



Virginia Early Childhood Coursework, Certificate, and Degree Navigation Guide

Financial Assistance for Early Educators

Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)		
What is it?	FAFSA is the federal government application that connects students to grants, scholarships, work-study, and, if needed student loans. Filling out the FAFSA will give you access to funding opportunities such as the Pell Grant, which do not need to be repaid. For the 2019 school year, the maximum Pell Grant award is \$5,775 (based upon enrollment status and income criteria).	
Plan ahead!	October 1	Students who are interested in attending college or university should plan ahead and file FAFSA in the year prior to attendance (for example, a student who wants to attend college in the Fall of 2020 should complete the FAFSA as soon as possible after October 1, 2019). Begin an application here: https://studentaid.ed.gov/sa/fafsa
Who is eligible?	https://studentaid.ed.gov/sa/eligibility/basic-criteria	
Who can help?	https://studentaid.ed.gov/sa/fafsa/filling-out/help	



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Virginia Child Care Scholarship Program		
What is it?	This scholarship program is for current/potential child care program staff to help improve the quality of child care. Undergraduate college courses required for a certificate or degree in early childhood education may be approved for payment as funding allows. This program is made possible through the federal Child Care and Development Fund and will pay for either 8 undergraduate college courses or a maximum lifetime award amount (currently set at \$3,570 for those just beginning the program), whichever occurs first. Scholarships pay for tuition and technology fees for up to two courses per semester when the eligibility criteria are met.	
Plan ahead!	March 15 June 15 October 15	Applications open three times each year, prior to the upcoming semester. The application windows typically open March 15 (for Summer), June 15 (for Fall) and October 15 (for Spring). Applications are available here: https://vaccscholarship.com/
Who is eligible?	While priority is given to current early childhood educators, funding may be available for those who intend to go into the field of early childhood but are not currently employed. See this page for more details about eligibility: https://vaccscholarship.com/	
Who can help?	For questions about VDSS Scholarship, please contact Virginia Department of Education at vaccscholarship@doe.virginia.gov	



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Project Pathfinders			
What is it?	Recognizing that one of the most important factors in school readiness is the adults who promote young children’s growth and development, the Commonwealth established Project Pathfinders, a Virginia state-funded scholarship program administered by the Virginia Early Childhood Foundation. Pathfinders values individuals’ goal and program completion, and therefore picks up where other funding drops off. Pathfinders covers tuition, fees, and textbooks for up to two courses per semester for early educators who work with children from birth through PreK in Virginia.		
Plan ahead!	<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 25%; padding: 5px;"> March 15 June 15 October 15 </td> <td style="padding: 5px;"> Applications open three times each year, prior to the upcoming semester. The application windows typically open March 15 (for Summer), June 15 (for Fall) and October 15 (for Spring). Applications are available here: http://www.vecf.org/project-pathfinders/ </td> </tr> </table>	March 15 June 15 October 15	Applications open three times each year, prior to the upcoming semester. The application windows typically open March 15 (for Summer), June 15 (for Fall) and October 15 (for Spring). Applications are available here: http://www.vecf.org/project-pathfinders/
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Who is eligible?	The program is designed for incumbent early childhood educators (including administrators, teachers, and assistant teachers/instructional aides) working with children ages birth to 5, especially those working with children who are at-risk. Eligible early educators may be working in family child care, private and faith centers, Head Start, VPI, and other publicly funded preschool programs. Project Pathfinders scholarships will support these early educators working toward certificates or degrees at Virginia Community Colleges and specific bachelor’s degree programs in early childhood education and child development by covering tuition, fees, and textbooks. Pathfinders is “last dollar,” with funds being applied after federal financial aid or other scholarships (such as the DSS scholarships for early childhood) and is focused on supporting completion of a credential goal set by each student. Project Pathfinders also supports high school students dually-enrolled in programs leading to certificate or degrees in early childhood development, individuals seeking teaching licensure recertification through college courses, and individuals enrolled in early childhood registered apprenticeships.		
Who can help?	For more information about Project Pathfinders, please visit: https://www.vecf.org/project-pathfinders/ For questions about Project Pathfinders, please contact Mila Spaulding, Pathfinders Advisor, at pathfinders@vecf.org or (804) 749-8149.		



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Frequently Asked Questions	
I completed my Associate degree in early childhood a long time ago. Am I still eligible for this program?	Yes; however, in many cases, you may need to take additional coursework before you are eligible to transfer into a +2 program. You will want to schedule a time to chat with a faculty advisor at the community college and / or university level to go over your transcript and find out what, if any, additional classes you may have to take to be able to transfer into a +2 program.
I completed my Associate degree in a different state. Am I still eligible for this program?	Potentially; however, as with the scenario above, you may need to take additional coursework before you are eligible to transfer into a +2 program. You will want to schedule a time to chat with a faculty advisor at the community college and / or university level to go over your transcript and find out what, if any, additional classes you may have to take to be able to transfer into a +2 program.
I am enrolled in a different Associate degree program. Will I be eligible for this program?	If you enrolled under a previous year's course catalog and are taking coursework toward a slightly-different associate's degree in early childhood development, you may need to take additional coursework before you are eligible to transfer into a +2 program. You will want to schedule a time to chat with a faculty advisor at the community college and / or university level to go over your transcript and find out what, if any, additional classes you may have to take to be able to transfer into a +2 program.
I completed my Associate degree at a program that's not listed here? Am I still eligible?	Probably; however, you may need to take additional coursework before you are eligible to transfer into a +2 program. You will want to schedule a time to chat with a faculty advisor at the community college and / or university level to go over your transcript and find out what, if any, additional classes you may have to take to be able to transfer into a +2 program.
I would like to go straight into a 4-year school. Am I eligible for this program?	No. The 2+2 program is designed for students who have already obtained an associate degree in early childhood development. There are many other options for students who want to begin at the university level.