FAQ: ACCESS Program (2026 – 2027)

Access to Child Care Excellence, Services, and Support

for Assistant, Associate and full Professors, Assistant, Associate, and full Professors in/of Practice, Assistant and full Clinical Professors of Law, Senior Lecturers, Associate Senior Lecturers, and Senior Preceptors

A: Priority Enrollment

All ACCESS-eligible faculty members (paid by Harvard, benefits-eligible, and in one of the eligible ranks below) are prioritized for enrollment at all Campus Child Care centers. Faculty can apply for a spot through the Campus Child Care, Inc website. During the application process, ACCESS-eligible families are considered Tier 1A for enrollment. These faculty categories take priority for up to half of the spots within the Campus Child Care network, which operates on Harvard's Cambridge and Allston campuses.

B: ACCESS Child Care Scholarships

Part 1: The Scholarship Application and Faculty Family Eligibility

1. How do I know if I am eligible to apply?

In order to be eligible for the ACCESS Program, you and your household must meet each of these five criteria:

1. **YOU** work in a benefits-eligible position:
   - working at least half-time (17.5 hours per week or more)
   - paid by the President and Fellows of Harvard College on a regular Harvard payroll;

   AND
2. **YOU** are in one of the following positions (tenured or on a tenure clock, where applicable):
   - Assistant, Associate, or full Professor
   - Assistant, Associate, and full Professors in/of Practice
   - Assistant and full Clinical Professors of Law
   - Senior Lecturers, Associate Senior Lecturers, or Senior Preceptors;

   AND
3. If you have a spouse/qualified domestic partner, **they are formally occupied** for at least 15 hours per week. Documentation of employment, intern position, or student status must be provided. Partner disability or caring for a disabled person also qualifies. Note that partners of newly-hired or relocated faculty (or those going through a work/life transition) have a 6-month grace period;

   AND
4. **TOTAL GROSS HOUSEHOLD INCOME (HHI): Your** HHI for the period of 7/1/2026– 6/30/2027 falls under the following income caps for family size shown below. Income is adjusted as follows:
   - Single parent household: $10K is added to the income cap
   - Households with more than one child aged under 13 years: $10K is added to the income cap for each additional child aged under 13 years beyond the first, up to three additional children.

One child	< $250,000
Two children	< $260,000
Three children	< $270,000
Four or more children	< $280,000

Single parent households (including those faculty families in dual-career households) also receive a $10K adjustment by the Office of Work/Life. Faculty families who are dual-career couples maintaining two separate households will be regarded as a single-parent household for the purposes of the ACCESS program. Faculty whose youngest child is aged between 6 and 12 years will also be included in the ACCESS program, with separate award tiers (see FAQ#2 below); AND

5. **YOUR CHILD(REN)**: You have at least one child under the age of 13 who is/are:
   - Born on or after July 1, 2013; and
   - Your legal dependent(s) verified by your tax return and you must be responsible for their child care costs (unborn, newborn, or newly-adopted/fostered children are exempted from the tax dependency verification requirement); and
   - Your responsibility as regards child care costs; and
   - In an eligible form of child care for reimbursement purposes (see #9 below)

   NOTE: Those families with children who have documented special healthcare needs can still apply for their teenage children, up to age 18

2. How is my Total Gross Household Income calculated*? What is the award matrix?

Families are grouped into ONE of these two programs, according to the age of your youngest child:

1. **0-5** (aged 0-5 years: youngest child born on or after 7/1/2021), OR
2. **6-12** (aged 6-12 years: youngest child born on or after 7/1/2013).

Based on the age of your youngest child under 13, your award is calculated using the following matrix:

Total Gross Household Income for single-child families	**Award 0-5 (before required tax withholding)**	**Award 6-12 (before required tax withholding)**
<$125,000	$24,000	$12,000
$125,000 - $149,999	$18,000	$10,000
$150,000 - $174,999	$12,000	$ 8,000
$175,000 - $199,999	$ 8,000	$ 6,000
$200,000 - $249,999	$ 4,000	$ 4,000

The Total Family Gross HHI is found by subtracting $10,000 from your family's total gross projected income (income from gross salary and all other household sources projected for the 7/1/26-6/30/27 cycle):

- if you are a single-parent family, and/or
- for each additional child up to and including the fourth child aged under 13 years

**Note that these adjustments are done during application processing – you only need to enter in your information as it is at the time of the application. You do not need to do the adjustment.*

Families with additional children aged under 13 will receive an award supplement of $4,000 per child.

