



California Kids Investment and
Development Savings Program

PROGRAM INFORMATION GUIDE

ESTABLISHED AND MAINTAINED BY THE SCHOLARSHARE INVESTMENT BOARD,
AN INSTRUMENTALITY OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA

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Introduction

California Kids Investment and Development Savings Program (“CalKIDS” or “Program”) aims to jumpstart college savings for children statewide by awarding scholarships to youth across the state.

CalKIDS was designed to expand access to higher education together with programs like [ScholarShare 529](#), California’s official tax-advantaged college savings plan. CalKIDS was initially established in 2019 to automatically provide newborns in California with college savings accounts, including seed deposits and other potential financial rewards. The Program also includes 3.4 million low-income public-school students enrolled in grades one through 12 during the 2021-2022 academic year and each first-grade class starting in fall 2022 who are identified as low-income by the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF).

Research demonstrates that children with a college savings account are [three times more likely to enroll in college](#) and nearly four times more likely to graduate than children with no savings. The investments provided in a CalKIDS account can be a steppingstone to building a new savings behavior for families and serve as a tangible demonstration of the state’s commitment to supporting children in reaching the goal of higher education.

Explore the [research](#) that substantiates the effectiveness of child savings accounts.

Overview

CalKIDS is administered by the ScholarShare Investment Board (Board). The Program was enacted in the 2019-2020 State Budget and expanded by the 2021-2022 State Budget. The Program, at launch, consists of two segments:

- 1) At-Birth Awardees
 - a. All children born in California on or after July 1, 2022; and
- 2) School-Age Awardees
 - a. All eligible low-income 1st through 12th grade students enrolled in a California public school and identified by the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF), on record October 6, 2021.
 - b. Starting fall 2022 and each year thereafter, each eligible low-income 1st grade student as identified by LCFF and recorded on the California Department of Education’s Census Day (first Wednesday in October).

Eligibility and award amounts vary between the two segments. Please see the applicable section for more information.

Automatic Program Enrollment

Enrollment in the Program is automatic. Eligible awardees are identified by data from the California Department of Public Health or the California Department of Education. Families will be notified of the award. Families do not have to apply to the Program and there is no financial contribution required. Families may opt out of the Program by completing the opt-out form located on [CalKIDS.org](#). More information about how to opt out is below.

Identifying Information Gathered

The Program gathers information on eligible youth from either the California Department of Public Health or the California Department of Education. In general, this information includes but is not limited to the youth's name, address, and date of birth. All Program data is held subject to confidentiality restrictions. The Program does not collect or require a taxpayer identification number to participate in the Program.

Registering and Accessing CalKIDS Accounts

Families can register and access a CalKIDS account by logging into the Program portal available at CalKIDS.org.

CalKIDS At Birth

Eligibility

All children born in California on or after July 1, 2022 are eligible to participate in the Program. The Program receives birth data for all eligible babies from the California Department of Public Health. Notification of the award will be mailed to parents or legal guardians within 90 days of the Board receiving birth data.

Notifications

The California Department of Public Health makes data on all newborns available to the Program within 90 days of the birth registration. Notification letters will be sent to addresses within 90 days of the data being retrieved to the Program by the California Department of Public Health. Please read and keep the letter for future reference. The letter contains a unique code, a CalKIDS ID, which may be used as one of the requirements for registration. Call center representatives do not have access to CalKIDS IDs and will not be able to share the CalKIDS ID over the phone with anyone. If you do not have the unique number written on the notification letter, you may register on the online portal using the Local Registration Number located on your child's birth certificate.

Award Structure

The State of California will award eligible newborn CalKIDS participants the following financial incentives, as applicable*:

- \$25 initial deposit in a CalKIDS account for every eligible newborn.
- \$25 deposit in your CalKIDS account if you register on the Program online portal.
- \$50 deposit in your CalKIDS account if you link your existing or new ScholarShare 529 college savings account—where you, your family, and friends can contribute to your child's savings—to your CalKIDS account.

