



February 2024,

An Update on ECCSS Financial Aid Applications:

The Diocese of Erie has changed its financial aid application in hopes of simplifying the process and encouraging more families to apply. The main changes involve moving to an online platform and reducing the number of questions. The application is also now based on federal rather than state tax returns.

The Diocese has launched the application website, which you can find at www.doetap.org.

As with previous applications, one form will be used for both the Bishop's Tuition Assistance Program and the STAR Foundation. Please review the information carefully!

If you have questions about filling out the form, please contact Sam Signorino, STAR Foundation Manager, at (814) 824-1188.

Elk County Catholic School System is reviewing this information. We hope to reach out with additional resources as soon as possible. For now, please see the attached document for answers to a few anticipated FAQs.

Thank you for your patience. We hope that these changes will streamline the process for you and your family.

Please note that deadline for submission of your application is April 15, 2024



Tuition Assistance Website: www.doetap.org

Tuition Assistance Program Overview

The Catholic school tuition assistance programs are designed to provide tuition aid for elementary and secondary school students enrolled in a Catholic school in the Diocese of Erie. Your children may be eligible for two separate scholarship programs offered by the Diocese of Erie: **The Bishop's Tuition Assistance Program (BTAP)** and the **STAR Foundation**. You only need to apply once to be eligible for both scholarship programs.

Bishop's Tuition Assistance Program

The Bishop's Tuition Assistance Program is a needs-based diocesan scholarship program that aids students attending a Catholic high school or elementary school in the Diocese of Erie. Scholarship awards from the Bishop's Tuition Assistance Program may be used at any Catholic school in the Diocese of Erie. There are no income limitations that apply to this program.

STAR Foundation

The STAR Foundation is a scholarship program that is funded through business contributions. Companies may elect to have part of their state business tax go to this scholarship fund. When companies contribute to the STAR Foundation, they may limit the use of the money to a specific school, or they can make the donation eligible for all Catholic schools. Money that is designated to a specific school must be utilized at that school. The income eligibility limits for families are set by the state.

STAR FOUNDATION INCOME GUIDELINES	Number of Dependents	Maximum Income (PA)	Number of Dependents	Maximum Income (PA)
	1	\$127,532	4	\$184,796
	2	\$146,620	5	\$203,844
	3	\$165,708	6	\$222,972

The STAR Foundation then distributes the funds directly to financially eligible families as tuition scholarships. Because of the limited availability of funding, a family that meets the income guidelines may not receive an award. For the 2023-24 school year, qualifying students received awards totaling just shy of \$1 million dollars.

Application Process

New this year is an online application that has streamlined the application process. **All families are encouraged to apply.**

A notable change is the requirement to submit a copy of the federal income tax return and schedules rather than the PA income tax return and schedules. Also, the application fee has increased to \$30 to accommodate the credit card processing fees.

As in past years, an applicant's need is determined by a formula that takes into consideration many factors, such as family income and expense items. All applications are processed by an independent company which allows the diocese to be unbiased in the decision process.

Families who receive a STAR Foundation award may also receive a Bishop's Tuition Assistance award. Receiving an award last year does not guarantee that the same family will receive an award this year.



Frequently Asked Questions

Who is eligible to receive assistance?

Any parent or guardian with a child in K to 12th grade who is registered at a Catholic school within the Diocese of Erie is eligible to apply for aid. **All families are encouraged to submit an application.**

How are applications evaluated?

Awards will be based on a formula that includes the ranking of financial need of the applicant pool. The money is distributed to designated schools within the Diocese of Erie. An independent third party will process the applications, verify the accuracy, and enter the applicant information into a database. The applications are ranked based on a uniform ranking criterion relative to the total applicant pool for the year.

When is the application deadline?

The deadline for all applications is April 15. Late application cannot be accepted.

If I am denied aid this year, can I appeal the decision?

Although all decisions for the diocesan programs are final, the family may apply for tuition assistance at their respective school.

If I do not receive aid this year, will I be eligible next year?

Applications are reviewed each year and evaluated based on the financial needs of the applicant pool for that year and the amount of available funds. It is necessary to apply each year.

I have more than one child registered in Catholic schools. How many can receive an award?

Families with more than one child enrolled in Catholic schools can apply for assistance for each child. All children to be considered for an award may be included on **one** application.

When will I find out if my child qualifies for an award?

All families who apply will be notified on their school's tuition bill.

Do I have to apply every year?

Families must apply each year because awards are based on a formula that ranks the financial needs of the applicant pool for a given year.

Will my personal financial information be kept confidential?

All applications and information received for aid consideration will be kept confidential and used only for evaluation purposes.