Example: *You have two children aged 4 and aged 7 years and your gross household income is projected to be $180,000. You are included in the 0-5 group and after the $10,000 adjustment for your second child your Total Gross HHI is $170,000. Your base award is $12,000 plus the $4,000 add-on for your second child under 13 which gives your family a final award of $16,000.*

Reimbursement payments from the ACCESS child care scholarship awards are regarded as extra compensation under IRS rules and therefore subject to required supplemental tax withholding at the federally-established rate of around 36%.

3. Can I apply if my baby is not born yet?

Yes! As long as you will use and pay for child care before June 30, 2027, you can apply for the scholarship.

4. Can I apply if my child is not yet formally enrolled in a program?

Yes! The application asks for enrollment information and costs or your best estimate of what your costs will be from July 1, 2026 through June 30, 2027.

5. Can I use the scholarship to pay my mother, father, or other family member?

Yes! You can use scholarship money to pay any relative who cares for your children, as long as this person:

1. Is not the child's parent; and
2. Does not live with you; and
3. Has a valid SSN or Tax ID number; and
4. Provides care while you or your spouse are at work.

6. Can I use the scholarship to pay my babysitter or nanny?

Yes! This is an eligible expense if the babysitter or nanny provides care while you or your spouse are at work. As mentioned above, your babysitter MUST have a Social Security or Tax ID number. The only exception to the "live-in" rules applies to formally-employed nannies, who may reside in your home. Agency placement fees are also eligible for reimbursement under the ACCESS program.

7. Can I use the scholarship to pay for my child's care even if my spouse is not working?

While there may be compelling reasons to place a child into care even though there is an adult at home capable of providing care, such families will generally not be eligible for assistance. Our limited funds are prioritized for those families where child care is a necessity because no one is at home to provide the care. Note that those ACCESS-eligible faculty families who are newly hired and/or relocated to Harvard, or those who are experiencing a disruptive work/life transition such that their spouse is currently actively looking for work, a 6-month grace period is applied.

8. Can I apply if I don't know what kind of child care I'm going to use?

That's fine - you can still apply. Scholarships are "reserved funds" and are based on your adjusted gross household income. You will receive an award email confirming the award amount for which you have been verified. You will be reimbursed for child care expenses, up to your award amount, after you demonstrate that you have paid them. Further, changing the type of care you use later will not affect your award as long as it remains 'qualifying care' (see #9 for the definition).

9. What kinds of child care can I use the scholarship funds for?

You can use the funds from the ACCESS scholarship and be reimbursed up to your award amount for the costs of:

- A licensed child care center
- A licensed family child care provider
- A licensed before -, or after-school program
    - After-school programs must generally be longer than one hour in duration where supervision and care of the school-aged child is implied and the non-present parent(s) can be at work for longer
- A licensed summer/vacation day camp
- An in-home caregiver, such as a nanny or babysitter, with a valid SSN or Tax ID number
- Formal transportation costs provided by the above programs.

10. What if my spouse also works at Harvard?

Scholarship awards are given per family. The ACCESS Program will supersede all other scholarship programs offered by Harvard for which your spouse may be eligible. Your spouse's application will not be considered by other scholarship programs, and your family will automatically be included in the ACCESS program.

11. How do I access the online application?

Please log in to PeopleSoft with your HarvardKey (you can access PeopleSoft via harvie.harvard.edu). During the open application window, select the PeopleSoft link, click on the "My Benefits" tile, select the "Child Care Scholarship" menu from the left-hand side, and click on "Application." Complete the pre-questions, and then select "Begin Application."

12. When is the deadline and what if I miss it?

The first online application is open from **Monday, August 17 through Friday, August 28, 2026**. This means that the application must be submitted online (via PeopleSoft) by 11:59pm on August 28 AND the supporting documentation must be uploaded within the application.