* Financial incentives are established by the ScholarShare Investment Board and are subject to change. Financial incentives will be placed in the CalKIDS account within 60 days of the qualifying action taken.

Award Investment Structure

Program seed amounts and incentives for CalKIDS At-Birth Awardees are invested in the ScholarShare 529 Plan Passive Enrollment Year Portfolios that corresponds to the year the participants are expected to enter an eligible education program after high school (typically at age 18). These portfolios are designed to become more conservative as the children near their anticipated college enrollment date, offering participants an opportunity to grow savings while the child is younger and better safeguard savings against market fluctuations when the child nears college age.

Registering and Accessing Your Account

Families may register and access a CalKIDS account on the Program online portal by visiting CalKIDS.org. Once on the portal, you can see the current value of your CalKIDS account including any incentives and earnings. Participants enrolled at birth are eligible to receive an additional \$25 award in their CalKIDS account for registering on the Portal.

Opening, Linking, and Viewing Your ScholarShare 529 Account

Once you have registered and accessed the CalKIDS Portal you can choose to open a new ScholarShare 529 account and link it, or an existing ScholarShare 529 account, to your CalKIDS account so you can see all your college savings accounts in one place. Participants enrolled at birth are eligible to receive an additional \$50 award in their CalKIDS account for opening and linking a new, or existing, ScholarShare 529 account to their CalKIDS account.

Adoption

All children born in California on or after July 1, 2022 who are subsequently adopted are eligible for a CalKIDS account. If the child has a California birth certificate, their account can be registered online at CalKIDS.org using the child's birth Local Registration Number, birth date, and county of birth.

CalKIDS School-Age

Eligibility

School-age eligibility includes all low-income and English Learner students enrolled in a California public school on Census Day (the first Wednesday of October) who meet at least one of the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) eligibility criteria based on data submitted and certified by your school district to the California Department of Education (CDE) in the fall. The CDE provides the list of students who are enrolled on Census Day and who meet one of the LCFF eligibility criteria, along with their data to CalKIDS. CalKIDS then automatically enrolls these students in the Program.

In general, the LCFF includes students who are enrolled on Census Day, and are low-income or English learners based on data submitted by your school district to the CDE. If your student was enrolled on Census Day, then in order to be eligible for a CalKIDS account, one of the following pieces of information must have been submitted and certified to CDE:

- The student was eligible to receive meals from the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), because:
 - Your family submitted to your school, by October 31, an NSLP application, or an Alternative Household Income Form, and the application or form was approved by your school district, OR

- Your student was directly certified to receive free or reduced-price meals based on their participation in CalFresh, CalWORKs, FDPIR (Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations), or Medi-Cal
- The student was identified, as of Census Day, as one the following:
 - Migrant, based on information the Migrant Region provided to your school district, [Learn about migrant students](#). OR
 - Homeless, based on information you provided to your school or which the school learned from the district or county homeless liaison, OR
 - Foster, based on information the CDE received from the California Department of Social Services.
- The student was identified as an English Learner based on the statewide assessment that your student took. The assessment is called the English Language Proficiency Assessments for California (ELPAC). Based on a family's responses to the Home Language Survey, students must take the Initial ELPAC when they first enroll in a California public school. If the assessment identifies the student as an English Learner, then the student must take the ELPAC annually until the school reclassifies the student as Redesignated Fluent English Proficient (RFEF).

Please also refer to the following information below from the California Department of Education for additional guidance:

- [National School Lunch Program Meal Application and Alternative Income Form Requirements for 2022-23](#).
- [2021–22 Guidance for Using the National School Lunch Program Application Alternative Household Income Form to Collect Data Used for Funding Allocations and P- EBT Eligibility](#)
- [Unduplicated Pupils and California Longitudinal Pupil Achievement Data System](#)

Notifications

Notification letters will be sent to addresses based on the data the Board receives from the CDE. Please read and keep the letter for future reference. The letter contains a CalKIDS ID which may be used as one of the requirements for registration. Call center representatives will not share a CalKIDS ID over the phone with anyone. If you do not have the notification letter, you may register on the online portal using a Statewide Student Identification Number (SSID). Please contact your school or school district to obtain your SSID.

