



Removing Barriers to Educator Preparation

Removing Barriers to Educator Preparation (HB22-1220) creates two new programs for students meeting eligibility requirements: 1) stipends to candidates completing a culminating clinical experience (such as student teaching), and 2) funds to cover the costs of preparing for and taking required Praxis exams.

Stipend programs reduce financial barriers and go a long way to make preparation more affordable for aspiring educators.

Educator Stipends

The purpose of educator stipends is to reduce financial burdens for teacher and school counselor candidates so they can participate in clinical experiences under the direct supervision of a mentor before licensure and taking on a position. Such clinical experiences are typically unpaid, so the stipends help to alleviate the financial strain that candidates face while serving in their student teaching/internship. To qualify for these educator stipends, candidates must be able to demonstrate financial need.

Funding for the stipend programs comes from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) for the first two years and will continue, pending appropriations from the Colorado General Assembly in future years. Funds are available beginning within the 2022-23 academic year and will be sent to institutions from the Colorado Department of Higher Education (CDHE) for the schools to disburse to eligible students. Institutions will also receive funding to help defray program administrative costs. Reporting for program evaluation and the use of federal stimulus funds is required.

Students who have questions should contact their school of education for award information.

Educator Stipend Glossary

Academic Residency – A 16-week to 32-week intentional clinical experience for student educators who are placed in a school- or community-based setting for their culminating clinical experience. The student teacher/resident cannot be the teacher of record in the classroom.

Approved Program of Preparation – An Educator Preparation Program (EPP) at a public, private, or proprietary postsecondary institution authorized by the Colorado Commission of Higher Education to offer educator preparation programs, or a designated agency authorized by the State Board of Education to offer educator preparation programs.

CASFA – Colorado Application for State Financial Aid (CASFA) is used to determine the need for financial aid for students historically left out of receiving state and federal financial aid. **Non-U.S. citizens and** those who are **not permanent residents of the U.S.** can use the CASFA to apply for aid. Students who are eligible to complete the FAFSA to determine potential qualifications for federal Title IV financial aid should not complete the CASFA.

Educator Preparation Provider (EPP) - Comprehensive (traditional) or alternative entities approved by the Colorado Department of Higher Education (CDHE) and/or Colorado Department of Education (CDE) to offer educator preparation programs

Eligible student – An undergraduate, post-baccalaureate, or graduate student who is enrolled in an approved initial teacher licensure or school counselor preparation program who is also eligible for financial assistance (the student's expected family contribution determined through the FAFSA or CASFA does not exceed 200% of the maximum federal Pell-eligible expected family contribution).

Expected Family Contribution (EFC) - An index number calculated to determine financial need according to a formula established by law used to determine how much financial aid one is eligible to receive.

FAFSA – The Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) is used to demonstrate the financial need of enrolled postsecondary students.

Student educator – A candidate in a preparation program for an initial teacher or school counselor licensure.

Student Educator Stipend Program

The *student educator stipend program* awards money to *eligible students* to compensate them for their culminating clinical experience in a single semester (traditional student teaching), or year-long (two-semester) academic residency position in Colorado. Candidates placed in a semester-long residency may receive a stipend of up to \$11,000 and those in year-long academic residency may receive a stipend of up to \$22,000.

EPPs will distribute the student educator stipends to eligible students in monthly installments either using their standard methods for allocating state-based financial aid (if that method allows for monthly installments) or through another method such as wages. Candidates are encouraged to work with their programs and financial aid offices to determine which may be in the best interest of the student. Student educator stipend funds may be considered taxable income, and students should be advised to consult with a tax advisor to understand those implications. One hundred percent of the student educator stipend must go to the student educators.

Teachers in alternative licensure programs or long-term substitutes serving as a teacher of record, and school counselor candidates serving in paid positions under intern or TEE authorizations *are not* eligible for the stipend program. All student educators completing their academic residency in Colorado are eligible, regardless of their status as in-state or out-of-state students. Students completing student teaching, residencies, or internships in locations outside of Colorado *are not* eligible for the stipend.

Funds for the student educator stipends will be disbursed to each EPP according to the number of eligible student educators reported to CDHE by July 1, 2022. CDHE will provide a template to report any changes to the

number of eligible students and resulting fund increases needed or overages to be returned to CDHE.

Student Educator Test Stipend Program

The *student educator test stipend program* awards money to approved preparation programs to reduce financial barriers for eligible student educators preparing for the Praxis test(s) required for licensure. The stipends will be disbursed by CDHE to the EPP to pay the fees and costs associated with the test(s), which may include the cost of the test, preparation materials or courses, and/or travel and lodging costs that may be associated with testing.

