

Early Learning Scholarships: Frequently Asked Questions

Program Administration

Question	Answer	Policy Manual Page
<p>When do programs need to submit invoices (claims) to Area Administrators?</p> <p>Do invoices have a due date of 30 days after the service period or is it just that they need to be in within 105 days, etc.?</p>	<p>The expectation is that programs serving Pathway I awarded children submit invoices (claims) to their Area Administrator within a month of the last date of a service period.</p> <p>The intention behind providing a submission window of 105 days was to allow a period of time for clarification or revisions/corrections of the invoice (or direct payment request if Pathway II). Be mindful of Area Administrator local policies regarding payment that account for processing time of invoices.</p>	30
<p>Can a program use Pathway I to support enhancements to their program? What is the approval process?</p>	<p>If a program wants to request using the Pathway I scholarship in full or part for enhancement, the Area Administrator sends <i>Early Learning Scholarships – Pathway I Enhancements Use Form</i>. The program returns the Plan which includes a statement for review on how they intend to use the enhancement to support access for the child with the scholarship. The parent must also sign a revised (or the original if done at the time of enrollment) <i>Award Planning Agreement</i>. Using the allowable options as a guide, the Area Administrator can approve or deny the request. If there is a request made that may supplant an existing publicly funded service if approved, such as if a child with an IEP or a DHS-funded Parent Aware support is involved, MDE must review and make the final decision. If there is any question, the Area Administrator should consult with MDE.</p>	20

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How does a program know how much scholarship funding is remaining for an awarded child?	Area Administrators will send a <i>Fund Balance Letter</i> to families when 60-70% of the award has been expended. Programs will receive a copy of this letter.	23
How does a program know how many absent days eligible for payment a child has left in their scholarship year?	Area Administrators will send an <i>Absent Day Letter</i> when a child has 10 consecutive absences or a total of 15 absences and is close to meeting the 25-day threshold. This letter will include a count of all absences across the child’s scholarship year. It is also the responsibility of the program to track the number of absent days they have requested payment for. As a reminder, scholarships cannot pay for absent days beyond 25 in a single scholarship year.	14
How does a program know a child has a scholarship award?	Area Administrators will communicate with the program chosen by the family. Notification occurs as soon as the family confirms their eligible program choice. An <i>Award Planning Agreement</i> will be sent to the program and expected to be returned within 13 days.	20
Which Area Administrator serves XX county?	A list of all Area Administrators is found in the manual and posted on the MDE Website under both Early Learning Scholarships Program-Students and Families and Early Learning Scholarships-District, Schools, and Educators .	16
What needs to be done by my program and/or a parent to “transfer” a scholarship when changing programs?	The family needs to contact the Area Administrator and inform them that they have chosen a new program. A <i>Notice to Cancel</i> letter will follow as notice that the current program is no longer being used. Area Administrators will communicate with the new program chosen by the family. Notification occurs as soon as the family confirms their eligible program choice. An <i>Award Planning Agreement</i> will be sent to the program and expected to be returned within 13 days.	18, 20

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May a family “transfer” their scholarship from a Pathway II scholarship to a Pathway I scholarship?	Children with a Pathway II scholarship who leave that program may have the opportunity to complete their scholarship at a different program, with Pathway II funding or with a Pathway I scholarship. Families wishing to be considered for an extension of their scholarship as a Pathway I should contact the Area Administrator to apply. Applications from a family wishing to change to a Pathway I have no higher priority unless the child is one the four priority populations. The child may be put on the waitlist.	22
Why can't I as the program ask the status of an application submitted for a child who attends my program?	All data or information about a family or an individual is considered private data and cannot be shared without the family or individual's consent. Area/Scholarship Administrators are restricted from responding to requests for private scholarship program data unless meeting an exception stated in the Minnesota Government Data Privacy Practices Act .	31
How long should I keep scholarship documentation and records?	Area/Scholarship Administrators are required to maintain documentation for seven years. Files may be stored in hard copy or electronically, but programs must store records in a secure manner that is protected from inappropriate or inadvertent access by anyone who is not authorized to have access to the data for their work.	31

Program Payment

Question	Answer	Policy Manual Page
What can a program charge a family if they attend fewer hours than my contract, or attend another program for part of the day?	Programs may charge the Early Learning Scholarship Program according to the terms of the contract, providing they are not charging scholarships more than a private pay family receiving the same services or schedule. Early Learning Scholarships will only pay one program even if the awarded child is attending more than one program in the same period of time.	19

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How do I figure out the CCAP amount to request on the invoice (claim) when there is a co-pay due?	Programs that are requesting scholarship payment for children with CCAP should include the authorized amount for CCAP in the specific column. The CCAP co-payment would be considered part of the tuition balance after CCAP has been applied. There is no column, nor need to specify the family co-payment.	30
What if the amount I received from CCAP is different than what I claimed?	Programs that are requesting scholarship payment for children with CCAP should include the authorized amount for CCAP and later send a revised invoice (claim) should there be a need based on the actual payment received for CCAP. Area Administrators should seek guidance from MDE for payment requests that exceed 105 days.	30

