

EDUCATION 2026-27 Renewal Student FREEDOM Eligibility Requirements

The **Education Freedom Scholarship (EFS)** Renewal Application for the 2026-27 school year provides current EFS recipients with the opportunity to apply to continue in the EFS program for the next academic year. Located in the same online portal that EFS account holders used for applications and account management, the renewal application is a streamlined version of the application submitted last year, focusing on confirming continued eligibility for the program. Renewal applications request current recipients provide updated documentation to demonstrate Tennessee residency and confirm any updates to their U.S. citizenship or lawful presence status. The information below provides a brief overview of the eligibility requirements and documentation needed in the renewal application.

Who is an eligible student for an EFS in the 2026-27 school year?

Any Tennessee student who is a U.S. citizen or lawfully present, as defined in State Board of Education (SBE) Rule 0520-01-24-.02(13), and who is entitled to attend a public school in grades K-12 in 2026-27 is eligible to apply.

OVERVIEW of Scholarship Availability & Prioritization

If the department receives more applications for the 2026-27 school year than scholarships are available, the first priority will be given to students who are current EFS recipients at the time of application.

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS for Renewal Applications

Renewals must continue to meet the requirements below:

- No more than 13 years in school and entering grades K-12
- Tennessee Residency (two (2) documentations of proof required)
- Student's Proof of U.S. Citizenship **OR** Lawful Presence in the U.S.
 - If documentation of the student's U.S. Citizenship (e.g., the student's birth certificate, the student's U.S. passport, the student's REAL ID) was provided with the 2025-26 application, nothing further is required for 2026-27.
 - If documentation of the student's lawful presence in the U.S. that was provided with the 2025-26 application has not changed, nothing further is required. If a status change has occurred, please submit two new proofs of lawful presence.

APPLICATION WINDOW

for Renewal Students

PLEASE NOTE: Renewal applications are the top priority for the 2026-27 academic year. Applications from current EFS recipients will be accepted from December 9, 2025, at 12 p.m. CT, until January 30, 2026, at 4 p.m. CT.

Applications for students not currently receiving EFS funds will be available in January 2026.



tn.gov/education/efs



EDUCATION 2026-27 Renewal Student FREEDOM Application Checklist

Please consider the following when preparing to complete your renewal application:

- Completeness & Accuracy: Only complete applications will be reviewed for scholarship eligibility. It is imperative applications have all required documentation uploaded, documentation is clear and legible, and all required fields are completed. Incomplete applications will have **one (1)** opportunity to resubmit the application with corrected documentation to demonstrate eligibility. The corrected application must be resubmitted within five (5) business days, by 4 p.m. CT on the fifth business day after email notification of incomplete status is sent. If the application is not resubmitted or the resubmission is incomplete, your application will be expired.
- **Document Uploads:** Documents are only considered within the section in which they are uploaded.
- **Documentation:** Documents must be saved and uploaded individually into the application. Each file upload should capture only a single document. Acceptable file formats include: jpg, gif, png, pdf, hevc, heic. After uploading your documents, click the magnifying glass to review them. Make sure each file is correct and displays properly before you continue.
- Note: Before completing a renewal application, you may be prompted to sign the 2025-26 Parent/Guardian Participation Agreement when logging in to your portal account, if you have not already.

ALL RENEWAL APPLICATIONS must include:

Two (2) Proofs of Tennessee Residency Documents

Both documents must include the:

- 1 Name & Current Address listed on the application for the Parent/Guardian or Eligible Student (Please note that P.O. boxes are not allowable for proof of residency.)
- 2 Required Date Range from Groups I, II, or III below
- **3** Effective dates on documents do not meet the requirement unless they also clearly show the date the document was issued or generated. For example, an insurance policy card that demonstrates a year-long coverage period only meets this requirement if it also includes an issuance date within the last 90 days.

Tennessee Proof of Residency Approved Documentation (This is an exhaustive list.)

GROUP I (Only listed documents issued within **the last 90 days** – Effective dates <u>not</u> allowable)

- · Utility Bill or Connection Notice (internet, gas, electric, water, garbage)
- Installment Loan Statement (auto, mortgage, personal, student, bank)
- Insurance Bill or Policy (homeowner's/renter's, auto, health)
- Affidavit of Residence (landlord signed & notarized)
- Fiscal Documentation (paycheck stub, bank statement)
- Agency Documentation (social security, disability, TANF, SNAP, public assistance/government benefits)
- Court Documentation

GROUP II (Only listed documents issued within **the last 365 days** – Effective dates <u>not</u> allowable)

- Rental or Mortgage Contract (deed of sale for property, mortgage contract, rental or lease agreement (signed by landlord & resident)) NOTE: Handwritten contracts or agreements must be notarized.
- Tennessee Vehicle or Voter Registration
- Tax Documentation (2024 IRS tax return (Form 1040), real estate/property tax receipt)

GROUP III (Only the listed cards that are **Non-Expired** are accepted)

• Tennessee Identification Cards (driver's license, identification license or card, handgun carry permit)



Documents to Demonstrate the Student's Lawful Presence in the U.S. (if applicable)

If documentation of the student's lawful presence in the U.S. that was provided with the 2025-26 application has not changed, nothing further is required. If a status change has occurred, please submit two (2) new proofs of lawful presence.

Two (2) Proofs of Student's Lawful Presence in the U.S.

Be sure the name on the document(s) are <u>for the student</u> identified on the application.



