

ALABAMA COMMISSION ON HIGHER EDUCATION
STUDENT ASSISTANCE
CHAPTER 300-4-7
POLICE OFFICER'S AND FIREFIGHTER'S SURVIVOR'S
EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM
REGULATIONS

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300-4-7-.01. Goal.

The goal of the Police Officer's and Firefighter's Survivor's Educational Assistance Program is to provide for tuition assistance and other costs for an undergraduate student in a state college, state community college, state junior college, state technical college, or state university, in the state of Alabama, who is the dependent child, or spouse who has not remarried, of a law enforcement officer or firefighter killed or totally disabled in the line of duty.

Authors: Dr. William H. Wall and Cheryl B. Newton.

Statutory Authority: Alabama Act 87-609, as amended by Alabama Acts 99-448 and 2000-808.

History: April 6, 1988. **Amended:** January 24, 2000; January 12, 2001.

300-4-7-.02. Organization.

(1) It is the responsibility of the Alabama Commission on Higher Education to establish policies and procedures for the implementation of the Police Officer's and Firefighter's Survivor's Educational Assistance Program. The Police Officer's and Firefighter's Survivor's Educational Assistance Program is administered in accordance with the policies and procedures established by the Alabama Commission on Higher Education.

(2) The Alabama Commission on Higher Education appoints such staff as are necessary to ensure efficient operation of the program.

(3) The Tuition Eligibility Board shall determine the eligibility of any person applying for assistance through the Police Officer's and Firefighter's Survivor's Educational Assistance Program and shall certify to the Alabama Commission on Higher Education each eligible person to receive assistance through the program.

Author: Dr. William H. Wall

Statutory Authority: Alabama Act 87-609.

History: April 6, 1988.

300-4-7-.03. Planning.

(1) It is the responsibility of the staff of the Alabama Commission on Higher Education to provide continuous study, analyses, evaluation, planning, reporting, and recommendations as a basis for long-range planning with established priorities on a statewide basis to assure a sound, vigorous, progressive, and coordinated system of higher education for the State.

(2) It is the responsibility of the Alabama Commission on Higher Education to supervise implementation of the Police Officer's and Firefighter's Survivor's Educational Assistance Program with the state college, state community college, state junior college, state technical college, or state university concerned.

Author: Dr. William H. Wall

Statutory Authority: Alabama Act 79-461.

History: April 6, 1988.

300-4-7-.04. Definition of Terms.

(1) Academic Qualifications and Satisfactory Progress of Eligible Students: A student is considered academically qualified if he/she is currently enrolled and matriculated, or has been enrolled in an eligible program of an eligible institution, and is maintaining, or did maintain, satisfactory progress in a course of study he or she is or was pursuing according to the standards and practices of the institution in which the student is or was in attendance. A participating institution must check whatever elements of its satisfactory progress standards are applicable for each payment period.

(2) Board: Tuition Eligibility Board.

(3) Educational Grant: A grant is defined as a financial award by the state of Alabama to a Police Officer's and Firefighter's Survivor's Educational Assistance Program applicant who is designated to be an eligible student who was enrolled in, or is enrolled in, or accepted for enrollment, in an eligible institution, and is to be awarded to the student to defray direct educational-related expenses: tuition, and mandatory fees as stated in the institution's catalog, plus the cost of books and supplies.

(4) Cost of Education: The cost of education is defined as the cost of instruction and fees to the student, as stated in the institution's catalog, plus the cost of books and supplies.

(5) Eligible Institution: An eligible institution is a public postsecondary educational institution -- a state college, state community college, state junior college, state technical college, or state university -- in the state of Alabama and which submits a complete application to the Police Officer's and Firefighter's Survivor's Educational Assistance Program for grant assistance to its students and complies with all regulations of the Alabama Commission on Higher Education.

(6) Eligible Program: An eligible program is any program leading to a diploma, certificate, or undergraduate degree in a state college, state community college, state junior college, state technical college, or state university, in the state of Alabama.

(7) Eligible Student: An eligible student is an applicant who completes a Police Officer's and Firefighter's Survivor's Educational Assistance Program application, and

(a) Is classified as an undergraduate student as defined in 04(15);

(b) Is enrolled or accepted for enrollment, or was enrolled, in an eligible program within an eligible institution;

(c) Is making satisfactory academic progress as defined by the eligible institution and consistent with guidelines applicable to Title IV programs at the institution or institutions.

(d) Is the dependent child, or spouse who has not remarried of a full-time law enforcement officer or firefighter employed by the State, by any county, or by any municipality and killed or totally and permanently disabled in the line of duty.

