

Scholarship Policy

(Adopted by Board of Directors 07/28/20)

Any resident of Sisters Park & Recreation District and who for reasons of financial hardship cannot participate in an activity sponsored by the district may confidentially apply for a partial waiver of activity fees. The maximum amount of scholarship funds granted to a household is limited to \$500 per fiscal year and are limited to no more than 50% of the actual activity fee and must be applied for and approved prior to participation. All applicants need to reapply at the beginning of the fiscal year. Scholarship recipients are not eligible for refunds above the dollar amount they paid.

Exceptions to this policy:

- A foster child who attends Sisters School District, is eligible for the scholarship program, regardless of their current address.
- A student who resides outside of SPRD boundaries however is a resident of and attends a Sisters School District school, is eligible to apply for a district scholarship. Patrons are still subject to out-of-district fees and scholarships funds may not be used toward out-of-district fee differential.

Sisters Park & Recreation District will adhere to the existing federal government's poverty-level guidelines when determining an applicant's eligibility. The district reserves the right to exempt an activity or program from the Scholarship Policy upon approval of the executive director.

District general fund scholarships are not applicable to programs within Level 4 and 5 of the district's cost recovery model. In addition, scholarships are not applicable to:

- nonrefundable registration fees,
- program supplies fees,
- single daily admissions, including special events when purchased on day of the event,
- team fees,
- out-of-district differential fee,
- facility rental fees,
- park reservation fees,
- program packages (birthday parties),
- concession items,
- third-party billings (e.g., insurance companies, Adult and Family Services Division (AFS*), vocational rehabilitation). Scholarship funds can be used only after third-party payment has been made and the total cost is not covered.

SCHOLARSHIP Procedure

When a patron requests information about district scholarships, the staff member must establish district residency first. If the patron is not a district resident, the staff member should connect patron with other financial assistance programs if available.

If the patron applies in person, the staff member who receives the completed application will make photocopies of the identification and other supporting documents and attach them to the application. If the applicant applies online, an email will go directly to the executive director for further review. The executive director or designee will process all scholarship applications.

For approval, the patron needs to present proof of residency (any of the following):

- current utility statement,
- driver's license,
- bank statement,
- employee payroll record,
- mortgage or lease agreement,
- Deschutes County tax report.

And proof of eligibility (any of the following):

- an Oregon Trail Card (food stamp card),
- statement of DHS benefits,
- WIC benefits,
- Oregon Health Plan eligibility statement or Medicaid card,
- Circle of Friends or Housing Works endorsement,
- unemployment benefits statement,
- Sisters School District free/reduced lunch.

If the patron is unable to provide this documentation, they may attach a hardship letter. The executive director has the ability to:

- Authorize the hardship letter from a patron whom is otherwise unable to provide the above criteria.
- Increase the allocation for an applicant based on extenuating circumstances (e.g., a recent medical or financial crisis).

A foster child who attends a school in the Sisters School District is eligible for the scholarship program, regardless of their current address. The child should be considered as an individual qualifier. A foster parent may apply on their own behalf, if they meet the financial guidelines.

Upon approval of a scholarship request, the appropriate staff member will inform the applicant. Upon denial of a scholarship request, the appropriate staff member informs the applicant in writing.

Scholarship questions will be sent to the Coffield Center. If staff are unable to answer the patron's question, it will be forwarded to the executive director.

Completed scholarship application forms are scanned and saved on the district server. Scholarship funds for participants will be tracked through the program registration software. The scholarship program has an annual maximum budgeted amount available for distribution during the fiscal year. When the budgeted amount is distributed, the program may end for the fiscal year unless additional funds are allocated from the board of directors. The board will be informed of usage of the scholarship line item through the quarterly financial reports.