



FAQ: ACCESS Program (2025 – 2026)

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, **the following five criteria must be met:**

1. **YOU must** be on a regular Harvard payroll, work at least half-time, and be eligible for full benefits; AND
2. **YOU must** be 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. **YOU have** (or are expecting) a child aged under 13 (born after July 1, 2012); AND
4. If you have a spouse/qualified domestic partner, **they must** be 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
5. **Your household will have** a projected Total Gross Household Income for the period of 7/1/2025–6/30/2026 under the following income caps, adjusted for family size (# of children aged under 13 years):

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).

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 7/1/2020), OR
2. **6-12** (aged 6-12 years: youngest child born on or after 7/1/2012).

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 7/1/25-6/30/26 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 40%. Please see #18 below for a more detailed explanation and examples.

3. What if my youngest child is over six years of age?

The ACCESS program enhancements, which were approved to begin in the 2022-2023 fiscal year, include an additional program to help defray the costs of afterschool, vacation, and summer camp expenses for children aged between 6 and 12 years.

4. 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, 2026, you can apply for the scholarship.

5. 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, 2025 through June 30, 2026.

6. 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. Does not live with you, and
2. Has a valid SSN or Tax ID number, and
3. Provides care while you or your spouse are at work.

7. 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.

8. 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.

9. 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 Total Gross Household Income. You will receive an award email confirming the award tier (ranging from \$4,000 to \$24,000+) for which your family has 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 #10 for the definition).

10. 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 after-school program,
- A licensed summer/vacation day camp,
- An in-home caregiver, such as a nanny or babysitter, with a valid SSN or Tax ID number.

11. 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.

12. 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.”

13. When is the deadline?

The first online application is open from **Wednesday, July 16 through Wednesday, July 30, 2025**. The second online application period is open from **September 2 – September, 12, 2025**. This means that the application must be submitted online (via PeopleSoft) by 11:59pm on July 30 AND the supporting documentation must be uploaded within the application. The final round will be in January, 2026.

Part 2: The Application and Award Process: Timeline

14. 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, 2025 through June 30, 2026.

Deadline Date	Description
July 16, 2025	Application opens in PeopleSoft > My Benefits
July 30, 2025	Completed applications due (supporting documents and online submission) for those already employed before August 1, 2025
September 12, 2025	Completed applications due for those hired on or after August 1, 2025 through early September, 2025.
August 1 – mid-September, 2025	Verification and processing period (eligibility, income)
Mid-September, 2025	Award notification emailed with ‘Instructions to Claim Award’
October 7, 2025	<u>Online claim form due</u> for any child care costs already paid for (or expected to be paid for) during this fiscal year (7/1/25-6/30/26).
October 31, 2025	First quarter payment delivered via paycheck if claim form(s) submitted by the deadline. Payment is less required supplemental tax withholding (see #18 for more details) .
December 2, 2025	<u>Online claim form due</u> for any additional child care costs for child care provided before 6/30/2026.
December 12, 2025	Second quarter payment delivered via paycheck if claim form(s) submitted by the deadline. Maximum payment is one half less required supplemental tax withholding (see #18) .
March 3, 2026	<u>Online claim form due</u> for any additional child care costs for child care provided before 6/30/2026.
March 20, 2026	Third quarter payment delivered via paycheck if claim form(s) submitted by the deadline. Maximum payment is three quarters less required supplemental tax withholding (see #18) .
May 12, 2026	FINAL <u>online claim form due</u> for any remaining unclaimed child care costs for child care provided before 6/30/2026.
June 12, 2026	Final payment delivered via paycheck if claim form(s) submitted by the deadline. Maximum payment is full award less required supplemental tax withholding (see #18) .

If you do not submit an online claim form for your child care expenses by the first or second deadlines (for example, you may have missed the deadline OR you may not have started paying for child care yet) you DO NOT forfeit the funds. You will be able to submit unclaimed expenses by **May 12, 2026**. This is the **FINAL** deadline. Reminder emails are sent in early May.

15. 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, 2025. Please see the timeline in #14.

16. 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. Please see #18 below for a detailed explanation of the reimbursement process with examples and the required tax withholding.

