Office of School Choice

Tuition Donation Credit Program Participation Guide - For Families

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I. Introduction and Purpose

Created by the 2012 Louisiana Legislature, The Tuition Donation Credit Program (TDC) empowers Louisiana families with the financial resources to choose the school that will best prepare their child for college and career. This program provides tax credits to Louisiana taxpayers who donate to tax-exempt, not-for-profit organizations called School Tuition Organizations that provide scholarships to K-12 students. The TDC program launched statewide during the 2013-2014 school year and is governed by BESE Bulletin 134.

School Tuition Organizations (STOs) play a critical role in the Tuition Donation Credit Program by: a) galvanizing Louisiana taxpayers to directly provide economic resources to Louisiana families; and b) conducting the scholarship award process to enable low-income children to attend the school that they feel will best prepare their child for college or career success.

The Louisiana Department of Education (LDOE) created this Tuition Donation Participation Guide to provide information and guidance to families, participating schools and STOs. This guide serves as a comprehensive tool designed to enhance understanding of the programmatic requirements and expectations outlined in Bulletin 134 by (1) clearly communicating program requirements and expectations; and (2) providing comprehensive timelines, guidance and suggested best-practices for participation.

II. Program Eligibility

Students, schools, donors, and STOs must meet eligibility criteria to participate in the [Tuition Donation Credit Program](#).

Student Eligibility

To be eligible to receive a scholarship through the [Tuition Donation Credit Program](#), a student must meet the following income, residency, and prior school year requirements:

Requirement	Criteria
Income	• Have a family household income that does not exceed 250% of the federal poverty guidelines, as established by the Federal Office of Management and Budget.
Residency	• Be a resident of the state of Louisiana.
Prior School Year	• Have attended a public school in Louisiana on October 1st and February 1st of the most recent school year[1]; • Be entering Kindergarten for the first time; or • Have participated in the Louisiana Scholarship Program/Tuition Donation Credit Program the previous school year.

A list of acceptable forms of eligibility documentation can be found in [Appendix 3](#). Continuing students need to reconfirm eligibility each year they participate in the program.

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[1] STOs may release their student application prior to the February 1st public school count date, but will not be able to verify prior year eligibility in a public school until approximately April.

III. Awarding Scholarships

Scholarship Award Process
The steps from application release to issuing scholarship payments are detailed in this section.

Step One:	Release of Student Application
Step Two:	Verification of Student Eligibility
Step Three:	Awarding of Student Scholarships
Step Four:	Enrollment in a Nonpublic School
Step Five:	Issuance of Student Scholarship
Step Six:	Verification of Quarterly Enrollment and Issuance Scholarship Payments
Step Seven:	Certification of Issuance of Scholarships to the LDOE

Step One: Release of Student Application

- A sample application may be found in Appendix 4.
    - STOs may charge an application fee.

Step Two: Verification of Student Eligibility

- STOs will verify student income and residency eligibility, as well as maintain eligibility documentation for auditing purposes.
    - Scholarship recipients must submit eligibility documentation to the STO each year they participate in the program.
    - Scholarship recipients will lose their eligibility status if they do not meet the income requirement in subsequent years.

Step Three - Awarding of Student Scholarships

- Once student eligibility has been verified, scholarships are awarded on a first-come, first-served basis, with priority given to students who received a scholarship through the Tuition Donation Credit Program or the Louisiana Scholarship Program the previous year.

Step Four: Enrollment in a Nonpublic School

NOTE: Receipt of a scholarship award does not guarantee enrollment into a specific school. Students must apply directly to a participating nonpublic school for enrollment.

- Qualified schools maintain their own enrollment procedures.
- If the number of Tuition Donation applicants that meet the participating school's enrollment criteria exceeds the number of available Tuition Donation seats, the school must conduct a lottery to determine enrollment.
    - The school can give preference to siblings of students already enrolled in the school, scholarship award recipients transferring from another nonpublic school, and

students who attended a D or F rated Louisiana public school in the previous school year.

- Once a student is officially enrolled in a partner nonpublic school, the family should promptly notify the STO.