1. If a dependent child, natural or adopted, the applicant must be under 21 years of age at the time of death or total disability of the law enforcement officer or firefighter;

2. If a spouse, the applicant must not have remarried and must enroll in an eligible program of an eligible institution within five years of the death or total and permanent disability of the law enforcement officer or firefighter or within five years from October 1, 2000 for persons whose spouses became totally and permanently disabled in the line of duty on or after July 23, 1987.

Authors: Dr. William H. Wall and Cheryl B. Newton.

Statutory Authority: Alabama Act 79-461, as amended by Alabama Acts 99-448 and 2000-808.

History: April 6, 1988. **Amended:** January 24, 2000; January 12, 2001.

(8) False Statement or Misrepresentation: Any person who knowingly makes or furnishes any false statement or misrepresentation knowing the same to be false, for the purpose of enabling an individual or institution to obtain monies wrongfully under this program, shall be guilty of a Class A misdemeanor, and upon conviction thereof, shall be subject to a fine or to imprisonment, or to both, as such misdemeanor is defined in Act No. 607, S.33 of the 1977 Regular Session (Acts 1977, No. 11, p. 812).

(9) Matriculated Status of Eligible Students:

(a) To be eligible for a Police Officer's and Firefighter's Survivor's Educational Assistance Program grant, a student must be or have been in a "matriculated status" in an eligible program leading to a diploma, certificate, or undergraduate degree in an eligible institution. For purposes of the Police Officer's and Firefighter's Survivor's Educational Assistance Program, a student shall be considered in "matriculated status" if he or she is enrolled, or has been enrolled, in an appropriate diploma, certificate, or degree program.

(b) A student is to be considered matriculated and eligible only if the courses pursued by the student are fully recognized as contributing toward fulfillment by the students of the requirements for completion of the program. That the student may be required, or has been required, to complete certain courses to make up deficiencies in background or training does not necessarily negate the student's status as a recognized certificate, diploma, or degree candidate, so long as acceptance and credit are not contingent upon additional and special requirements designed to establish his/her qualifications to pursue the program successfully. If credit toward the certificate, diploma, or degree is conditional upon satisfactory completion of additional special requirements, then the student must be considered not fully matriculated and ineligible for assistance during his/her present program of study.

(c) A student who meets all eligibility requirements for the Police Officer's and Firefighter's Survivor's Educational Assistance Program and who is, or has been, permitted to enroll in an eligible institution on an early admission basis is eligible to receive an educational grant provided he/she meets all other matriculated status criteria of these procedures.

(10) Public Institution of Higher Education. A public institution of higher education is an educational institution which

(a) Is in Alabama;

(b) Admits as regular students only persons who have a high school diploma or have the recognized equivalent of a high school diploma, or are beyond the age of compulsory school attendance, and have the ability to benefit from the training offered;

(c) Is legally authorized to provide an educational program beyond secondary education;

(d) Provides an educational program for which it awards an associate or baccalaureate degree, or provides at least a two-year program which is acceptable for full credit toward a baccalaureate degree, or provides at least a one-year training program which leads to a certificate or diploma and prepares students for gainful employment in a recognized occupation;

(e) Is accredited by a nationally-recognized accrediting agency or association or, if not accredited, is an institution whose credits are determined to be accepted on transfer by at least three accredited institutions on the same basis as transfer credits from fully-accredited institutions.

(11) Refund Policies and Procedures.

(a) If a student transfers, or becomes ineligible for an educational grant, prior to the delivery of program funds to the student, the institutional financial aid administrator will not disburse Police Officer's and Firefighter's Survivor's Educational Assistance Program funds to the student.

(b) If a student withdraws from school or reduces his/her course load after receiving Police Officer's and Firefighter's Survivor's Educational Assistance Program funds, but before the end of the academic term or terms, and is not entitled to a refund in accordance with the institution's refund policy, the Police and Firefighter's Survivor's Educational Assistance Program will not require a refund of any portion of the educational grant which was utilized by the student toward payment of the institution's net charges to the student for the period of actual attendance. However, if an educational grant award payment to the student exceeds the amount of the educational costs of the student, the institution must return to the Police Officer's and Firefighter's Survivor's Educational Assistance Program the refund amount and the institution must maintain with the student's records documentation listing (a) the date the student withdrew, (b) the net institutional charges to the student for the period of the student's attendance, (c) the amount of the student's educational grant award, and (d) the amount of refund due the Police Officer's and Firefighter's Survivor's Educational Assistance Program.

(12) Student Application Procedure: Each applicant for a Police Officer's and Firefighter's Survivor's Educational Assistance Program grant must submit to the Alabama Commission on Higher Education a Police Officer's and Firefighter's Survivor's Educational Assistance Program student application. Completed applications will be forwarded to the Tuition Eligibility Board for review and certification of eligibility.