Award Structure

At Program launch, all eligible low-income public-school students enrolled during the 2021-2022 academic year in grades 1 through 12 as recorded on the CDE's Census Day (October 6, 2021), as applicable:

- \$500 automatic deposit in a CalKIDS account; and
- \$500 additional deposit in a CalKIDS account for eligible students identified as a foster youth; and
- \$500 additional deposit in a CalKIDS account for eligible students identified as homeless.

Starting fall 2022 and each year thereafter, each low-income eligible student enrolled in 1st grade, as recorded on the CDE's Census Day (first Wednesday in October), shall receive:

- \$500 automatic deposit in a CalKIDS account; and
- \$500 additional deposit in a CalKIDS account for eligible students identified as a foster youth; and
- \$500 additional deposit in a CalKIDS account for eligible students identified as homeless.

Award Investment Structure

Eligible Students Enrolled in Grades 1 through 12 in Academic Year 2021-2022

- Grades 1 through 5:
 - At launch, Program incentives for CalKIDS school-age awardees who were enrolled in 1st through 5th during the 2021-2022 academic year, are invested in the Passive Enrollment Year Portfolios within the ScholarShare 529 Plan that corresponds to the year the participants are expected to enter an eligible education program after high school (typically at age 18). These portfolios are designed to become more conservative as the children near their anticipated college enrollment date, offering participants an opportunity to grow savings while the child is younger and better safeguard savings against market fluctuations when the child nears college age.
- Grades 6 through 12
 - At launch, Program incentives for awardees who were enrolled in 6th through 12th grade during the 2021-2022 academic year, are held in the CalKIDS Scholarship account which is invested in a TIAA-CREF Funding Agreement with a guaranteed rate of return. Funds remain in the Scholarship Account until the participant requests funds to pay for qualified expenses, as defined by the Program, at an eligible school. If the participant turns the age of 26 and has money remaining in their CalKIDS account, rights to the monies will be forfeited by the participant and retained by the Program and may be allocated to another eligible participant.

Eligible Students Entering 1st Grade in the Fall of 2022 and Each Year Thereafter

Beginning in the fall of 2022, all seed deposits and incentives for eligible 1st grade students will be invested in the Passive Enrollment Year Portfolios within the ScholarShare 529 Plan that corresponds to the year the participants are expected to enter an eligible education program after high school (typically at age 18). These portfolios are designed to become more conservative as the children near their anticipated college enrollment date, offering participants an opportunity to grow savings while the child is younger and better safeguard savings against market fluctuations when the child nears college age.

Registering and Accessing Your Account

Families may register and access a CalKIDS account on the Program online portal by visiting CalKIDS.org. Once on the portal, you can see the current value of a CalKIDS account including any incentives and earnings. Eligible participants will be enrolled into the Program and funds will be invested after the Board receives data from either the California Department of Public Health or the California Department of Education.

- Newborn awards will be processed within 90 days from the time the Board receives birth data from the California Department of Public Health. Pursuant to state law, the California Department of Public Health is required to provide birth data to the Board within 90 days of a birth's registration.
- School-age awards are determined each fall on Census Day (first Wednesday in October) and will be awarded in the following spring or early summer.

Opening, Linking, and Viewing Your ScholarShare 529 Account

Once you have registered and accessed the CalKIDS Portal, you can choose to link an existing ScholarShare 529 account or open a new ScholarShare 529 account and link it to your CalKIDS account so you can see all your college savings accounts in one place.