Part 3: Verifying Your Costs and Claiming Your Award Funds

17. How do I claim my child care expenses?

Full instructions for claiming your child care expenses are detailed in the award email. To summarize, child care expenses are documented and submitted in two ways:

1. Online claim form submission

Please log in to PeopleSoft through the HARVie homepage with your HarvardKey (harvie.harvard.edu), click on the “My Benefits” tile, select the “Child Care Scholarship” menu from the left-hand menu, and select “Claim Form.” Enter the required information in the fields to detail your expenses and dates (scroll down to add in new blank rows as needed), upload your receipts/statements/other documents to verify your expenses and dates of care, and hit the “Save & Submit” button.

2. A completed and signed Provider Signature Form (attached to the award email or downloaded from within the online claim form site in PeopleSoft) can be used if a receipt/statement is not available.

In order to have a better idea of the costs of child care for Harvard faculty families, please make sure to enter ALL of your child care expenses online, even if they exceed your award amount. This is a requirement of the program; more complete data enables the Office of the Senior Vice Provost for Faculty and the Office of Work/Life to continually advocate for program enhancements.

18. How is the scholarship money disbursed?

The ACCESS child care scholarship is a reimbursement program – you will only be reimbursed up to your award amount OR your total eligible child care costs if these are less than your award.

Once you have paid for your child care and have submitted an online claim form, funds are delivered to you via your paycheck according to the schedule outlined in #15. Program reimbursement payments are considered additional compensation according to IRS rules and are subject to federally-established required supplemental tax withholding (typically around 40%).

These awards are not grossed-up for tax purposes. Please see the following generalized examples:

Your award is \$10,000 and you submit one online claim expense of \$11,000 by the final deadline. It is approved and a payment of \$10,000 is sent to payroll for processing. Your net amount, provided after required supplemental tax withholding of about 40%, will be approximately \$6,000 in your paycheck.

Your award is \$10,000 and you submit one online claim expense of \$7,500 by the final deadline. It is approved and a payment of \$7,500 is sent to payroll for processing. Your net amount, provided after required supplemental tax withholding of about 40%, will be approximately \$4,500 in your paycheck. No more funds are reimbursed to you – you forfeit the unclaimed funds.

Your award is \$10,000 and you submit one online claim expense of \$5,000 by the first deadline. It is approved and a payment of \$5,000 is sent to payroll for processing. Your net amount, provided after required supplemental tax withholding of about 40% in your paycheck, is approximately \$3,000. You do not submit any more child care expense claims. No more funds are reimbursed to you – you forfeit the unclaimed funds.

19. When will I receive my reimbursement payments?

The program schedule is outlined in #15. If you submit your expenses online by the claim form deadlines each quarter, then you will receive up to four reimbursements on the following dates: October 31, 2025, December 12, 2025, March 20, 2026, and June 12, 2026. If you only submit one claim by the FINAL deadline of May 12, 2026, then you will receive one reimbursement in your June paycheck for the whole award amount, or the total of your costs (whichever is the smaller value). Remember that the reimbursement is subject to required tax withholdings.

20. What if I have not yet spent any money on child care?

If you will not begin to incur child care expenses until a time later in the fiscal year (7/1/25 - 6/30/26), you can submit your first online claim after you begin incurring expenses. You will not forfeit any funds unless you do not submit an online claim form by the FINAL deadline of May 12, 2026.

21. What if I have expenses for my older children as well?

ACCESS program enhancements approved beginning in the 2022-2023 cycle will now include faculty families who have children aged under 13 if they meet the other eligibility criteria. Funds from the award can be reimbursed for child care costs for all children up to the year when they turn 13 years of age (as per IRS guidelines). Just enter your claims and upload the receipts for all your care providers for your different children's care situations online in PeopleSoft. If one or more of your children require more specialized care (for a learning disability, for example), your family may still be eligible for the ACCESS program even if your youngest child is above the age of 13. Please contact the Office of Work/Life at childcare_scholarships@harvard.edu with any further questions.

22. What if I miss a claim deadline?

As long as you submit all of your claims by May 12, 2026, you will not lose any scholarship funds that have been awarded to you; you will simply delay the receipt of your funds. Payments cannot be made beyond the end of the fiscal year. You will forfeit any remaining unclaimed funds. An email reminder will be sent in early May, 2026.

23. Can I submit forms in advance of making payments?

Generally, you must submit claims after making payments. However, if you have an annual or periodic contract with your provider, you are welcome to claim for the whole academic/fiscal year or contract care period in advance to ensure that you do not miss payment deadlines. You will need to have your child care provider complete the Provider Signature Form for the whole year/period. You will still receive your payments based on the schedule outlined above in #15.

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.