Child Eligibility

Question	Answer	Policy Manual Page
Can a family child care program receive a Pathway I early learning scholarship for their eligible child?	<p>A family child care program whose child qualifies for a scholarship may be awarded a scholarship. However, scholarship-eligible family child care programs are not eligible to receive early learning scholarship payments for services to their own children.</p> <p>In short, the program providing services and collecting scholarship funds cannot be the parent of the child.</p>	18
Can a family child care program with Pathway II funding award a scholarship to their own child in their program if the child and family meet eligibility?	Scholarship-eligible family child care programs that receive Pathway II funds may not award an early learning scholarship to their own children.	24
Can an early learning program receive scholarships for their employees' children?	Early learning programs may receive scholarships for children of their employees. However, the scholarship shall only be applied after any staff benefits or discounted rates are applied, if applicable.	18, 24

Question	Answer	Policy Manual Page
How long does a sibling need to be attending the same program as the older child, the qualifying scholarship recipient?	MDE does not require a minimum period of enrollment before a change of program can be made once the child with a scholarship is awarded. However, continuity (longevity, stability) and consistency of care for the benefit of the child’s learning experience is an important goal of Early Learning Scholarships. It is expected that Area Administrators communicate this goal with families as they are making their enrollment choices.	6
Does the scholarship end when the child turns 5?	Children who turn 5 before September 1 remain age eligible until September 1. They can continue to receive services under the scholarship until their In-Eligible Date. They can also be awarded or have a scholarship award renewed between July 1 and August 31 of the fiscal year in which they age out of eligibility.	5
I have a child in my care who is age 3, when can they apply?	A child who is age 3 or 4 as of September 1 of the current school year and not yet eligible for kindergarten may be eligible for a scholarship. Note the scholarship fiscal year begins July 1. Children who turn 3 between July 1 and September 1 are eligible as of July 1 of the fiscal year, just as those who turned three prior to July 1.	5
Does the scholarship “transfer” to younger siblings?	A sibling between the ages of 0 and 5 of a child who has been awarded a scholarship is eligible for a scholarship upon request, provided the sibling attends the same program and funds are available. If the younger sibling is not awarded with the older sibling, they would need to qualify on their own as the older child’s scholarship would not qualify the younger child as eligible and cannot be transferred to the younger child.	5
In the case of foster care, who completes and signs the <i>Award Planning Agreement</i> with the program?	As the foster care agency is the legal guardian but the foster parent will be determining the schedule, the <i>Award Planning Agreement</i> should be completed in coordination with both the foster parent and foster care agency, but it must be signed (or agreed to using the “Alternative to Signature” option) by the county or tribal foster care worker. Time to complete this may extend to 30 days.	7

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Does the family need to send you updated income information when income changes?	Once a scholarship is awarded, families do not need to update income information and the child remains eligible until they age out. However, for children who are on the wait list but now are being considered for an award, Area Administrators must verify that income documentation is still timely and accurate. For Option 1, the scholarship award date must fall within the dates of program eligibility if it is an annual program (such as Free and Reduced-Price Lunch) or within six months if it is not an annual program. If they do not, the Area Administrator must request updated Option 1 documentation. For Option 2, proof of income documentation must not be older than six months, with the exception of allowing for the most current tax return. Families may be asked to provide updated proof of income.	5, 17

Program Eligibility

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How often does an early learning program need to sign the <i>Program Participation Agreement</i> ?	Each fiscal year, programs must sign and submit the <i>Program Participation Agreement</i> to the Area Administrator before they are able to receive a scholarship. This <i>Program Participation Agreement</i> must be completed by any program serving one or more children receiving an early learning scholarship. A signed agreement must be on file with the Area Administrator of a Pathway I scholarship award before any payment of scholarship funds is made to the program. Area Administrators will want to establish a renewal cycle each year for those programs that continue to receive scholarships and as soon as new a program is identified as a scholarship recipient.	21
At what point is a program eligible to receive scholarships after they sign a <i>Parent Aware Participation Agreement</i> ?	Families who choose a program that is currently in a Parent Aware cohort but not yet rated may receive up to \$3,000. Having a signed <i>Parent Aware Participation Agreement</i> does not make the program eligible to receive scholarships. This policy went into effect July 1, 2017.	10

Question	Answer	Policy Manual Page
Can a program going through the Accelerated Rating Pathway (ARP) receive up to \$3,000?	Early learning programs that are going through the Accelerated Rating Process are not eligible to accept scholarships until they receive a rating. They are either rated Four Stars or not eligible for scholarships.	10