

SAFE Grants

Safe Access to Flexible Education

SAFE Grants 101 for Parents



What are Safe Access to Flexible Education (SAFE) Grants?

SAFE Grants is a program, developed by Governor Henry McMaster, to address the educational needs of eligible K5-12 students who attend a participating independent school.

Modeled on successful grant and scholarship programs serving thousands of students in states like Florida, Arizona, and North Carolina, SAFE Grants will provide critical support for families who need it most, to stabilize their child's education journey during the COVID-19 pandemic and ensure that their students can access an education environment of their choice.

Who qualifies for a SAFE Grant and how will they be awarded?

K5-12 students whose household adjusted gross income (AGI) is 300% or less of the federal poverty level are eligible to apply for the program. AGI is commonly used for determining student aid, such as for the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) used in higher education. Parents and guardians may apply for these scholarships through a secure online portal which may be accessed in coming weeks at MySCEducation.org. **Parents may also sign up at MySCEducation.org to receive email notifications for when the online application portal opens and other important program announcements.**

How many SAFE Grants are available for the 2020-21 school year?

Governor McMaster has dedicated up to \$32 million of a federal grant known as the Governor's Emergency Education Relief (GEER) Fund for the SAFE Grants program. (This program does not draw from existing state or local education funds.) At up to \$6,500 per eligible student, approximately 5,000 subgrants will be available for the benefit of South Carolina students.

How will scholarships be awarded?

The first 2,500 scholarships will be awarded on a first-come, first-served basis, after which a lottery program will be instituted (if necessary) to allocate the balance of available grant funds.

Are SAFE Grants considered taxable income for parents?

No. As with similar programs across the nation, families will not receive an IRS Form 1099 from the state of South Carolina as a result of receiving a SAFE Grant.

How long will the application review process take?

Applications will be processed in the order they are received and as quickly as possible, given the close proximity to the beginning of the school year. Regular updates about anticipated program dates and milestones will be released by email.

By participating in the SAFE Grants program, I am agreeing to:

- Provide an education for my student that meets school attendance requirements in state law through enrollment in a participating independent school.
- Release my local district and student's zoned school from all responsibility to educate my student during the time they are enrolled in the SAFE Grants program.
- Fulfill parental responsibilities as outlined for the SAFE Grants program.

Can a participating student withdraw from the SAFE Grants program?

Yes, a participating student may voluntarily withdraw from the program at any time. If this happens, the parent must notify the SAFE Grants program, as well as the independent school. If a student withdraws from the program, unexpended funds will revert to the SAFE Grants program.

How can I be ready to apply for a SAFE Grant?

We anticipate that there will be strong demand for SAFE Grants. Here are the 1-2-3's of preparing to apply, so that YOU can be ready as soon as the online portal opens! **(Be sure to sign up at MySCEducation.org to receive an email notification when the application window opens.)**

1. Research independent schools in your area

If your child is not already enrolled in a participating independent school, start to research and contact schools immediately to see if they plan to participate and inquire about enrollment requirements. A list of participating independent schools will be updated on MySCEducation.org as they are approved. You may also use your home address to search our online database for schools near you.

It is important to remember: each independent school has its own admission policies and procedures. Applying for a SAFE Grant does not guarantee acceptance into a participating independent school. Participating schools may not discriminate based on race, color, or national origin. Participating private schools may also offer additional financial aid to eligible students in the form of scholarships or payment plans. The application process for additional financial aid will vary by school.

2. Answer the following questions:

- Is my student a South Carolina resident and entering Kindergarten (5-year old) through 12th grade?
- Was my household adjusted gross income (AGI) on my last tax return (IRS Form 1040) 300% or less of the federal poverty level?

Household Size	300% FPL	Household Size	300% FPL
1	\$38,280	6	\$105,480
2	\$51,720	7	\$118,920
3	\$65,160	8	\$132,360
4	\$78,600	9	\$145,800
5	\$92,040	10	\$159,240

Source: U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, 2020
FPL Calculations

- » What was my total household size (every person claimed on tax document, including yourself)?
- » What was my adjusted gross income (Line 7 for 2018 or Line 8b for 2019)?
- Have I enrolled or applied to enroll my student in a participating independent school?

3. Be prepared to:

- Certify your student's eligibility (based on the question above)
- Enter your own Social Security Number
Provide two proofs of address: a valid SC Driver's License or state ID, **and** one of the following:
 - » Property tax receipt, mortgage statement, or signed lease agreement
 - » Utility bill
 - » SC Voter registration card
 - » Affidavit from landlord or owner of current residence
- Document your household size and income by providing:
 - » Your most recent (2018 or 2019) federal income tax return (Form 1040)
 - » A Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) letter of eligibility
- Upload your student's acceptance letter from a participating school (this may be provided after the initial application process).

Photos of required documents must be uploaded through the secure, online portal using a smart phone, tablet, or computer. If you do not have internet at your home, public library branches often provide internet access, even if you do not have a library card.