NOTE: Applicants who are not U.S. citizens must demonstrate lawful presence in the U.S. under one of the following immigration categories, pursuant to SBE Rule 0520-01-24-.02(13):

- · Legal Permanent Residents
- Refugees
- Asylees
- Non-citizens granted humanitarian parole for at least one year
- Non-citizens granted withholding of removal
- Non-citizens who have been approved, or determined eligible by the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), for relief under the Violence Against Women Act
- Cuban or Haitian entrants as defined in the Refugee Education Assistance Act of 1980
- Non-citizens who have been approved, or determined eligible by USCIS, for relief under the Trafficking Victims Protection Act
- Non-citizens residing in the U.S. in accordance with the Compacts of Free Association
- Cuban or Haitian parolees granted humanitarian parole

At least one of the two documents must be issued by a U.S. federal immigration agency demonstrating the applicant has one of the immigration statuses listed. The other may be any form of government-issued identification, including from the applicant's country of origin. All documents not in English must be translated.

The following are examples of acceptable documents to show immigration status:

- U.S. Permanent Resident Card or Form I-551
- Foreign Passport stamped by the U.S. Government indicating that the holder has been "Processed for I-551"
- Permanent Resident Re-entry Permit Form I-327
- Travel Document issued to Refugees Form I-571
- Approval Notice Form I-797
- Arrival Departure Form I-94 or passport stamp
- USCIS Approval, Eligibility or Prima Facie Determination Letter
- Employment Authorization Document (EAD) Card or Form I-766
- Office of Refugee Resettlement Eligibility Letter for benefits under Trafficking Victims Protection Act
- · Order from an Immigration Judge

Documents must be saved and uploaded individually into the application. Each file upload should capture only a single document. Acceptable file formats include: jpg, gif, png, pdf, hevc, heic.

Sample types for each required documentation can be found on the following pages.

These examples show acceptable document types and the required information needed for each. The dates shown are for example purposes only—refer to the charts on previous pages for the correct date requirements.

Education Freedom Scholarship (EFS) Application

Required Proof of Documentation Samples

Tips for All Residency Documents

- Documents must show ISSUE date, NOT due date or effective date.
- Not accepted documents include: credit card bills, cell phone bills, medical bills, insurance cards, and Explanations of Benefits (EOBs).
- Only a tax form 1040 is accepted (no Form 1098, Form W-2, tax transcripts, etc.).
- Service location on documentation must match the address on the application.
- Paycheck stubs must include a home address that matches the address on the application.
- Documents are only considered within the section in which they are uploaded.

Examples of Proof of Tennessee Residency

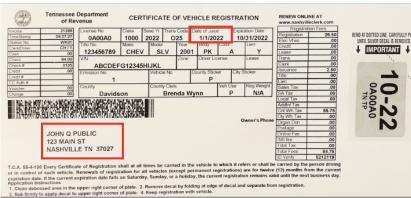
MLGW Utility Bill



Tennessee Driver's License



Tennessee Vehicle Registration

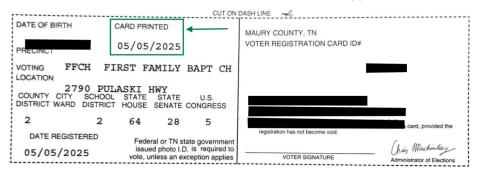




Examples of Acceptable Residency Documentation

Voter Registration

- Must confirm that the CARD PRINTED date (example highlighted in green) is within 365 days of application date.
- Name and address on card must match name/address on application.

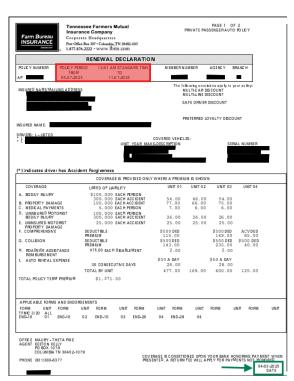


Insurance

- Generated/Issue Date of document (examples highlighted in green) is required.
- Policy Period or Effective Date (examples highlighted in red) is NOT acceptable.

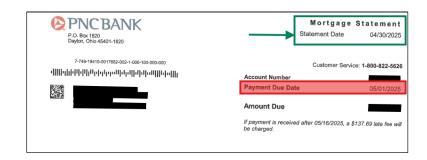






Mortgage Statement

- Issued/Statement Date of document (example highlighted in green) is required.
- Payment Due Date (example highlighted in red) is NOT acceptable.





Examples of Lawful Presence in the United States

Form I-94, Arrival/Departure Record

Class of Admission must be for: *Asylee, Parolee* or *Parole, Refugee, Asylum, HP-humanitarian* parolee or public interest parolee (PIP).





U.S. Permanent Resident Card



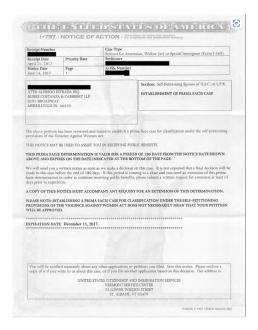
Permanent Resident Re-entry Permit



Office of Refugee Resettlement Eligibility Letter for benefits under Trafficking Victims Protection Act



Form I-797 Establishment of Prima Facie Case for VAWA Petition



Prima Facie Determination Letter for VAWA



I-797 Approval Notice for T Nonimmigrant Status



Photos not included:

- Foreign Passport stamped by the U.S. Government indicating that the holder has been "Processed for I-551"
- Travel Document issued to Refugees (1-571)