(13) Transfer Student: Each Police Officer's and Firefighter's Survivor's Educational Assistance Program award is made on the basis of the student applicant's attending the postsecondary educational institution listed on his/her student application form. An award recipient who elects to transfer to another educational institution may apply for a new award in accordance with the student application procedure. The original application will be canceled automatically, unless the student has met the student eligibility requirements for receipt of funds for attendance at that institution. A Police Officer's and Firefighter's Survivor's Educational Assistance Program award is not transferable from one institution to another.

(14) Tuition: Tuition is defined as the cost of instruction and fees to the student as stated in the institution's catalog, plus the cost of books and supplies.

(15) Undergraduate Student: An undergraduate student is defined as a person who is or was enrolled in an eligible program at an eligible institution and has not earned a baccalaureate or professional degree. Students who have previously earned a baccalaureate or professional degree, even though they may be enrolled in an undergraduate course of study, are not eligible for a Police Officer's and Firefighter's Survivor's Educational Assistance Program grant.

Authors: Dr. William H. Wall and Cheryl B. Newton.

Statutory Authority: Alabama Act 87-609, as amended by Alabama Acts 99-448 and 2000-808.

History: April 6, 1988. **Amended:** January 24, 2000; January 12, 2001.

300-4-7-.05. Audit.

Each eligible institution receiving grants on behalf of, and to the credit of, any student shall be subject to examination at any time by the Alabama Commission on Higher Education, the Examiner of Public Accounts, or the State Auditor, for the purpose of determining whether such institution has complied with the rules, regulations, and procedures of the Police Officer's and Firefighter's Survivor's Educational Assistance Program.

Author: Dr. William H. Wall

Statutory Authority: Alabama Act 87-609.

History: April 6, 1988.

300-4-7-06. Application Processing Procedures.

The following procedures shall be the method used by the Alabama Commission on Higher Education for making available Police Officer's and Firefighter's Survivor's Educational Assistance Program awards to eligible students at eligible institutions:

(a) Applications may be obtained from eligible institutions and from the Alabama Commission on Higher Education.

(b) The applicant shall be required to complete the application form and attach documentation to substantiate eligibility. Such documentation must include a copy of a natural child's birth certificate, adoption papers for an adopted child, or marriage certification by a spouse, and a death certificate for the police officer or firefighter killed in the line of duty, or the certification by a qualified physician of the police officer's or firefighter's total and permanent disability as a result of service in the line of duty.

Author: Dr. William H. Wall

Statutory Authority: Alabama Act 87-609.

History: April 6, 1988. **Amended:** January 24, 2000.

(c) The applicant shall forward the completed application form, with attached documentation, to the Alabama Commission on Higher Education.

(d) Each application shall have a preliminary review by the Alabama Commission on Higher Education staff to determine if the application is complete and contains all required documentation. Each student applicant shall be notified by the Alabama Commission on Higher Education when an application is incomplete and additional information is needed. The Alabama Commission on Higher Education shall notify any student who does not meet student eligibility criteria and is, therefore, ineligible for a Police Officer's and Firefighter's Survivor's Educational Assistance Program award.

(e) Complete applications of applicants who appear to meet the eligibility criteria for participation in the Police Officer's and Firefighter's Survivor's Educational Assistance Program shall be forwarded by the Commission on Higher Education to the Chairman of the Tuition Eligibility Board.

(f) The Chairman of the Tuition Eligibility Board shall review the application, in consultation with other members of the Board, as directed by Board policy, and determine if the applicant meets the eligibility requirements for participation in the program. Upon signature of the Board Chairman, the application shall be returned to the Alabama Commission on Higher Education for processing.

(g) Upon receipt of the approved application, the Alabama Commission on Higher Education shall request the eligible institution to submit an invoice for reimbursement of tuition, fees, books, and supplies for each term the applicant is eligible to receive benefits through the Police Officer's and Firefighter's Survivor's Educational Assistance Program. Original receipts must accompany institutional invoices submitted to the Commission.

(h) Payments for eligible students shall be forwarded to the financial aid office of the eligible institution.

Authors: Dr. William H. Wall and Cheryl B. Newton.

Statutory Authority: Alabama Act 87-609, as amended by Alabama Acts 99-448 and 2000-808.

History: April 6, 1988. **Amended:** January 12, 2001.

300-4-7-.07. Disbursement of Funds.

(1) The Alabama Commission on Higher Education shall determine the dollar amount of each grant award and shall submit a voucher to the State Comptroller.

(2) The State Comptroller shall prepare a check payable to the eligible institution for each eligible student listed on the voucher. Such check shall be forwarded to the institution for credit to the student's account or for payment to the institution for delivery of funds to the eligible student. No later than thirty (30) calendar days after receipt of the grant check, the eligible institution shall deliver the grant funds to the eligible student and return a completed certification form to the Alabama Commission on Higher Education.

