



SCHOOL & STUDENT
SERVICES

SCHOOL & STUDENT SERVICES FAQ

SOURCES OF FINANCIAL AID

Where can I get more information about financial aid?

The best first stop is the admissions or financial aid office at the schools you're interested in. They provide the bulk of the aid dollars and can give you specific advice on options, procedures, and—especially important—deadlines. Policies and guidelines vary so never assume that what's true for one school is true for all. Ask questions.

Isn't it possible to get scholarships from sources other than schools themselves?

Yes. But most such scholarships are small. Often they have much narrower criteria (for example, daughters of women who've been incarcerated in the state of Rhode Island). Many still have a component of financial need. And still others are awarded by random drawings.

Nearly all need-based and merit-based financial aid for students at private K-12 schools comes directly from the schools themselves. It's probably more useful to spend your time on your application for need-based grants than searching for scholarships.

That said: You can ask the schools to which you're applying if they can provide you with a list of organizations that provide scholarships. [Click here to see a list of scholarship providers.](#)

How can our family afford to take out loans for pre-collegiate education if we may also need to borrow for college?

Keep in mind that you don't have to borrow the entire amount of tuition. You may be able to pay some of it from current income, savings, or gifts from relatives, as well as from financial aid from the school. You can use a loan as a viable, accessible option to close a funding gap.

Does SSS offer any sort of financial aid to families?

No, SSS does not provide money to families in any form.



SCHOOL & STUDENT
SERVICES

SCHOOL & STUDENT SERVICES FAQ

SSS and the Parents' Financial Statement (PFS)

When our family applies for financial aid, what information will schools ask for?

The vast majority of financial aid is based on financial need. To determine how much financial assistance you need, schools use the SSS computations provided by National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS) to first figure out how much you can contribute. The school needs to know such information as:

- Family size
- Income from all sources
- Savings, investments, and other assets (including home equity)
- Children's assets
- Indebtedness
- Medical, dental, and unusual expenses.

This information, and much more, is collected on the Parents' Financial Statement (PFS) and shared with all the schools you want to receive it. The PFS is called a common application, or common app, because you only need to complete one application for many schools.

Most schools will require you to submit a copy of your most recently completed federal tax return to verify that the information you used on the application is true and accurate. In certain cases — for example, if you own a farm or business — schools may also ask you for additional documentation.

What is SSS?

SSS is used by more than 1,800+ K-12 private schools and other organizations to help determine a family's ability to pay school costs. The service and process helps ensure that all schools use the same methods and objective procedures to evaluate your financial aid application.



SCHOOL & STUDENT
SERVICES

SCHOOL & STUDENT SERVICES FAQ

How does the SSS program calculate my family’s “contribution,” or ability to pay?

The process starts when you complete and submit the Parents’ Financial Statement (PFS) to SSS. Through the PFS, SSS gathers family and financial information that it applies to a formula to estimate the resources your family may have available to pay school costs.

Simply stated, the formula considers your income, what you own (your house and other investments), what you owe (your mortgage and other debts), the size of your family, and how many family members are enrolled in tuition-charging schools or colleges.

You submit the completed PFS to SSS for processing. After making allowances for basic necessities, taxes, and certain other expenses, SSS figures out what portion of your remaining funds is available to pay school costs. Then the service provides the results of the analysis to the school as a recommendation on your ability to pay.

SSS encourages schools to use this estimate in addition to other information they collect from your family to make their final determination about your family’s contribution. That final determination always comes from the individual school — not from SSS.

Who can I ask for help in completing the PFS form?

If you’ve read our online instructions but still have questions, email us at sss@communitybrands.com.

Also, don’t hesitate to be in touch with the director of admission or financial aid at the school(s) to which you’re applying. They can also help make sure you answer questions on the form in the way that they prefer or expect families to answer.



SCHOOL & STUDENT
SERVICES

SCHOOL & STUDENT SERVICES FAQ

Can my family receive a waiver so we don't have to pay the Parents' Financial Statement (PFS) processing fee?

In keeping with our mission as a non-profit organization, SSS has a program where application fees can be waived for families most in need of financial help. We use the family size, income, and asset information in the PFS to assess the family situation and automatically apply a waiver if they qualify.

In addition, dozens of agencies across the country (known as access organizations) help underprivileged or underrepresented children apply for financial aid by supplying their families with fee waivers that enable them to submit a PFS through SSS without incurring any cost. To find out more about fee waivers, you can contact [access organizations](#) directly.

If all the schools where our family applies use the Parents' Financial Statement, why do they offer us different amounts of financial aid?

Once a school receives the recommendation from SSS, it may revise the SSS calculation based on its specific policies, additional information the school received from you, and other factors. Also, some schools have more money than others for financial aid. So even if two schools agreed on the SSS recommendation, one school may not be able to provide aid for all demonstrated need.

[Click here for case study examples.](#)

FINANCIAL AID TERMS AND OTHER BASICS

Where does financial aid come from?

Most is provided directly from the school and distributed on the basis of financial need.

What does "financial need" mean?

Need is the difference between educational expenses — especially tuition and fees — and your family's ability to pay those expenses.



SCHOOL & STUDENT
SERVICES

SCHOOL & STUDENT SERVICES FAQ

How do schools determine financial need?

When they work with SSS, they ask you to fill out a Parents' Financial Statement that gives them an objective picture of how much you can afford to contribute toward education. After calculating the difference between your resources and their tuition and fees, schools weigh the resulting financial need against their available financial aid funds and their policies. Keep in mind that applying for financial aid does not guarantee that you will be eligible for assistance, and being eligible does not guarantee that financial aid will be available.

What is the income level at which a family is no longer eligible for aid?

There is no specific income limit. If you feel you cannot pay all the costs yourself, it's worth asking whether aid is available.

If my family turns in our financial aid application late, is there any chance more funds may be available later in the year?

In most cases, schools give out virtually all their financial aid funds in March and April. Very few schools have a rolling process for financial aid (as opposed to admission). That said, sometimes in June or July, a school may learn that students who were given financial aid are not enrolling after all, and extra dollars become available. It's always worthwhile to call the school's financial aid office to ask, just in case.

Does financial aid need impact my child's chances of being admitted?

Many schools follow a "need-blind" policy — meaning they won't take your family's financial situation into consideration when weighing your child's application for admission. However, admission is no guarantee that you'll receive financial aid. The amount of aid depends on (1) your family's eligibility and (2) the amount of funds the school has available.

Was your question not covered above? [Download the Extended FAQ](#)



SCHOOL & STUDENT
SERVICES

SCHOOL & STUDENT SERVICES RESOURCES

If you have questions as you complete your PFS or submit documents in the SSS Family Portal, please contact the SSS Family Support Center. Assistance is available in English as well as Spanish.

<https://www.solutionsbysss.com/>

800-344-8328

sss@communitybrands.com

Phone support is available during the following hours:

- January 1 – March 31
9am–11pm ET weekdays and 9am–4pm ET on Saturday. Closed Sunday.
- April 1 – October 31
9am–7pm ET weekdays. Closed Saturday and Sunday.
- November 1 – December 31
9am–8pm ET weekdays and 9am–4pm ET on Saturday. Closed Sunday.

If you are calling from outside of the United States or Canada, dial 952-967-9922.