

# **Guidelines: Children of Disabled or Deceased Firefighters and Law Enforcement Officers**



**Student Financial Aid Programs  
Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board**

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# CHILDREN OF DISABLED OR DECEASED FIREFIGHTERS AND LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS

The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) Program Guidelines are intended to support institutions by highlighting requirements that appear in the Texas Education Code (TEC). When administering this program, institutions should always refer to the applicable statutes and rules. The information provided in this document is to be used solely as a resource and does not supersede the statute or rules for this program.

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## PROGRAM AUTHORITY AND PURPOSE

The exemption for Children of Disabled or Deceased Firefighters and Law Enforcement Officers is authorized by [TEC, Chapter 54, Subchapter D, Section 54.351](#). Any person whose parent is an eligible firefighter or law enforcement officer who suffered an injury, resulting in death or disability, sustained in the line of duty according to the regulations and criteria then in effect governing the department or agency in which the former employee volunteered or was employed will be exempt from the payment of all dues, fees, and charges.

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## ELIGIBLE INSTITUTIONS

Any public institution of higher education, as defined in [TEC, Section 61.003\(8\)](#), is **required** to participate in the Children of Disabled or Deceased Firefighters and Law Enforcement Officers program.

## ELIGIBILITY

### ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

Per [TEC, Section 54.351\(h\)](#), the THECB will collect all documentation necessary to determine whether the student’s parent was an eligible firefighter or law enforcement officer who suffered an eligible injury and whether the student has not exceeded the maximum application age requirement of either 21 or 22 years of age, depending on circumstances.

#### IN ORDER TO BE DETERMINED ELIGIBLE BY THE THECB:

The following criteria must be met by the parent:	The following documents must be submitted to the THECB:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parent was once a paid or volunteer:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Firefighter</li> <li>○ Municipal peace officer</li> <li>○ County peace officer</li> <li>○ State peace officer</li> <li>○ State game warden; OR</li> <li>○ Paid custodial officer of the Texas Department of Criminal Justice—in the state of Texas; and</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Parent suffered a work-related injury in the line of duty that resulted in death* or disability.                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ If parent was disabled, the disability determination must be issued by a physician designated to make disability reports to the Social Security Administration.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The head of the department where the student’s parent was once employed must submit to the THECB a <b>Certification Form</b> verifying that the parent’s death* or disability status was the result of a work-related injury sustained in the line of duty.                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ If the parent is disabled, a copy of the certificate of disability will be collected.</li> <li>○ If the parent’s injury resulted in their death,* a copy of the death certificate will be collected.</li> <li>○ Confirmation that the student applied before their twenty-first birthday will be collected. (If the student was eligible to participate in a school district's special education program under <a href="#">TEC, Section 29.003</a>, then the student must apply before turning age 22).</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

\*If the parent’s death occurred *on or after* Sept. 1, 2000, the student may be eligible for [Education Benefits for Certain Survivors of Individuals in Specific Public Servant Positions](#) program ([TEC, Section 54.354](#)).

#### IN ORDER TO BE DETERMINED ELIGIBLE BY THE INSTITUTION:

##### The following criteria must be met by the student:

- Must meet all entrance requirements of the institutions.
- Have a letter from the THECB on file with the institution confirming that the student has met the tuition exemption program requirements.
- Be under the age of 26 at the start of the semester or term.
- Be enrolled as an undergraduate student or attending only undergraduate courses.
- Be registered with Selective Service or be exempt (see [Selective Service Statement Requirements](#)).

## CONTINUATION OF ELIGIBILITY

A student can continue to receive this exemption in subsequent semesters or terms if the student:

- Meets the institution's grade point average (GPA) requirement for financial aid.

**NOTE:** A student who fails to meet the institutional GPA requirement may have the ability to regain eligibility for this exemption if he or she meets the GPA requirement during an upcoming term or semester in which the exemption was not awarded. The student may also be granted a hardship **exception** by the institution.

## DISCONTINUATION OF ELIGIBILITY

A student may **not** continue to receive this exemption in a subsequent semester or term if the student:

- Has enrolled in undergraduate hours considered to be excessive under [TEC, Section 54.2001\(a\)\(2\)](#).
- Has turned 26 years old at the start of the term or semester.
- Has registered for a total of 120 undergraduate semester credit hours.

**NOTE:** At the start of a semester or term, if an undergraduate student is attempting hours considered to be excessive, the student may continue to receive this exemption if he or she is granted a hardship **extension** by the institution.