(3) If a student whose eligibility for a grant award has been certified by an eligible institution becomes ineligible for a grant award before the expiration of the institutional refund period, the grant funds shall not be delivered to the student but shall be returned to the Alabama Commission on Higher Education.

Author: Dr. William H. Wall

Statutory Authority: Alabama Act 87-609.

History: April 6, 1988.

300-4-7-.08. Review Procedures.

(1) The institutional review will enable the reviewer to express an opinion of the administrative controls and the compliance aspects of the Police Officer's and Firefighter's Survivor's Educational Assistance Program at the eligible institution.

(2) The primary objectives identified for the reviewer conducting institutional reviews are:

(a) To determine if the institution's records present information accurately and in conformity with the Police Officer's and Firefighter's Survivor's Educational Assistance Program Regulations, and whether all reports are prepared on a consistent basis from one period to the next;

(b) To determine whether the institution has implemented, and is utilizing, reasonable procedures and internal controls for effectively discharging management responsibilities and for protecting adequately the state's interest;

(c) To review institutional records and reports on areas of noncompliance; and,

(d) Based upon the review, to provide constructive recommendations to the institution.

(3) The institution shall make all records and information relative to the Police Officer's and Firefighter's Survivor's Educational Assistance Program available to the reviewer.

(4) A written report shall be provided by the reviewer to the institution and shall include:

(a) Any findings of inaccuracies in institutional reports;

(b) Any inconsistencies in institutional reports;

(c) Conclusions regarding the adequacy of administrative controls;

(d) Any areas of noncompliance; and,

(e) Any recommendations for improvement.

(5) If the eligible institution does not concur with all items in the written report, a written appeal should be submitted to the Executive Director of the Alabama Commission on Higher Education.

(6) When an institutional review reveals sufficient problems pertaining to the Police Officer's and Firefighter's Survivor's Educational Assistance Program at an institution, the Executive Director of the Alabama Commission on Higher Education may:

(a) Impose a temporary suspension of Police Officer's and Firefighter's Survivor's Educational Assistance Program payments to the institution;

(b) Suspend the institution from participation in the Police Officer's and Firefighter's Survivor's Educational Assistance Program for an indefinite period of time;

(c) Demand payment of any Police Officer's and Firefighter's Survivor's Educational Assistance Program funds to a student or repayment of funds to the state of Alabama to remedy a violation of applicable laws, regulations, agreements, or operating procedures; or,

(d) Refer any problems to the Attorney General for appropriate legal action.

(7) A suspended institution may request a hearing by the Alabama Commission on Higher Education. The institution shall be notified in writing of the time and place of such Alabama Commission on Higher Education hearing.

(8) After such hearing, the Alabama Commission on Higher Education shall determine, at an official meeting of the Commission, whether to:

(a) Continue the suspension pending the receipt of any additional information the Commission may require;

(b) Continue the Executive Director's suspension subject to limitation or exceptions;

(c) Revoke or lift the suspension and restore the institution to full participation as authorized under the Regulations;

(d) Terminate the institution's eligibility for an indefinite period of time;

(e) Demand payment of any Police Officer's and Firefighter's Survivor's Educational Assistance Program funds to a student or repayment of funds to the state of Alabama to remedy a violation of applicable laws, regulations, agreements, or operating procedures; or,

(f) Take any other appropriate action the Commission deems necessary, including referral to the Attorney General for appropriate legal action.

Author: Dr. William H. Wall

Statutory Authority: Alabama Act 87-609.

History: April 6, 1988.

300-4-7-.09. Maintenance of Records.

(1) Each eligible institution shall establish and maintain on a current basis adequate records which reflect all transactions with respect to program and fiscal activity as they relate to the administration of the Police Officer's and Firefighter's Survivor's Educational Assistance Program.

(2) The academic records for any award period shall be retained for a period of five (5) following the date of certification on an institutional invoice, unless a longer retention period is necessitated because of program review or audit resolution problems. In the event an eligible institution closes or otherwise ceases operation and fails to matriculate students, institutional Police Officer's and Firefighter's Survivor's Educational Assistance Program records of the eligible institution shall be forwarded to the Alabama Commission on Higher Education.

(3) Forms must be used to gather data in a uniform manner from each applicant; such forms shall contain information relative to all eligibility criteria for a Police Officer's and Firefighter's Survivor's Educational Assistance Program award.

(4) The Executive Director of the Alabama Commission on Higher Education, or any of the Director's duly authorized representatives, will have access, for the purpose of review and examination, to Police Officer's and Firefighter's Survivor's Educational Assistance Program records and supporting documents maintained by the eligible institution.

(5) The records involved in any claim or expenditure which has been questioned by a program review or by a state audit must be retained until resolution of any such review of audit questions.

Author: Dr. William H. Wall

Statutory Authority: Alabama Act 87-609.

History: April 6, 1988.