Step Five: Issuance of Student Scholarship

- Once an STO awards a scholarship and confirms a student's enrollment at a partnering nonpublic school, the STO can officially issue a scholarship.
- Students may receive awards from multiple School Tuition Organizations as long as the total award does not exceed the maximum scholarship award amounts (refer to Section IV: Scholarship Award Amount for more information).
- Students may apply for and be offered a scholarship from the Louisiana Scholarship Program, School Choice Program for Certain Students with Exceptionalities, and the Tuition Donation Credit Program. However, they may only accept and use *one* of the scholarships.

Step Six: Verification of Quarterly Enrollment and Issuance of Scholarship Payments

- School Tuition Organizations (STOs) verify student enrollment in each quarter prior to issuing payments.
- STOs distribute quarterly scholarship payments to each participating school in September, December, February and May of the current school year.
- Quarterly payment checks are issued and made payable to the parent/guardian listed on the scholarship student's application.
- Parents must restrictively endorse the check for deposit into the school's account.
- The check recipient must verify that:
    - the information on the check is accurate and complete;
    - the check has been restrictively endorsed into the school's account; and
    - sign under the check's "For Deposit Only" line.
- Once received, nonpublic schools should stamp or write "For Deposit Only into the Account of (name of nonpublic school)."

Step Seven: Certification of Issuance of Scholarships to the LDOE

- STOs are required to certify that scholarships have been issued by submitting quarterly enrollment reports to the LDOE in September, December, February and May.

IV.   Prorating Scholarship Award Amount

Scholarships granted to qualified students are transferable during the school year and can be used at any qualifying school served by the STO that accepts the qualified student. The parent must verify that the STO partners with the new school, as well as provide verification that the student has been enrolled in the new, qualified school.

If the student moves to a new qualified school served by the STO during a school year, the STO can transfer the scholarship award and prorate the scholarship amount.

Please see below for the three common occurrences resulting in the need for a scholarship award to be prorated. For the purposes of the example scenarios below, MFP for grades K-8 = $4,200, and for grades 9-12 it is $4,700.

1. A student scholarship award was issued after the first scholarship payment date.

Scholarship Issue Date	Grade Level	Maximum Scholarship Award Amount (assuming school's tuition and fees meet or exceed 90% of MFP)
October 20	9	- Since the student was not issued a scholarship until after the Quarter 1 count date, the student is not eligible to receive funding for this quarter. - The student is eligible to receive a scholarship for the next three quarters, assuming the student is enrolled for the remainder of the school year. 3/4 of $4,700.00 = $3,525.00

2. A student transfers to a different school during the school year.

Scholarship Issue Date	Transfer Date	Grade Level	Maximum Scholarship Award Amount (assuming school's tuition and fees meet or exceed 80% of MFP)
August 15 (School 1)	November 5 (School 2)	5	1/4 of the payment should be distributed to the school the student was enrolled in during Quarter 1 **1/4 of $4,200.00 = $1,050.00 to School 1** 3/4 of the payment should be distributed to the school the student was enrolled in during Quarters 2, 3 and 4 **3/4 of $4,200.00 = $3,150.00 to School 2**

Note: The original and new school will only receive payments for the quarters in which the student is enrolled. The September report would reflect the full $4,200.00 at the student's initial school. However, the December report would have two separate lines for this student: one for School 1 reflecting a scholarship award of $1,050.00 and one for School 2 with a scholarship award amount of $3,150.00.

3. A student exits the Tuition Donation Credit Program before the end of the school year.

Scholarship Issue Date	Exit Date	Grade Level	Maximum Scholarship Award Amount (assuming school's tuition and fees meet or exceed 90% of MFP)
August 15 (School 1)	January 10 (School 2)	10	- Since the student exited the program prior to the February (Quarter 3) count date, the student is not eligible to receive funding for quarters 3 or 4. - The student is eligible to receive a scholarship for quarters 1 and 2. **2/4 of $4,700.00 = $2,350.00**

Note: The September report would reflect the full $4,700.00 at School 1. However, the February report would include the January 10 exit date and an updated scholarship award amount of $2,350.00

Quarterly Enrollment
If a student attends the qualified school and is absent less than 10 days during any of the following timeframes, that student is considered "enrolled" for that quarter.
- Quarter 1 = Beginning of the school year through September 30
- Quarter 2 = October 1 through December 31
- Quarter 3 = January 1 through February 28
- Quarter 4 = March 1 through May 31

Appendix 1: Frequently Asked Questions

What is the purpose of the Tuition Donation Credit Program?
The Tuition Donation Credit Program empowers Louisiana families with the financial resources to choose the school that will best prepare their children for college and careers. This program provides credits to Louisiana state taxpayers that donate to tax-exempt, not-for-profit organizations that provide scholarships to students in low-income families.