Requesting a Distribution

Using CalKIDS Funds

When a student enrolls in an eligible education institution (see Eligible Institutions) and wants to use some or all of their Program balance, the student must complete a distribution request as outlined on the online Portal. The Program will send the payment directly to the Eligible Institution for the benefit of the student.

To request a distribution, the student must:

- Be at least 17 years of age
- Be enrolled in an Eligible Institution
- Request the distribution on the online portal and provide*:
 - Name and address of education institution
 - Self-certification that they are enrolled in an Eligible Institution
 - Self-certification that they were a resident of California for the 12 months preceding the request
 - Student's ID number issued by the Eligible Institution they are attending, and
 - Dollar amount of the distribution

*A taxpayer ID is NOT required to request a distribution.

Treatment of CalKIDS Checks at Distribution

A distribution check from the CalKIDS Program is a scholarship from the State of California for a student attending an Eligible Institution. Distribution checks do not contain Section 529 monies.

California state law governing the CalKIDS Program, including information on qualified expenses, can be found in Education Codes 69996 - 69996.9. Examples of allowable expenses include tuition, fees, books, certain on or off-campus room and board costs, and computer and other required equipment for attendance.

As stated above, CalKIDS scholarships can be used for a wide range of higher education expenses. If a student does not have a balance at the Eligible Institution to apply the funds toward, the funds should be processed according to the institution's guidelines and procedures on how to process scholarship funds in these situations where some higher education expenses may be incurred by the student outside of the institution.

Eligible Institutions

Eligible institutions are defined for the Program as "Eligible Educational Institutions" as that term is defined by [Section 529\(e\)\(5\) of the Internal Revenue Code](#) and generally include postsecondary schools that are eligible to participate in federal financial aid programs. This includes thousands of colleges, universities, and technical/vocational schools across the nation and even some abroad. If you cannot confirm whether your institution is qualified and you believe it may be qualified, please send an email to

support@calkids.org with proof of enrollment and information of the school's status indicating it is eligible to participate in federal financial aid programs. The Program will consider your inquiry and aim to provide a response no later than 45 days from your email.

Restricted Use

The money held in the Program for each beneficiary may not be used for any purpose other than to pay for qualified expenses, as defined by the Program, related to higher education. Monies held in the CalKIDS accounts will only be paid directly to the Eligible Institution selected, as described above. All amounts in the Program remain the property of the Program until distributed to an Eligible Institution for the benefit of a student.

Additional Information

CalKIDS Accounts

Families and children will not have the ability to affect transactions on their CalKIDS account. All changes to the account and/or distributions will only be completed at the direction of the ScholarShare Investment Board as administrators of the Program.

Families may not make direct contributions to a CalKIDS account. However, families are encouraged to consider opening a separate ScholarShare 529 college savings account and linking it to their CalKIDS account through the online Portal.

Contact Information

Families are encouraged to register through the Program's online portal to view their child's CalKIDS account. Families may call (888) 445-2377 if they have additional questions.

Account Funding

CalKIDS is primarily supported by state general fund appropriations. Additionally, California law allows the ScholarShare Investment Board to accept private donations to support the program.

Section 529 Programs

The ScholarShare 529 plan operates as a Section 529 education savings program. As such, savings in the Plan qualify for federal and state tax advantages, including tax-deferred earnings and federal and state tax-free distributions if used by the beneficiary (student) for qualified education expenses at an eligible education institution, as determined under Section 529 of the Internal Revenue Code. To find out more about 529 college savings plan accounts, visit ScholarShare529.com.

Automatic Enrollment

Subject to available funding, all children born on or after July 1, 2022 in California and eligible, low-income school-age children as described in the CalKIDS Eligibility section are enrolled automatically into the Program.

Registering on the Program Portal

Families are strongly encouraged to register their CalKIDS Account by logging into the Program Portal available at CalKIDS.org.