## HARDSHIP PROVISIONS

Institutions must adopt a hardship policy that may grant a student an **exception** from meeting the institution's GPA requirement, or an **extension** of eligibility for excess undergraduate hours, when a student has a showing of a hardship or other good cause, including:

- A showing of a severe illness or other debilitating condition that could affect the student's academic performance;
- An indication that the student is responsible for the care of a sick, injured, or needy person and that the student's provision of care could affect the student's academic performance;
- The student's active duty or other service in the United States armed forces or the student's active duty in the Texas National Guard; or
- Any other cause considered acceptable by the institution.

All hardship decisions must be documented in the student's record and be available for submission to the THECB, if requested.

## AWARDING

Institutions **must exempt** the cost of all tuition and fees for **eligible** undergraduate courses attempted by the student. Eligible courses are those for which an institution receives formula funding ([TEC, Section 54.2002](#)).

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



## SELECTIVE SERVICE STATEMENT

Male students must be registered with or exempt from Selective Service (SS) in order to be eligible to receive federal or state financial assistance. In accordance with [TEC, Section 51.9095](#), male students must file the required **Selective Service Statement of Registration Status** (found below) with their institution or other entity granting or guaranteeing financial assistance. This includes grants, scholarships, loans, or other assistance funded by state revenue, including federal funds or gifts and grants accepted by the state.

### When is the statement NOT Required?

- **When the SS registration is confirmed through the Institutional Student Information Record (ISIR):** The ISIR confirmation serves as the student’s official, signed statement because the Department of Education validates registration directly with the Selective Service System (SSS).
- **NEW** **When the SS registration is confirmed through the [SSS.gov website](#):** The institution can save the confirmation directly from the website to serve as the student’s official, signed statement on record.
- **NEW** **When the ISIR confirms that a student is under the age of 18:** No statement or documentation is needed for the applicable award year, even if the student turns 18 during that year.

### When is the statement REQUIRED, including all supporting documentation?

- When the student completes a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) but is flagged “not registered” on the ISIR and SS status **cannot** be confirmed on the [SSS.gov website](#).
- **NEW** **When the student completes a Texas Application for State Financial Aid (TASFA):** The required statement is embedded in the 2020-21 TASFA and must be completed by the student.
- **NEW** When the student does not complete a FAFSA or TASFA but applies for state financial aid, such as through exemptions or waivers, and SS status **cannot** be confirmed on the [SSS.gov website](#).

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

### FREQUENCY COLLECTING THE STATEMENT

If the student’s status will NOT change, the statement and supporting documentation can be used for subsequent semesters. (Example: The student entered the U.S. after the eligible age to register.)

If the student’s status is temporary, the statement must be collected each academic year until the student is registered or determined exempt. (Example: Student is under age 18 but did not complete a FAFSA or TASFA.)

### RETENTION SCHEDULE

The status statement and all documentation must be retained in the student’s record for 7 years after the date of completion of the award period ([TEC, Section 441.1855](#)).

### REPROCESSED ISIRS

If the student’s most recent ISIR transaction has been reprocessed by the Central Processing System (CPS) and the registration with the SSS was confirmed, the institution does not need to collect the status statement or any documentation.

**Institutions may collect the required status statement and documentation either electronically or on paper.**

**([English Statement](#) or [Spanish Statement](#))**

SELECTIVE SERVICE STATEMENT OF REGISTRATION STATUS	
Male students must verify their current Selective Service registration status by marking one of the statements below and providing proof of their registration status to their current institution. Failure to do so may result in the loss of eligibility for state financial aid.	
_____ I am under the age of 18 and not currently required to register.	
_____ I am <b>REGISTERED</b> with the Selective Service and, <i>Check the following box that applies:</i> <input type="checkbox"/> I have already submitted proof of registration to my current institution. <input type="checkbox"/> Proof of registration is included with this statement. <input type="checkbox"/> I will submit proof of my registration. <b>NOTE:</b> Proof is required to be considered eligible for financial aid.	_____ I am <b>EXEMPT</b> from registration and, <i>Check the following box that applies:</i> <input type="checkbox"/> I have already submitted proof of my exemption to my current institution. <input type="checkbox"/> Proof of my exemption is included with this statement. <input type="checkbox"/> I will submit proof of my exemption. <b>NOTE:</b> Proof is required to be considered eligible for financial aid.
_____ I am over the age of 18. I am not registered with Selective Service and I am not exempt from registration with Selective Service.	
I, _____, hereby certify that the Selective Service status statement provided above is true and accurate.	
Student ID: _____	Signature: _____
Date: _____	

## APPLICATION PROCESS

### STEP ONE: EMPLOYER CERTIFICATION

Employer mails the following documents to the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board:

- [Certification letter](#) on official letterhead.
- If the parent is disabled, a copy of the physician's statement certifying the fire fighter or law enforcement officer's current disability status.