EPPs may purchase vouchers or make other arrangements to pay for the costs and fees associated with taking the exams required for licensure. EPPs may choose to disburse the student educator test stipend funds through the financial aid office as they will not be considered part of an estimated family assistance and will not be taxable (for FY22-23 and FY23-24). Eligible expenses may include purchasing test vouchers on behalf of students, reimbursement of exam fees, purchasing or reimbursing costs for test preparation materials (including programs, courses, tutoring), and third-party test preparation materials and vouchers. Students who are not eligible for the test stipend may use the purchased test prep materials as well, but not the funds (vouchers) for taking the exam itself.

EPPs will determine how many times a student can take the Praxis exams. Additional information about allowable expenses will be forthcoming to include travel.

Student educators can get stipend support for the following endorsement areas for which Praxis exams are *required* for licensure:

- Elementary Education – Elementary Education bundle 5901 (or Mathematics 5903, Social Studies 5904, and Science 5905); and Teaching Reading 5205
- Early Childhood Education – Education of Young Children 5024 and Teaching Reading 5205
- Early Childhood Special Education – Education of Young Children 5024, Special Education: Preschool/Early Childhood 5691, and Teaching Reading 5205
- Special Education – Special Education: Core Knowledge and Applications 5354; Elementary Education bundle 5901 (or Mathematics 5903, Social Studies 5904, and Science 5905); and Teaching Reading 5205
- School Counselor – Professional School Counselor 5421

Praxis exams that are required by the EPP, but not for licensure as listed above, *are not* eligible.

Administrative funds

Funds will be awarded to each qualifying EPP to support the direct costs of implementing and administering the stipend programs. Administrative fund awards were determined by the number of eligible students at each EPP. The funds will be disbursed from CDHE to EPPs. It is up to each EPP to determine how to distribute funds among different programs/offices to best support implementation.

Reporting Requirements

CDHE is working with the Office of State Planning and Budgeting to determine reporting requirements per federal stimulus funding. Statutorily required data required to be reported to CDHE for program evaluation include (but are not limited to):

1. The total number of eligible students served by each program and documentation of eligibility;
2. The demographic data of each eligible student aggregated by race, ethnicity, and gender;
3. The total amount of stipend money each eligible student receives each year;
4. The name of the school or community-based setting where each eligible student is completing their academic residency;
5. A survey of eligible students to measure the eligible students' experience with the stipend program;
6. The total number of times an eligible student educator sits for licensure exams covered by the educator test stipend and their pass rate;
7. The pass rates for each EPP disbursing funds for the student educator testing stipends.

EPPs should track allocated funds spent on direct administrative costs for reporting purposes. All reporting templates, surveys, and reporting schedules will be provided by CDHE at a later date. Please **do not** send personally identifiable student information until a secure portal is established. CDHE will provide details about secure submission in the following weeks.

Fund Disbursement

Funds will be disbursed to EPPs upon final execution of the agreements. These funds will be sent through an electronic funds transfer from CDHE. Each EPP will identify the best channel to disburse the student educator stipend and student educator testing stipend funds (e.g., bursar, financial aid office, etc.) that is in the best interest of the student.

Demonstrating Financial Need

To qualify for either the student educator stipend or the student educator test stipend, students must meet certain income eligibility requirements. Students must complete either the FAFSA or CASFA as financial eligibility is determined using estimated family contribution (EFC).

The following question determines which application students should complete:

Is the student (are you) a U.S. citizen or an eligible noncitizen?

- o An eligible noncitizen is a U.S. national (includes natives of American Samoa or Swains

Island), U.S. permanent resident (who has an I-151, I-551 or I-551C [Permanent Resident Card]), or an individual who has an Arrival-Departure Record (I-94) from U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) showing one of the following designations:

- "Refugee"
 - "Asylum Granted"
 - "Cuban-Haitian Entrant (Status Pending)"
 - "Conditional Entrant" (valid only if issued before April 1, 1980)
 - Victims of human trafficking, T-visa (T-2, T-3, or T-4, etc.) holder
 - "Parolee" (You must be paroled into the U.S. for at least one year and you must be able to provide evidence from the USCIS that you are in the U.S. for other than a temporary purpose and that you intend to become a U.S. citizen or permanent resident.)
- If yes = the student should complete the [FAFSA](#)
- If no = the student should complete the [CASFA](#)

Information reported on the candidate's FAFSA or CASFA is used to calculate EFC. EFC is calculated using the family's taxed and untaxed income, assets, and benefits. Also considered are family size and the number of family members who will attend college or career school during the year.