FAQs for Families:

1. **What students are eligible for a scholarship?**
   Students should meet each of the following income, residency, and prior school year requirements:

Requirement	Applicant Criteria
Income	Have a family household income that does not exceed 250% of the federal poverty guidelines, as established by the Federal Office of Management and Budget.
Residency	Family resides in the state of Louisiana.
Prior School Year *student must meet one of these requirements*	Students must meet one of the following prior school-year requirements: • Participated in the Tuition Donation Credit Program during the previous school year. • Participated in the Louisiana Scholarship Program during the previous school year. • Attended a public school in Louisiana on October 1 and February 1 of the previous school year. • Entering Kindergarten for the first time.

2. **Where can families find a list of School Tuition Organizations participating in the Tuition Donation Credit Program?**
   Families can find relevant information about participating School Tuition Organizations on the Tuition Donation Credit Program Page.

3. **How do students apply for a scholarship?**
   Students apply to a School Tuition Organization for a scholarship. School Tuition Organizations are not-for-profit, tax-exempt organizations [501(c)(3)]. School Tuition Organizations award scholarships on a first-come, first-served basis. Priority is given to students who participated in the Tuition Donation Credit or Louisiana Scholarship Program in the previous year.

4. **How do students choose their school?**
   Receiving a scholarship from a School Tuition Organization does not guarantee enrollment in a specific nonpublic school. Rather, families must still apply directly for enrollment to the nonpublic school of their choice. School Tuition Organizations may determine to partner with a group of schools for which their scholarship may be used. Families should consult their choice school and the School Tuition Organization to ensure that a scholarship award can be used at the school. Scholarships are portable and may be used at any participating school that the School Tuition Organization partners with. Schools may use their own selective admissions

criteria to decide which students they enroll. If the number of students applying with a Tuition Donation Credit scholarship that meet the participating school's enrollment criteria exceeds the number of available seats, the school must conduct a lottery to determine enrollment.

5. **How much is the scholarship?**
   School Tuition Organizations determine the amount of the scholarship. Scholarship amounts cannot exceed the lesser of either school's tuition and mandatory fees or 80% of the state average per pupil funding for elementary and middle school students and 90% of the state average per pupil funding for high school students.
   Students may receive a scholarship from more than one School Tuition Organization. The total dollar amount of scholarships may still not exceed the maximum amounts outlined above.

6. **Do families have to pay the difference between the Tuition Donation Credit scholarship and the full tuition and fees charged by the nonpublic school?**
   Yes, families are responsible for paying school tuition and fees that exceed the amount of the scholarship.

7. **Do families have to pay to apply for a scholarship?**
   School Tuition Organizations may also charge families a scholarship application fee.

8. **Can a student participate in both the Louisiana Scholarship Program and the Tuition Donation Credit Program?**
   Families may apply for a scholarship from both programs. If a student receives both scholarships, families may accept and use only one of the scholarships, either from the Louisiana Scholarship Program or the Tuition Donation Credit Program.

9. **Can a student participate in both the School Choice Program for Certain Students with Exceptionalities and the Tuition Donation Credit Program?**
   Families may apply for a scholarship from both programs. If a student receives both scholarships, families may accept and use only one of the scholarships, either from the **School Choice Program for Certain Students with Exceptionalities** or the Tuition Donation Credit Program.

If you have any questions regarding the Tuition Donation Credit Program, please contact studentscholarships@la.gov.

Appendix 2: Helpful Links

Helpful Links For Families

What is it?	Link
Louisiana Department of Education Website	https://www.louisianabelieves.com/
LDOE School Choice Library	https://www.louisianabelieves.com/schools
Scholarship Program Comparison	https://www.louisianabelieves.com/docs/default-source/school-choice/faq---scholarship-program-comparison.pdf?sfvrsn=18

Appendix 3: Eligibility Documentation Reference Sheet

To be eligible to receive a scholarship through the Tuition Donation Credit Program for the **2022-2023 school year**, a student must meet the following income, residency, and prior school year requirements. Continuing students must reconfirm eligibility each year they participate in the program. STOs may decide to require additional forms of eligibility verification. STOs collect documentation from all applicants to verify both income and residency eligibility.

