

Colorado Promise: Two Free Years of College Expanded

Communications Toolkit



Overview

Beginning in Fall 2024, students who attend public Colorado institutions and have family incomes of \$90,000 or less are eligible for a complete reimbursement of any out-of-pocket tuition and fees paid for their education through a tax credit. The program builds on individual institutional promise programs and extends financial support to even more Colorado residents.

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Program webpages

English: <https://cdhe.colorado.gov/colorado-promise>

Spanish: <https://cdhe.colorado.gov/promesa-de-colorado-dos-anos-de-universidad-gratis>

News release

<https://www.colorado.gov/governor/news/governor-polis-signs-bills-law-making-two-years-college-free-more-families-cutting-red-tape>

Talking points

- Colorado Promise provides students with tuition and fees for their first two years of college in the form of a yearly refundable tax credit if they have a family income of \$90,000 or less. Starting in fall 2024, qualifying students can enroll in a program and begin claiming the credit on their 2025 taxes.
- To qualify for the program, students must have a family income of \$90,000 or less, have enrolled at an eligible institution within two years of graduating high school, and begin with less than 66 credit hours. If students complete at least six credits per term, and maintain a GPA of 2.5 or higher, they will be eligible for reimbursement.
- Eligible students may attend any Colorado public postsecondary institution— including community colleges, public four-year colleges and universities, area technical colleges, and local district colleges.
- Colorado Promise: Two Free Years of College Expanded is a last-dollar program that builds on the free college programs at colleges and universities to cover your costs. These school-specific promise programs may cover your tuition and other fees

up front. Prospective students should contact their intended college or university for eligibility and to discuss program criteria for additional financial support programs.

- The Colorado Promise offers qualifying students the opportunity to graduate debt-free with a certificate(s), an associate degree, or half of a bachelor's degree. Students with substantial concurrent enrollment credits may be able to complete an entire bachelor's degree through the tuition and fee reimbursement program.
- Students should ensure that they have completed a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) or Colorado Application for State Financial Aid (CASFA) and enroll in at least six credits to be eligible for the program.

Fact sheet

[CDHE Colorado Promise Fact Sheet](#)

Program details

- Bill text:
 - https://leg.colorado.gov/sites/default/files/documents/2024A/bills/2024a_1340_enr.pdf
 - https://leg.colorado.gov/sites/default/files/2025a_319_signed.pdf
- Students who begin their postsecondary education with enough dual or concurrent enrollment classes and/or Advanced Placement (AP) or International Baccalaureate (IB) credits could use the remaining 65 credits to cover an entire bachelor's degree free of charge, after receiving the tax credit reimbursement.
- Students must first enroll at a Colorado public postsecondary institution within two years of graduating from high school.
- Student eligibility criteria:
 - Complete FAFSA or CASFA
 - Family Adjusted Gross Income of \$90,000 or less, as determined by the FAFSA or CASFA
 - Colorado resident with an in-state tuition classification
 - Classified as degree or credential-seeking
 - Initially enrolled at a Colorado public postsecondary institution within two years of high school graduation or equivalent
- Term/semester eligibility criteria: Eligible students can receive a tax credit for out-of-pocket tuition and fees paid at an eligible institution for terms or semesters in which they meet the following criteria:

- Have accumulated fewer than 65 credits at the start of term (excluding AP, IB, military credit, credit for prior learning and dual or concurrent enrollment)
 - Completed at least six credits at the end of the term
 - Earned a 2.5 GPA at the end of the term
 - Student or family paid some amount in tuition and/or fees
- Colorado Promise is meant to mimic a last-dollar promise program. The income cap of \$90,000 is roughly equivalent to Colorado's median family income.
- Implementation timeline:

Academic Year (AY) 24-25			Academic Year (AY) 25-26		
Fall '2024	Spring 2025	Summer 2025	Fall 2025	Spring 2026	Summer 2026
Program begins			Program ongoing	▪ IHEs notify students and CDHE of eligibility ▪ CDHE sends AY 24-25 eligible students to Department of Revenue ▪ Student files 2025 taxes ▪ Student receives AY 24-25 reimbursement for tuition and fees	

Program end date = Summer 2032 (unless renewed)

Supporting graphics

📎 2025 Colorado Promise Graphics (English and Spanish language graphics available)

Social media posts

General Audience

- Are you interested in graduating from college, debt-free, with a certificate, associate degree or other credential? See if you qualify for a tax credit reimbursement for tuition costs and fees paid out of pocket. Learn more about Colorado Promise at <https://cdhe.colorado.gov/colorado-promise> #COPromise
- Did you know that Colorado offers students Colorado Promise, a tax reimbursement of tuition costs for their first two years of college? You may qualify if your family income is \$90,000 or less. Learn more: <https://cdhe.colorado.gov/colorado-promise> #COPromise
- Unsure what to do after high school graduation? Stay in Colorado and explore your options at one of our public colleges or universities through Colorado Promise. If your family income is \$90,000 or less, you may qualify for a tax credit that would reimburse you for the cost of your first two years. Learn more: <https://cdhe.colorado.gov/colorado-promise> #COPromise

Student-focused:

- You've got potential. We've got a promise. Colorado Promise will pay qualifying students back for up to 65 credits! There's no application needed - if you're eligible, you're already enrolled. Find eligibility criteria and more information at <https://cdhe.colorado.gov/colorado-promise>. #COPromise
- Students! Invest in college, and we'll invest in you. Colorado Promise pays back students for up to 65 credits! To qualify, you have to enroll at a public Colorado college or university within two years of completing high school, complete a FAFSA or CASFA application, and have a household income of \$90,000 or less. Find more information at <https://cdhe.colorado.gov/colorado-promise>. #COPromise
- You bring the grades. We bring the bucks. Qualifying students who maintain a 2.5 GPA or higher will get reimbursed for money paid out-of-pocket towards tuition and fees through Colorado Promise! Find out how to qualify at <https://cdhe.colorado.gov/colorado-promise>. #COPromise
- Colorado Promise pays qualified students back for up to 65 college credits! This year, enroll, go to class, and get the grades. Next year, file your state tax return and get reimbursed for tuition and fees from the previous year. Learn more about how Colorado Promise works at <https://cdhe.colorado.gov/colorado-promise>. #COPromise
- We believe education beyond high school is an opportunity that all Coloradans should have, and finances should not be a barrier to pursuing your goals. Colorado Promise reimburses up to 65 credits for qualifying students with household incomes of \$90,000 or less. Find more information and save on college at <https://cdhe.colorado.gov/colorado-promise>. #COPromise
- Colorado Promise: Two Free Years of College Expanded builds on YOUR INSTITUTION's PROMISE PROGRAM to help cover your costs. If there's something your institutional promise program doesn't cover, you may be eligible to receive the Colorado Promise tax credit to reimburse you for your remaining out-of-pocket expenses. Learn more about Colorado Promise at <https://cdhe.colorado.gov/colorado-promise>. #COPromise

In the News

Greeley Tribune: [Colorado Promise Act gives eligible students 2 years of free college](#)

MSU Denver RED: [New state program to reimburse college costs](#)

Chalkbeat Colorado: [How students can take advantage of Colorado's new tax credit for college](#)

Inside Higher Ed: [Colorado to Cover Two Years' Tuition at Any Public College](#)

Coloradoan: [Two years of free college? For some students in Colorado, the answer will soon be, 'Yes'](#)

The Colorado Sun: [Many public colleges offer free tuition to low-income residents. The state may build on that with a "Colorado Promise."](#)

Presentation slides

 Presentation: Colorado Promise

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

How does this program interact with other financial aid and scholarships?