Candidates will list the college or university they attend by entering the institution's [Federal School Code](#). While completing the FAFSA, candidates must list at least one school to receive their information. If the desired EPP is not listed, the candidate should enter another Colorado public institution or print their completed application for the EPP to complete the steps necessary to determine EFC. Candidates who complete the FAFSA will receive their EFC via email. Candidates can also log in to the FAFSA student portal to view their Student Aid Report with the EFC summary on it and email it to the EPP.

If candidates complete the CASFA, they will not receive the EFC via email. Candidates can log into the student portal and click the "View an application" icon (shaped like an eye) next to the application; this will open a PDF of the completed application with the calculated EFC at the bottom.

Determining Financial Eligibility

To show that a student meets the Pell financial eligibility guidelines to receive the stipends, there must be a FAFSA or CASFA on file for the candidate. EPPs at public or private colleges or universities (even alternative programs) should be able to determine if candidates meet the expected family contribution (EFC) eligibility criteria.

If not, please use the steps below.

1. Using the information provided on the FAFSA or CASFA forms, use the [2022-23 EFC Formula Guide](#) to calculate the candidate's EFC. There are three regular formulas and a simplified version of each (beginning on p. 2):
 - a. Formula A, for dependent students;
 - b. Formula B, for independent students **without** dependents other than a spouse; and

c. Formula C, for independent students **with** dependents other than their spouse.

2. The expected family contribution threshold (floor) for meeting Pell eligibility for 2022-23 is \$6,206¹. Per HB22-1220 the expected family contribution cannot exceed 200% of the maximum federal Pell-eligible expected family contribution. Therefore, if the EFC calculated using the FAFSA, CASFA, or formula information found above is **\$12,412 or less**, the candidate meets the financial criteria for eligibility.

Please do not send this information, or the completed FAFSAs or CASFAs directly to CDHE. We will share information regarding how to track and safely report sensitive student data as soon as the templates are developed.

Educator Stipend FAQs:

I see that Teacher of Record candidates are not eligible but are candidates in alternative programs eligible?

Not typically because they are considered Teachers of Record, but there are a handful of alternative programs that do offer a residency alongside a mentor teacher before candidates become a Teacher of Record. As alternative teachers in that role, they would be eligible during that portion of their program.

Are the Praxis test stipends retroactive or only for fees that will be paid in the future?

Funding for stipends will begin for the 2022-23 academic year and are only available going forward. Fees paid for tests taken before August 1, 2022, cannot be reimbursed.

Where can I find more information about the Temporary Educator Loan Forgiveness Program?

Please visit <https://cdhe.colorado.gov/students/preparing-for-college/educator-funding-opportunities/temporary-educator-loan-forgiveness> for information about this program.

Are practicum students (pre-student teaching) eligible if they are in placements that meet residency criteria? Or is this only available for the final semester/year as a student teacher?

Only candidates completing their culminating clinical experience (student teaching or residency) are eligible for the student educator stipend. However, eligible students can receive *test stipend* support before that clinical experience.

To what extent does a student's residency status and/or location for student teaching affect their eligibility for stipends? (We have several students who hold residencies outside of Colorado or who are completing student teaching/internships out-of-state).

All students completing their student teaching/internship in Colorado are eligible regardless of their residency status for tuition purposes. Students completing student teaching, residencies, or internships out-of-state are not eligible for stipends.

What if a student withdraws or drops – how is that communicated to the office paying stipends?

¹ Per Dear Colleague letter dated 3/24/2022: <https://fsapartners.ed.gov/knowledge-center/library/dear-colleague-letters/2022-03-24/revised-2022-2023-federal-pell-grant-payment-and-disbursement-schedules>

If a student withdraws or drops from the program, or is unsuccessful during their educator residency, program staff should inform the office paying the student's monthly stipends. Program leads will also inform CDHE of the change and will reimburse CDHE for the unspent funds using a form to be developed.

If a candidate receives these funds, does that affect their eligibility for loan forgiveness or any other financial aid or stipend programs?

HB21-1220 stipulates that if a candidate receives these stipend funds, they **will not** be eligible to receive funds through the Temporary Educator Loan Forgiveness program, and those who have received the Temporary Educator Loan Award are not eligible to receive educator stipend funding. Students may still be eligible to receive other educator recruitment and retention initiatives, however. Please contact educator.preparation@dhe.state.co.us for specific questions.

Please contact educator.preparation@dhe.state.co.us if you have any additional questions.