Identifying Information Required to View CalKIDS Accounts

A CalKIDS participant or their parent or legal guardian is able to view a CalKIDS Account by clicking the Register button at CalKIDS.org and registering with the following information:

1. County where the child was born or attends school
2. Child's birth date
3. For enrolled newborns, either the child's Local Registration Number as found on their birth certificate OR the unique code provided on the initial notification letter sent to families. For enrolled school-age students, their statewide student identification number (SSID), which can be found by contacting your school or local education agency (school district, for example), OR the unique code provided on the initial notification letter sent to families.

After you have registered your account, you may continue to log back in by clicking on Log In on CalKIDS.org.

Opting Out of the Program

Beneficiaries or parents who do not wish for their child to participate in the Program may opt out by completing and returning an Opt-Out Form located at CalKIDS.org. Once the Program has had time to act upon the request, the beneficiary's account will be closed. Closed accounts may not be reopened.

By choosing to opt-out, a participant forfeits their right to reenter the program. Nonetheless, choosing to opt-out does not affect a participant's ability to establish and contribute to an individual ScholarShare 529 college savings account.

Expiration of CalKIDS Accounts

Pursuant to state law, if a beneficiary does not use any portion, or all, of the money intended for the beneficiary in a CalKIDS Account for a qualified higher education expense for any reason, including the death or disability of the beneficiary, before the beneficiary turns 26 years of age, all contributions made for the beneficiary into the CalKIDS Account and any earnings from those moneys shall be forfeited and redeposited into the fund and may be reallocated to another eligible student.

Change of Address

Families are encouraged to keep their contact information current with the Program in order to receive periodic updates. The family may update their address through the online Portal at CalKIDS.org.

Returned or Forwarded Mail

If CalKIDS mail is returned, the child's account will be flagged, and a note will be placed in the account. In the event the United States Postal Service returns mail to the Program with a forwarding address, the Program shall use such notice to update the address in the Program's records.

Residency

A student must live in the state of California for at least one year immediately preceding a distribution to an Eligible Institution.

CalKIDS Account Balances

Families are encouraged to check their child's account balance at any time by going to CalKIDS.org. The Program will not send statements.

Coordination with Other Financial Aid

To the extent permissible under federal law, the CalKIDS award is owned by the State of California and as such should not count against your calculation of financial aid while the account is under the State of California's control. Once the funds are paid out to the school of your choice, the financial aid office will coordinate the funds with your federal, state, and institutional financial aid. Please consult your financial aid office.

Establishing A Personal College Savings Account

Families are encouraged to open a separate, individual 529 college savings account for their child. CalKIDS participants may open a ScholarShare 529 college savings account with an initial deposit of as little as \$1, and then make contributions as they choose via check or automatic payment from a checking or savings account. This can be done from the CalKIDS portal in the "My Accounts" tab by clicking the Open/Link Button or using the ScholarShare 529 [Open Account Form](#).

Once you open an individual ScholarShare 529 account, you will be in complete control of it and enjoy all the benefits allowed in accordance with Section 529 of the Internal Revenue Code. Remember, planning, contributing, and discussing higher education with your child is one of the best ways to help ensure that when the time comes, they will be prepared for college or career training.

Families of newborn beneficiaries who open and link a ScholarShare 529 account to their CalKIDS Account will receive an additional \$50 in their CalKIDS Account.

Confidentiality

All information shall only be used by the ScholarShare Investment Board, the State Treasurer's Office, the Office of State Publishing, the Foundation for California Community Colleges, and VistaShare for program administration. All family and Program information will be held strictly confidential. Under no circumstances will the information be sold or used for any other purpose.

Accounts Not Guaranteed

CalKIDS accounts are not guaranteed by the ScholarShare Investment Board, the State of California, or TIAA-CREF. Due to market fluctuations, CalKIDS account balances may, at any time, including at the time of withdrawal, be worth less than the amount contributed by the ScholarShare Investment Board on behalf of students.

