



California Kids Investment and  
Development Savings Program

## **PROGRAM INFORMATION GUIDE**

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

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## Introduction

California Kids Investment and Development Savings Program (“CalKIDS” or “Program”) is a children’s development account program, administered by the ScholarShare Investment Board, an agency of the state of California. CalKIDS provides eligible participants with scholarship accounts, including seed deposits and other potential incentives, to help pay for future qualified higher education expenses.

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 established in 2019 to automatically provide newborns in California with CalKIDS Accounts, including seed deposits and other potential financial rewards. The Program was expanded in 2021 to also include low-income public-school students identified as low-income or an English learner 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 fostering new savings behaviors for families, while also demonstrating the state’s commitment to helping children achieve their higher education and career aspirations.

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 formally launched in 2022 and 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 or English learner 1<sup>st</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> grade students enrolled in a California public school and identified by the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF), on record October 6, 2021.
  - b. Starting academic year 2022-2023, and each year thereafter, each eligible low-income or English learner 1<sup>st</sup> grade student as identified by LCFF and recorded as a public school student on the California Department of Education’s Census Day (first Wednesday in October). First-grade students are not formally enrolled into the Program until the late-spring or early-summer of the applicable academic year. (These students may reach second grade by the time they are formally entered into the Program).

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

Additionally, based on available funding, the Program enrolls foster youth in public schools not previously captured on the applicable time periods described above in accordance with AB 2508 (2024).

Individual CalKIDS Accounts may also be referred to as a CalKIDS Scholarship Account.

## 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 are notified of the award, they do not have to apply to the Program, and no financial contribution is required. Families may opt out of the Program by completing the opt-out form located on [CalKIDS.org](https://www.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.

## Claiming and Accessing CalKIDS Accounts

Families can claim and access a CalKIDS Account by logging into the Program portal available at [CalKIDS.org](https://www.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 is 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 are 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 claiming the account. 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 claim the account on the online portal using the Local Registration Number located on your child's birth certificate.

### Award Structure

Children born in California between July 1, 2022 – June 30, 2023, regardless of income status, received a \$25 initial deposit in a CalKIDS Account.

Children born in California on or after July 1, 2023, regardless of income status, receive a \$100 initial deposit in a CalKIDS Account.

The amount of the initial deposit varies based on a child's birth date. Children born between July 1, 2022 – June 30, 2023 received a different amount than those born on or after July 1, 2023. This

difference reflects a budget increase to the Program for future beneficiaries, which was made possible only after the Program's inaugural year.

The following financial incentives are also available for all newborn participants, as applicable\*:

- \$25 deposit in your CalKIDS Account if you claim the account 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.

### Claiming and Accessing Your Account

Families may claim and access a CalKIDS Account on the Program online portal by visiting [CalKIDS.org](https://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 claiming on the Portal.

The term “registration” has the same meaning as “claiming” for accessing your CalKIDS Account.

### 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 link 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. Please note, families are encouraged to open and link a ScholarShare 529 account, but are not required to do so.

### 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 of 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 (RFEP).

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

- [Alternative Income Forms - Principal Apportionment \(CA Dept of Education\)](#).
- [School Nutrition Programs Eligibility - School Nutrition \(CA Dept of Education\)](#).
- [Unduplicated Pupils and California Longitudinal Pupil Achievement Data System](#)

Additionally, based on available funding, the Program enrolls foster youth in public schools not previously captured on the applicable time periods described above in accordance with AB 2508 (2024).

## Notifications

Notification letters are 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 claim the account 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, received the amounts described below.

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

Additionally, in academic year 2022-2023, and each year thereafter, each eligible low-income public school student enrolled in 1<sup>st</sup> grade, as recorded on the CDE's Census Day (first Wednesday in October), shall receive the same award amounts listed above.

The Board reserves the right to offer additional incentives to be deposited into CalKIDS Accounts based on available funding.