### STEP TWO: SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

Student mails the following documents to the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board:

- [Supporting Documents](#) form.
- Copy of the student's birth certificate.
- If the parent is deceased and death occurred before Sept. 1, 2000, a copy of the death certificate is required.

**CHILDREN OF DISABLED OR DECEASED FIREFIGHTERS AND LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS**

**Certification Form**

The head of the department in which the eligible firefighter or law enforcement officer was employed (or volunteered) at the time the incident occurred must file a certificate with the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board using this template (see [Texas Education Code, Section 54.351](#)).

**THE TEXT BELOW MUST BE WRITTEN ON OFFICIAL DEPARTMENT OR AGENCY LETTERHEAD.**

Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board  
ATTN: Financial Aid Services  
1200 E. Anderson Lane  
Austin, Texas 78752

To Whom It May Concern,

Pursuant to Texas Education Code, Section 54.351, this letter certifies that           (FULL NAME OF DECEASED OR DISABLED OFFICER)           was once a paid or volunteer           (SELECT FROM THE LIST BELOW)           for the           (NAME OF DEPARTMENT OR AGENCY)          .

\_\_\_\_ Firefighter  
\_\_\_\_ Municipal peace officer  
\_\_\_\_ County peace officer  
\_\_\_\_ State peace officer  
\_\_\_\_ State game warden  
\_\_\_\_ Custodial officer of the Texas Department of Criminal Justice

In addition, this letter certifies that           (FULL NAME AS STATED ABOVE)           suffered an injury sustained in the line of duty on           (DATE OF INJURY)          . This injury resulted in his or her:

\_\_\_\_ Death on           (DATE OF DEATH)            
\_\_\_\_ Disability

**NOTE: If the individual is disabled, a certificate of disability issued by a physician designated to make disability reports to the Social Security Administration must be provided with this letter. The physician's certification must align with the meaning of disability as described in TEC, Section 54.351(a)(2).**

Pursuant to [TEC, Section 54.351\(h\)](#), the head of           (NAME OF DEPARTMENT OR AGENCY)           or the authorized official named below certifies that the information provided in this letter and in the attached documents is true and accurate.

Signature of Department Head or Authorized Official \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Full name \_\_\_\_\_ Title \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_ Phone number \_\_\_\_\_

**CHILDREN OF DISABLED OR DECEASED FIREFIGHTERS AND LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS**

Texas Education Code, Section 54.351

**Supporting Documents**

**APPLICANT INFORMATION**

Applicant name: \_\_\_\_\_ Disabled or deceased individual: \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone number: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Is this your first time attending college? Yes  No  Date of enrollment: \_\_\_\_\_

Are you transferring institutions? Yes  No  Date of enrollment: \_\_\_\_\_

**INSTITUTION INFORMATION**

Institution name: \_\_\_\_\_

Institution contact name (Registrar or Admissions): \_\_\_\_\_

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

**REQUIRED DOCUMENTS**

Copy of the student's birth certificate.  
 If the parent is deceased and death occurred before Sept. 1, 2000, a copy of the death certificate is required.

The applicant must mail this completed form to the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board along with the required documents. After all documents are received from both the applicant and the employer, a determination letter can be processed.

Printed name \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of applicant \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**THECB CONTACT INFORMATION**

Financial Aid Services  
Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board  
1200 E. Anderson Lane  
Austin, TX 78752  
888-311-8881  
[CONTACT US](#)

### STEP THREE: ELIGIBILITY DETERMINATION

Documents submitted will be reviewed by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board.

- Additional documentation may be requested.

If the student is eligible, the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board will email an official **Eligibility Determination Letter** to the:

- Student;
- Authorizing official at institution where student is enrolled.

# APPENDIX 1: QUICK REFERENCES

## CONTACT FINANCIAL AID SERVICES

By phone: (844) 792-2640

Contact us by completing an [online inquiry form](#) and select “Financial Aid Question” as the Contact Reason.

## OTHER RESOURCES FOR INSTITUTIONS

General program information for institutions	<a href="#">Student Financial Aid Programs Information Webpage</a>
Texas Program Statutes	<a href="#">Texas Education Code</a>
Texas Program Rules	<a href="#">Texas Administrative Code</a>
Information concerning programs, procedures, allocations, and other topics will be communicated to institutions through the GovDelivery system. To receive these communications, interested individuals must subscribe.	<a href="#">GovDelivery</a>
Federal Selective Service Requirement Guide	<a href="#">Who Must Register Chart</a>