

Fee Waiver Guidelines for 2023-24

To reduce the obstacle that application fees can create for the neediest of families, K-12 financial aid solutions by Community Brands automatically evaluates eligibility for families to receive a fee waiver. In addition to these fee waivers (referred to as “means-based” waivers), schools may purchase fee waiver credits and assign them to a parent’s PFS their own discretion.

K-12 financial aid solutions by Community Brands Fee Waiver Guidelines and Eligibility

Eligibility for the “means-based” waiver (MBW) is based on the information families submit on their PFS related to total income, family household size, and other factors. These guidelines are school-specific and should never be shared with parents. Doing so could risk a parent's authenticity with the financial information they report on their PFS.

To be eligible for a means-based waiver, the family must meet all the following criteria:

- Family must qualify for the federal free lunch program.
- Neither parent owns or shares ownership in a business or farm.
- Parents must be U.S. or U.S. territory residents. International families are not eligible for an MBW.
- The parents’ total assets must be less than \$25,000.

FEDERAL FREE LUNCH INCOME AND FAMILY SIZE LIMITS¹

48 Contiguous States, District of Columbia, Guam, and Territories		Alaska		Hawaii	
For family size of...	...Total income for 2021 must be less than	For family size of...	...Total income for 2021 must be less than	For family size of...	...Total income for 2021 must be less than
1	\$17,667	1	\$22,087	1	\$20,319
2	\$23,803	2	\$29,757	2	\$27,378
3	\$29,939	3	\$37,427	3	\$34,437
4	\$36,075	4	\$45,097	4	\$41,496
5	\$42,211	5	\$52,767	5	\$48,555
6	\$48,347	6	\$60,437	6	\$55,614
7	\$54,483	7	\$68,107	7	\$62,673
8	\$60,619	8	\$75,777	8	\$69,732
Each add'l family member, add	\$6,136	Each add'l family member, add	\$7,670	Each add'l family member, add	\$7,059

¹ Federal Register, Volume 84, No. 32, February 16, 2022. <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/FR-2022-02-16/pdf/2022-03261.pdf>

In the Family Portal, as soon as the family clicks the Pay Now button (activated after completing all PFS sections), their application goes through the means test:

- If the family **qualifies**, their payment is automatically waived, the system bypasses the payment screen, and they receive confirmation of payment by waived fee.
- If the family **does not qualify**, the payment screen is shown with the option to enter payment by credit card or e-check/ACH.

The fee waiver covers the cost of the family's PFS submission, regardless of the number of schools listed or number of children applying. Updating a submitted PFS carries no additional fee for parents; therefore, a waiver is not needed for families making changes or revisions to a PFS already in the system.

If a family is not eligible for a means-based waiver at the time they submit their PFS and pays the fee, then later revises PFS information in a manner that would make it eligible for a waiver, no waiver or refund will be given as the initial fee has already been paid and submitted.

A family cannot request a waiver from within their Family Portal account. If a family does not qualify for the means-based waiver, they must reach out to the school or access organization to inquire about the possibility of receiving a fee waiver.

Understanding your Fee Waivers tab

Located on the upper navigation bar, this tab includes two sub-tabs: Assigned Waivers and Assign Fee Waivers.

Assigned Waivers Sub-tab

This page provides a summary of your 2023-24 fee waiver credits and assigned waivers.

Fee Waivers Assigned box

- # of school purchased fee waiver credits
- # of assigned waivers
- # of credits available

Assigned Fee Waivers box

This box lists all applicant families who've been granted a waiver – those granted by your school ("School") and by K-12 financial aid solutions by Community Brands ("Means Based").

Assign Fee Waivers Sub-tab

This page allows you to view your current list of unsubmitted/unpaid PFSs, purchase fee waiver credits, and assign a fee waiver to a family's PFS.

**For users on the TADS School Portal, please contact support as needed in order to purchase fee waivers.*

Fee Waivers

This box summarizes your purchased fee waiver credits (same summary displays on the Assigned Waivers sub-tab).

Unpaid Current Year Applicants

This box lists all current applicant families with unsubmitted/unpaid PFSs. This section allows you to purchase fee waiver credits, assign a waiver to a family's PFS and understand where in the application process a family is with their PFS completion ("PFS Status").

*This list will also include applicants who are international or own a business/farm since they automatically do not qualify for a means-based waiver.

Understanding PFS Status

Within the Unpaid Current Year Applications box is a column called PFS Status noting one of two statuses:

- **Application in Progress** – Indicates the family has started an PFS, they have selected your school, and they are still in the process of filling out the necessary information. *A PFS with this status has not yet gone through the means test to determine if it qualifies for a “means-based” waiver.
- **Application Completed** – Indicates the family has completed their application, it did not qualify for a “means-based” waiver, and they have yet to pay for their application to fully submit it.

Purchasing Additional Fee Waivers

- **Purchase** fee waiver credits at the same cost as the \$60 PFS fee and assign it at your own discretion.
- **Receipts** for fee waiver purchases are available in the Transactions sub-tab in Setup.
- **Unused waivers** expire at the end of the processing year and do not carry forward to the next processing year. It is recommended that schools purchase in smaller increments or on an as needed basis.

Assigning a Fee Waiver

After purchasing a fee waiver credit or credits, you can assign one to a family listed in the Unpaid Current Year Applicants box while the application is in either PFS Status (Application in Progress or Application Completed).

Check the box on the far left of the name (you can select more than one family), click Assign Waivers and confirm your selection(s).

The assigned waiver is applied to the family’s PFS in one of two ways, depending on PFS Status:

- **Application Completed** – Waiver is automatically applied as payment and no further action needed.
- **Application in Progress** – Parent must finish their PFS and click **Pay & Submit** to apply the assigned waiver as their payment. If you assign a waiver to a PFS with this status and the family later qualifies for an SSS means-based waiver after clicking **Pay & Submit**, the waiver you assigned is credited back to your account to use again.

Payment by waiver is noted in on the Dashboard of the parent’s Family Portal account.

Viewing Prior Year Assigned Waivers

The **Assigned Waivers** tab defaults to the 2023-24 processing year. Access your prior year assigned waivers by toggling to 2022-2023 via the academic year dropdown (upper right corner of screen). Open the Fee Waivers tab, then toggle to the prior year to view the list.

Questions?

School Support – 855.230.7850 | Submit a portal Support Ticket

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