## 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 1<sup>st</sup> through 5<sup>th</sup> 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 or higher education program enrollment date—offering participants an opportunity to grow savings while the child is younger and better safeguard savings against market fluctuations as the child nears college age.
- Grades 6 through 12
  - At launch, Program incentives for awardees who were enrolled in 6<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> grade during the 2021-2022 academic year, are held in an account which is invested in a TIAA-CREF Funding Agreement with a guaranteed rate of return. Funds remain in the 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, which may be allocated to another eligible participant.

### Eligible Students Entering 1<sup>st</sup> Grade in the Fall of 2022 and Each Year Thereafter

Beginning in the fall of 2022, all seed deposits and incentives for eligible 1<sup>st</sup> grade students 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 as the child nears college age.

### Claiming and Accessing Your Account

Families may claim and access a CalKIDS Account on the Program's online portal by visiting [CalKIDS.org](https://CalKIDS.org). Once on the portal, you can see the current value of a CalKIDS Account including any incentives and earnings. Eligible participants are enrolled into the Program and funds are invested after the Board receives data from either the California Department of Public Health or the California Department of Education.

- Newborn awards are 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 are awarded in the following spring or early summer.

### Opening, Linking, and Viewing Your ScholarShare 529 Account

Once you have claimed 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 and higher education savings accounts in one place. CalKIDS participants cannot save directly into their CalKIDS Account and instead are encouraged to save on their own through ScholarShare 529, California's official college savings plan.

## 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 IRS 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 the student has no account balance with the institution, the institution may distribute funds received for the student directly to the student for the purpose of paying for qualified higher education expenses.

More information on treatment of CalKIDS checks at distribution can be found [here](#).

### 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 includes 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](mailto: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 link 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](https://www.ScholarShare529.com).

### Automatic Enrollment

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

### Claiming on the Program Portal

Families are strongly encouraged to claim their CalKIDS Account by using the Program Portal available at [CalKIDS.org](https://www.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](https://www.CalKIDS.org) and registering with the following information:

1. County where the newborn's birth was registered or where the student attended school, as of the applicable census day
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](https://www.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](http://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 some or all of the money in their CalKIDS Account for qualified higher education expenses before turning age 26 – for any reason, including the death or disability of the beneficiary – the funds (both program provided contributions and earnings) will be forfeited. These funds will then be returned to the CalKIDS program and may be reallocated to another eligible student.

Funds in a personal ScholarShare 529 Account, even if linked to a CalKIDS Account, do not expire.

### 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](http://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 may use such notice to update the address in the Program's records.

### Residency

Pursuant to [California state law](#), 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](http://CalKIDS.org). The Program will not send statements.

### Coordination with Other Financial Aid

The CalKIDS award is considered a scholarship from the State of California. The funds should be processed according to your institution's guidelines and procedures around scholarship funds. Please consult your financial aid office.

### Establishing A Personal College Savings Account

Families are encouraged to open a separate 529 college savings account for their child but are not required to do so. CalKIDS participants may open a ScholarShare 529 college savings account with an initial deposit of as little as \$1 and then make additional 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.

The ScholarShare 529 Plan is also overseen by the ScholarShare Investment Board.

### Confidentiality

All information obtained and/or provided 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 NonProfitly, Inc. 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. The foregoing information 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

**Please note: Due to various statutory and budgetary limitations, SIB is not in a position to add new children into the program unless they are part of the regular data transfers from either the California Department of Public Health or the California Department of Education.** This includes, but is not limited to, disputes regarding eligibility. Although we may not have an immediate resolution or ability to rectify your dispute, SIB may take the information you submit to further investigate the situation.

### **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, so long as they have claimed their CalKIDS Account prior to their 26<sup>th</sup> birthday. Such appeal shall be submitted through the “CalKIDS Age-Based Appeal Form” 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, 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**

915 Capitol Mall, Suite 141  
Sacramento, CA 95814  
(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.