Potential Tax Consequences

CalKIDS seed deposits, enhanced deposits, incentives, and possible earnings are 100% free from state and federal tax when used at Eligible Institutions for certain Qualified Expenses like tuition, books, fees, computers, and equipment required for attendance. However, in some cases, amounts in your CalKIDS account that are distributed to an Eligible Institution on your behalf potentially may be taxable and also potentially may be subject to state and/or local income tax. Examples of potential taxable uses include, but are not limited to, funds received from a school as a refund or funds used to cover room and board expenses. This should not be construed as tax advice. Individual circumstances vary and students are encouraged to consult with their school or tax advisor regarding the tax implications of a CalKIDS account.

Transferability

CalKIDS accounts may not be transferred or sold to other individuals.

Disputes

All disputes must be submitted to the ScholarShare Investment Board in writing to Appeals@CalKIDS.org for consideration. The Board will review disputes and respond as appropriate. For disputes regarding eligibility, please follow the below instructions prior to contacting the Board.

- Newborn parents/guardians: Please confirm with your local birth registrar that your child's birth on or after July 1, 2022, has been registered with the California Department of Public Health.
- Students or school-age parents/guardians: Please confirm with your local educational agency that the student was enrolled on fall census day (October 6, 2021) in grades 1-12, is identified as low-income eligible by the Local Control Funding Formula, and that this information was reported to the California Department of Education.

Appeal to Use CalKIDS Funds After Age of 26.

- A beneficiary may appeal to use the moneys designated for the beneficiary in a CalKIDS Account after the beneficiary turns 26 years of age. Such appeal shall be submitted in writing and emailed to the Board at Appeals@calkids.org with the subject line "CalKIDS Appeal" no later than 90 days after the beneficiary's 26th birthday, and shall include a signed and dated letter, including appropriate documentation, explaining the extenuating circumstances of why the CalKIDS account funds could not be used until after the beneficiary's 26th birthday.
- The Board will mail or email a written decision to the beneficiary, including the reason for the decision, within thirty (30) days unless SIB notifies the Beneficiary of a different timeline.
- In the event a beneficiary is not satisfied with the resulting decision, the beneficiary may request that the dispute be reviewed by the Executive Director of the Board. Such a request shall be in writing and shall be received by the Executive Director within thirty (30) days of the adverse decision.

The Executive Director shall mail or email a written decision, and the reasons therefore, to the beneficiary within thirty (30) days of the request for the review or such period as may be mutually acceptable. The decision of the Executive Director of the Board is the final administrative decision.

Program Amendments

The ScholarShare Investment Board reserves the right to discontinue, suspend, merge, consolidate, or amend the Program to the extent permitted by law. Continuation of the Program is contingent upon funding availability and the discretion of the ScholarShare Investment Board and the State of California.

Content

The CalKIDS site and all intellectual property associated with the site are the sole property of the ScholarShare Investment Board. You may not reproduce, decompile, disassemble, modify, republish, distribute, resell, broadcast, reverse-engineer, create derivative works from or otherwise exploit in any manner, in whole or in part, the Content, except as expressly permitted in these Terms of Use.

Links

Links to third-party sites are provided solely as a convenience to you and do not constitute an endorsement of any content by CalKIDS, ScholarShare 529, the ScholarShare Investment Board or the State of California. Different terms and conditions may apply to your use of any third-party site. None of CalKIDS, ScholarShare 529, the ScholarShare Investment Board or the State of California are responsible for any losses, damages, or other liabilities incurred as a result of your use of third-party sites.

Use by Minors

If you are under the age of eighteen years old, you must make your parent or guardian aware that you are using this site. Your use of this site is the responsibility of your parent or guardian and may affect their legal rights and obligations.

Contact Us

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(888) 445-2377

Monday - Friday 8:00 am - 5:00 pm (PST) | Closed for major holidays

Disclosure

The ScholarShare Investment Board Reserves the right to modify this Program Information Guide.