mayor of each Tennessee county, will work with TSAC to administer Tennessee Promise, including the provision of student mentoring. Partnering organizations will:

- *Provide mentoring services*
- *Conduct required Tennessee Promise meetings for students\**
- *Provide notification to TSAC when Tennessee Promise participants have met all scholarship requirements*
- *Establish local Tennessee Promise advisory councils to build a network of advocates for the program*

A list of approved Tennessee Promise partnering organizations is located below.

*\*Only partnering organizations can conduct the required meetings. Counselors and school staff are encouraged to attend the meetings.*

## Community Service

Community service is an important component of Tennessee Promise. A student participating in the program must perform and report 8 hours of community service per academic term, prior to July 1 for the fall semester, December 1 for the spring semester, and April 1 for the summer semester. Partnering organizations must provide students with community service guidelines in advance and are responsible for documenting and reporting that students meet the service requirement.

For their community service, students may choose an activity benefiting their community, provided it fits within the guidelines set by their partnering organization and it does not fall into one of the following categories:

- *Community service performed prior to the Tennessee Promise application deadline of the student's senior year (November 1, 2017 for the Class of 2018)*
- *Work resulting in payment or remuneration of any kind*
- *Religious persuasion or proselytizing*
- *Work directly benefiting family members*

For more information on community service requirements or opportunities, contact your county's local partnering organization.

## PARTNERING ORGANIZATION INFORMATION

### tnAchieves

Krissy DeAlejandro  
krissy@tnachieves.org  
865-621-9223

### Ayers Foundation

Susan Rhodes  
susan.rhodes@theayersfoundation.org  
931-589-3660

### Regional Economic Development Initiative (REDI)

Lisa Hankins  
lhankins@swtdd.org  
731-668-6450

# TENNESSEE PROMISE SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

## Summary of Rules and Regulations

The Tennessee Promise Scholarship Program rules were adopted by the Tennessee Student Assistance Corporation in order to implement Public Chapter 900, the Tennessee Promise Scholarship Act of 2014.

### The Tennessee Promise Scholarship:

- Provides financial assistance to offset tuition and mandatory fees associated with pursuing postsecondary education after all other gift aid has been credited to tuition and mandatory fees. "Gift aid" is defined as Pell, TELS, and TSAA awards.
- Shall not include fees charged for online courses, specific programs of study, books, or supplies, even if such fees are considered necessary for enrollment.

### Tennessee Promise Scholarship Program

#### Participants Must:

- Complete the Tennessee Promise Scholarship award application no later than the November deadline of their senior year of high school for the initial year of enrollment.
- File a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) or renewal FAFSA, available at [www.fafsa.gov](http://www.fafsa.gov), in each year of program participation. Students enrolled in a two-year or four-year college must file the FAFSA by the January deadline for fall enrollment or by November 1 for spring and summer enrollment. Students enrolled at a TCAT must complete the FAFSA by the January deadline for summer and fall enrollment or by November 1 for spring enrollment.
- Be a Tennessee resident as defined by Tenn. Comp. R. & Regs. 0240-02-02, as promulgated by the Board of Regents.
- Graduate from an eligible Tennessee high school or home school program beginning in the spring of 2015 or obtain a GED or HiSET diploma prior to reaching 19 years of age. Eligible high schools are defined in T.C.A. § 49-4-902 and an eligible home school student is defined in T.C.A. § 49-4-708.
- Maintain continuous, full-time enrollment each academic term at an eligible postsecondary institution as defined in T.C.A. § 49-4-708 beginning in the fall term immediately following graduation or attainment of a GED or HiSET diploma; except that a student enrolling in a Tennessee College of Applied Technology (TCAT) may enroll in the summer prior to the fall term.
- Maintain a minimum cumulative grade point average of 2.0, as determined by the eligible postsecondary institution, at the end of each academic year if enrolled in an associate degree program, or maintain satisfactory academic progress as defined by a TCAT if enrolled at a TCAT.

- Prior to the initial fall enrollment, attend mandatory meeting(s) organized by a county's partnering organization.
- Complete and report 8 hours of community service each term while participating in the program. Service shall be performed prior to the beginning of each academic term (by July 1 for fall semester, by December 1 for spring semester, and by April 1 for summer semester), including the initial fall semester, in which the scholarship is received.
- Complete a diploma or associate degree prior to reaching a terminating event (see termination criteria below). Transfer students may continue to receive the award for up to 5 semesters or until completion of certificate or diploma.
- Comply with United States Selective Service System requirements for registration, if such requirements are applicable to the student.
- Be in compliance with federal drug-free rules and laws for receiving financial assistance and not be incarcerated.
- Not be in default on a federal Title IV or Tennessee educational loan and not owe a refund on a federal Title IV or a Tennessee student financial aid program.
- Meet the following criteria to be granted a personal or medical leave of absence from the scholarship program:

Allowable medical or personal reasons may include illness of the student; illness or death of an immediate family member; extreme financial hardship of the student or student's immediate family; fulfillment of a religious commitment encouraged of members of that faith; fulfillment of required military service; the program of study at a TCAT only begins in the spring or summer academic term or openings are unavailable for the fall academic term; full-time attendance at an eligible four-year institution while waiting for admission to an eligible postsecondary program; or other extraordinary circumstances beyond the student's control where attendance by the student creates a substantial hardship. In the event an institution denies a student's request for a medical or personal leave of absence, the student may appeal the decision in accordance with these rules. The appeals process is explained at:

<http://www.tn.gov/collegepays/article/TELS-Program-and-TN-Promise-Scholarship-Appeals-and-Exceptions>

### Tennessee Promise Scholarship Termination Criteria:

A student shall be eligible for the Tennessee Promise Scholarship until the occurrence of the first of the following events:

- The student has earned a diploma or associate degree; or
- The student has attended 5 semesters, exclusive of approved leaves of absence. An approved leave of absence shall not count against the 5 semester limit.
- If a student is authorized to attend less than full-time due to disability the institution shall determine the limit on number of semesters for that individual student.