Colorado Promise is a last-dollar program and is not meant to replace any services that state government or higher education institutions provide to support student affordability. State agencies and institutions should continue awarding financial aid and scholarships to eligible students, and students should continue to accept awarded grant aid in their financial aid package.

How do students take advantage of this program?

Students are automatically eligible to receive the tax credit if they meet all eligibility criteria; there is no separate application. To ensure eligibility, students can complete a FAFSA or CASFA each academic year, complete at least six credits with a 2.5 GPA per term and attend an eligible Colorado public college or university. Eligible institutions include community colleges, public four-year colleges and universities, area technical colleges and local district colleges.

Student eligibility criteria:

- Complete FAFSA or CASFA
- Family Adjusted Gross Income of \$90,000 or less, as determined by the FAFSA or CASFA

- Colorado resident with an in-state tuition classification
- Classified as degree or credential-seeking
- Initially enrolled at a Colorado public postsecondary institution within two years of high school graduation or equivalent

Term/semester eligibility criteria: Eligible students can receive a tax credit for out-of-pocket tuition and fees paid at an eligible institution for terms or semesters in which they meet the following criteria:

- Have accumulated fewer than 65 credits at the start of term (excluding AP, IB, military credit, credit for prior learning and dual or concurrent enrollment)
- Completed at least six credits at the end of the term
- Earned a 2.5 GPA at the end of the term
- Student or family paid some amount in tuition and/or fees

How does the tax credit work?

This tax credit fully reimburses tuition and fees paid out-of-pocket by eligible students and their families. The higher education institution of choice will notify students if they are eligible for the program and how much was paid in qualified educational expenses for a given tax year. To receive the credit, a student must file state income taxes and request the amount shared with the student by their institution. Each year, students will file taxes and claim the credit for tuition and fees paid in the prior academic year, not the current academic year.

What degrees are eligible for the program?

Eligible students can receive the tax credit reimbursement while working towards any undergraduate degree at an eligible Colorado public higher education institution, including a certificate, associate, or bachelor's degree. For most eligible students, a certificate and/or associate degree is covered by the program. In addition, students who begin their postsecondary education with enough dual or concurrent enrollment classes and/or AP/IB credits could use the remaining 65 credits to cover an entire bachelor's degree free of charge, after receiving the tax credit reimbursement.

What happens if I take time off from my degree program?

If you are eligible for Colorado Promise and take time off from your degree program (such as not enrolling for one or more terms or semesters), you remain eligible for the tax credit when you return to your studies as long as you continue to meet eligibility criteria.

If I transfer colleges, can I still be eligible for the program?

Yes, as long as you transfer to an eligible public institution in Colorado, such as a community college, area technical college, local district college, or public four-year college or university.

If I complete a degree program but still meet the eligibility requirements, can I continue to receive the tax credit?

Yes! Colorado Promise applies toward your first 65 credits for eligible students, regardless of whether you have completed a certificate, associate degree or another credential. You can continue to receive the tax credit until you reach the 65 credit cap.

Does a student request Colorado Promise or do their parents/family?

Students should always file a State of Colorado tax return to receive the Colorado Promise, never their parents, guardians or through another individual. This is true for students considered independent and dependent on the FAFSA.

What if I have no tax liability or no income? Can I still file taxes and receive the credit?

Yes! This is a refundable tax credit, meaning eligible students will receive the full amount paid out-of-pocket for tuition and fees in eligible terms, even if that amount is larger than the student's tax liability or total income in that tax year. The only time you would not receive the full amount is if you owe taxes on your State of Colorado income tax return.

I don't usually file taxes. How do I claim the credit?

To claim the credit, you will file state income taxes for the tax year following the academic year(s) for which you were eligible. For example, if you were eligible in Fall 2024 and Spring 2025 but would not otherwise file taxes, you should file your taxes in early 2026 for the 2025 tax year to claim the credit. Additional guidance on this process will be provided in the coming months. Your institution will notify you if you are eligible and have instructions to help you through the process.