

Exemption for Blind or Deaf Students Fact Sheet

Fact Sheets highlight specific requirements in the Texas Education Code (TEC) and Texas Administrative Code (TAC) in order to assist institutions with the administration of programs.

Purpose

To help enable students who are blind or deaf to attend public colleges or universities in the state of Texas.

Eligibility Determination

Texas residents with a *vision-related disability* (e.g., blindness, significant visual impairment) are determined eligible by **Vocational Rehabilitation Services Offices through the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC)**.

Students must contact their [local TWC office](#) to apply.

Texas residents with a *hearing disability* who meet certain criteria are determined eligible by **Texas Health and Human Services (HHS)**. To apply, students must submit the Application for Certificate of Deafness for Tuition Waiver (Form 3900) to HHS.

After eligibility is established, the HHS will issue the student a certification of eligibility letter that he or she must provide to the institution's registrar.

Eligible Courses

Any course for which an institution receives formula funding is eligible ([TEC, Section 54.2002](#)), even if the course is not included in the student's program of study.

Formula funding is defined as the method used to allocate appropriated sources of funds. Formula-funded courses are those that do not depend solely on student tuition and fees to cover their costs.

Required Documentation

- Certification from the TWC or HHS of status as a blind or deaf person
- A written statement of purpose indicating which certificate, degree program, or professional enhancement is being pursued
- A high school diploma or its equivalent
- A letter of recommendation from a responsible person who knows the applicant and who can serve as a reference (e.g., school principal, public official)

NOTE: Institutions have the discretion to determine how a *transfer student* meets the high school diploma/equivalency requirement.

Award Amount

Institutions must exempt the cost of all dues, fees, and enrollment charges, including fees for correspondence courses, general deposit fees, and student services fees, authorized by [TEC, Section 54.003](#), for every eligible course attempted. *Fees or charges for lodging, board, or clothing are not included.*

Resources

- [TEC, Section 54.364](#)—Blind, Deaf Students
- [TEC, Section 61.003\(8\)](#)—Institution of Higher Education
- [TEC, Section 54.2001](#)—Continued Receipt of Exemptions or Waivers
- [TEC, Section 54.014](#)—Tuition for Excessive Undergraduate Hours

Understanding the FACTS

This exemption may be used at any Texas public college or university, including SouthWest College for the Deaf.

Eligible students:

- Are not required to demonstrate financial need.
- Must be registered with Selective Service or be exempt.
- Who meet the enrollment eligibility requirements can receive the exemption while attempting any program of study offered at an eligible institution (i.e., undergraduate, graduate, or doctoral degree).
- Can continue to receive the exemption in subsequent semesters or terms **only** if the student is meeting the institution's grade point average (GPA) requirement for financial aid.
- May **not** continue to receive the exemption while enrolled in undergraduate hours considered to be excessive. ([TEC, Section 54.014](#))

Understanding the PROCESS

1. Student is admitted at an eligible institution.
2. Student submits his or her **eligibility certification** to the institution's registrar.
 - **Certification for Vision-Related Disability**
 - No expiration
 - **Certification for Hearing Disability**
 - No expiration
 - However, if a student needs a copy of the certificate five or more years after the original date of issuance, the student must reapply to HHS for a new certificate of disability.
3. The registrar collects all Required Documentation from the student and verifies enrollment eligibility.
4. Institution verifies each year that the student remains eligible. (Student does not have to reapply each year.)