Requirement	Applicant Criteria
Income	Have a family household income that does not exceed 250% of the federal poverty guidelines, as established by the Federal Office of Management and Budget.
Residency	Family resides in the state of Louisiana.
Prior School Year	Students must meet one of the following prior school-year requirements: ● Participated in the Tuition Donation Credit Program during the previous school year. ● Participated in the Louisiana Scholarship Program during the previous school year. ● Attended a public school in Louisiana on October 1 and February 1 of the previous school year. ● Entering Kindergarten for the first time.

Tuition Donation Credit Program Eligibility Table Based on 2022 Federal Poverty Guidelines:

Persons in Family/Household	Yearly Income	Monthly Income	Bi-Weekly Income	Weekly Income
2	$45,775	$3,815	$1,761	$880
3	$57,575	$4,798	$2,214	$1,107
4	$69,375	$5,781	$2,668	$1,334
5	$81,875	$6,765	$3,122	$1,561
6	$92,975	$7,748	$3,576	$1,788
7	$104,775	$8,731	$4,030	$2,015
8	$116,575	$9,715	$4,484	$2,242
Add this amount for each additional person	$11,800	$983	$453	$227

In order to be eligible to receive a scholarship, families must submit proof of income by bringing one of the following documents to a School Tuition Organization.

- 2022 Federal Tax Return
- SNAP Benefits/Louisiana Purchase Card Benefits Statement
- Unemployment compensation statement for period ending December 31, 2021
- Social Security benefits statement for the period ending December 31, 2021
- Pension statements for the period ending December 31, 2021

In order to be eligible to receive a scholarship, families must submit proof of residency by bringing one of the following documents to a School Tuition Organization.

- Rental lease agreement or mortgage agreement
- Electricity/Gas Bill
- Telephone Bill (must be a landline-cellular phone bills will not suffice.)
- Cable or Internet service bill
- Sewage/water bill
- Current Official letter from a Government Agency (Department of Social Services, Department of Health and Hospitals)
- Homestead Exemption Notice
- Property Tax notice

Appendix 4: Sample Student Application

Sample Application: Instructions To Complete

School Tuition Organizations: Please complete "Section 1 – For School Tuition Organization Information" prior to distributing student applications.
Families: Please ensure you follow the steps below to successfully complete your application.
   1. Read the entire application first
   2. complete "Section 2 – Student Information"
   3. Turn in the application directly to the identified School Tuition Organization

Section 1 – School Tuition Organization Contact Information

Name:	Website Address:
Street Address:	

City	State	Zip Code
Phone	Fax	E-mail

Scholarship Award Amounts And Deadlines

[School Tuition Organization inputs specific amounts and deadlines for available scholarships before distributing application]

Step 1: Eligibility Check

Instructions: Please answer each of the following questions. You must answer "Yes" to all questions to qualify for a Tuition Donation Credit Scholarship.

◯ Yes ◯ No	Is my child a resident of Louisiana?
◯ Yes ◯ No	If one of the below statements is true, mark Yes to the left. • My child participated in the Tuition Donation Credit Program during the 2021-2022 school year. • My child participated in the Louisiana Scholarship Program during the 2021-2022 school year. • My child attended a public school in Louisiana on October 1 and February 1 of the 2021-2022 school year. • My child will be entering Kindergarten for the first time during the 2022-2023 school year.
◯ Yes ◯ No	Is my family income less than the amount listed below?

Students enrolled in private school during the previous school year as part of the Louisiana Scholarship Program are eligible to apply for a scholarship under the Tuition Donation Credit Program and are given priority over new applicants. However, students are not able to receive funding from both programs for the same school year.