The second and final round will be in January 2027.

Part 2: The Application and Award Process: Timeline

13. What information will I need to complete my application?

The program uses a sliding scale based on total gross household family income to determine awards (see #18 for basic award tiers). The application therefore asks you for information on **your family's typical income**. Your Harvard earnings will be pre-populated and there is space for including your spouse's income and any additional, non-salary/self-employment income.

Before you begin the application, you may want to assemble the following documents for your reference. You will also need to upload copies of these documents inside the application.

- 2025 US Federal tax return (generally Form 1040 or 1040-NR) OR a formal tax extension (you will later need to provide the filed federal tax return)
    - If you file separately from your partner, you will need to also upload their 2025 US federal tax return

- Any additional Schedule C from your 2025 US Federal tax return (this documents non-salary, self-employment income).
- Spouse/partner paystubs – two recent ones, or an offer letter; and/or
    - Student verification; and/or
    - Formal, unpaid position verification via signed letter on letterhead
- For those new hires who are newly-arrived to the US without a 2025 US tax return, only partner documentation will be required for the first year, where applicable.

14. Why do you need my federal tax forms?

Your federal tax return verifies both your children's status as tax dependents and your usual household income. Of course, incomes change year-to-year and there is a section that asks you to explain if your anticipated income will be over $5,000 less than what was reported on your 2025 federal tax form.

15. What is the program timeline?

Please remember that this cycle applies to all child care expenses incurred (care provided and paid for) during the current cycle from July 1, 2026 through June 30, 2027.

Deadline Date	Description
August 17, 2026	Application opens in PeopleSoft > My Benefits
August 28, 2026	Completed applications due (supporting documents and online submission)
August 29 – mid-September, 2026	Verification and processing period (eligibility, income)
September 18, 2026	Award notifications emailed
September 21, 2026	Begin submitting your child care expenses online using the vendor system (instructions will be emailed)
Late September, 2026 – June, 2027	Submit expenses and receive reimbursements from the vendor; Harvard paychecks will have the **required supplemental taxes withheld**
June 16, 2027	**Final deadline** to submit child care expenses (incurred between 7/1/2026 – 6/30/2027) using the vendor system.

If you do not submit an online claim form for your child care expenses earlier in the cycle using the vendor system (for example, you may not have started paying for child care yet) you DO NOT forfeit the funds. However, you MUST submit unclaimed child care expenses using the vendor system by **June 16, 2027**.

16. When will I hear whether or not I have received an award?

Once applications are received and incomes are verified, you will receive notification via email in mid-September, 2026. Please see the timeline in #15.

17. What happens to my award if the actual cost of my childcare ends up being less than what I estimate on the application?

The child care scholarships program is a reimbursement program. You are only reimbursed for what you spend. If you spend less than what you were awarded, the program will reimburse you up to the total qualified child care costs you submitted.

Part 3: Verifying Your Costs and Claiming Your Award Funds

NEW SYSTEM for 2026-2027 – administered by vendor

Additional instructions and information will be updated and included once finalized

24. What happens if I leave the University or my eligibility changes? Will I still be eligible to receive the award?

If, during the scholarship period, there is a change in your situation such that you no longer meet the eligibility criteria, the scholarship will be discontinued. Examples of a change in status include the termination of Harvard employment or the change to a job code/position that is no longer one which is part of the program (see #1 above). Pro-rated payments will be made in both cases.

25. Can I use the funds set aside in my Dependent Care FSA and the award from the child care scholarships together to pay for my child care?

Yes, the two programs complement one another and can be used together. The ACCESS Childcare Scholarship provides you with additional income, and the FSA provides you with a way to protect part of your overall salary from taxes with a self-funded reserve that can be set aside for dependent care expenses. In both cases, you are submitting receipts to demonstrate that you have child care expenses, but in one case you are claiming extra income (and paying taxes on it at around 40%) and in the other you are claiming the tax protection that is available to you. The same receipts can be submitted to each program.

For questions, please contact Natalie Beaumont-Smith at the Office of Work/Life:
(617) 495-5933 | childcare_scholarships@harvard.edu.