Tuition Donation Credit Program Eligibility Based on 2022 Federal Poverty Guidelines				
Household Size	Yearly Income	Monthly Income	Bi-Weekly Income	Weekly Income
2	$45,775	$3,815	$1,761	$880
3	$57,575	$4,798	$2,214	$1,107
4	$69,375	$5,781	$2,668	$1,334
5	$81,875	$6,765	$3,122	$1,561
6	$92,975	$7,748	$3,576	$1,788
7	$104,775	$8,731	$4,030	$2,015
8	$116,575	$9,715	$4,484	$2,242
Add this amount for each additional person	**$11,800**	**$983**	**$453**	**$227**

Step 2: Student Information	
Instructions: Please fill out to the best of your ability.	
Student Social Security Number	
Date of Birth (MM/DD/YYYY)	
Student Last Name, First Name and Middle Initial	
Suffix (Jr., Sr., etc)	
Gender (choose one)	◯ Male ◯ Female
Ethnicity (for reporting only)	◯ Hispanic ◯ Not Hispanic
Race (choose all that apply)	◯ White ◯ Black ◯ Asian ◯ Pacific Islander ◯ American Indian
Street Address (include apartment number if applicable)	
City, State and Zip Code	

What school is your student currently attending?	
What school district is the student's current school located in?	
Which grade is your child entering for the 2022-2023 school year? (K-12)	
Did your student receive a scholarship through the Louisiana Scholarship Program or Tuition Donation Credit Program in the 2021-2022 school year?	

Step 3: Parent/Legal Guardian Information

Instructions: Please fill out to the best of your ability.

Parent/Legal Guardian Last Name, First Name and Middle Initial	
Parent/Legal Guardian Suffix (Jr., Sr. etc.)	
Relationship to Student (choose one)	⚪ Father ⚪ Mother ⚪ Step-father ⚪ Step-mother ⚪ Aunt/Uncle ⚪ Grandfather ⚪ Grandmother ⚪ Guardian/Other
Mailing Street Address	
City, State, Zip Code	
Home Phone and Cell Phone	
Email Address	
Annual Family Household Income	
Number Family Members in Household	

Step 4: Students With Disabilities

Instructions: Please fill out to the best of your ability.

Does your child have an Individual Education Plan (IEP) or services plan? (Choose One)	⚪ Yes ⚪ No
If yes, please indicate your child's primary exceptionality. If no, please go to Step 5.	

STEP 5: INCOME VERIFICATION

Instructions: Complete Part A or B (you do not need to complete both)

A. If you participate in any of the programs below, please check the circle next to the program. When you submit your application, please include evidence that you participate in the program.
○ Louisiana Purchase Card   ○ SNAP Benefits   ○ Social Security Benefits

B. If you do not participate in any of these programs, please submit proof of income for every member of your household. This can consist of any of the following:
- 2022 Federal Tax Return
- Unemployment compensation statement for the period ended December 31, 2021
- Social Security benefits statement for the period ended December 31, 2021
- Pension statements for the period ended December 31, 2021
- Placement form from DCFS, in the case of foster children

Step 6: Residency Verification

Instructions: Please include proof of residency when you submit your application.

The address of residency should be where the child lives and should match the student address listed in Step 2. The proof can be dated for any time after January 2022. This proof can consist of any of the following:
- Rental lease agreement/mortgage agreement
- Electricity/Gas bill
- Telephone bill
- Cable or Internet service bill
- Sewerage/Water bill
- Current official letter from a Government Agency (DSS, DHH)
- Homestead Exemption Notice
- Property Tax Notice

Step 7: Signature

By submitting this application to the School Tuition Organization (STO), you are granting permission for the School Tuition Organization and the Louisiana Department of Education to utilize, and to disclose to third parties, any information provided by you in this application to verify eligibility for the program and if a scholarship is awarded, to continue to utilize, and to disclose to third parties, this information as it relates to the award granted.

Parent/ Legal Guardian's Printed Name:	Parent/ Legal Guardian's Signature:	Date:

Before you submit your application, please check that you have done the following:
1. Completed all boxes in Sections 2 and 3
2. Attached Income Verification documents as described in Step 5
3. Attached Proof of Residency as described in Step 6
4. Signed the application in Step 7

Applications will not be considered complete until all of the steps above are taken. If eligible, the application will be placed in line for funding. Scholarships are available on a first-come, first-served basis, with priority given to students who received a scholarship in the previous year.