Maryland Higher Education Commission
Office of Student Financial Assistance
6 North Liberty Street, Ground Suite
Baltimore, MD 21201
(410) 767-3300; (800) 974-0203
TTY for the Deaf - (800) 735-2258
www.mhec.maryland.gov

**WORKFORCE SHORTAGE STUDENT
ASSISTANCE GRANT PROGRAM**

WSSAG Frequently Asked Questions

1.   I applied last year, but did not receive an award. Do I have to provide the supporting documents again this year?
Yes, we require all new supporting documents with the application. We cannot use documents from a prior year's file.

2.   What is the application deadline date?
Applications are available each year through the Maryland College Aid Processing System (MDCAPS) starting in mid April. The application **and all supporting documents must be received by our office by July 1** to be considered 'on-time.'

3.   How are awards determined?
Both merit and need-based criteria will be used when making awards. Applicants will be ranked by grade point average (GPA) and then by need within each occupational field. Those students with the greatest need within each GPA range will be awarded first. Students will be ranked by need within the following GPA ranges:

GPA 3.8 to GPA 4.0
GPA 3.6 to GPA 3.79
GPA 3.4 to GPA 3.59
GPA 3.0 to GPA 3.39
GPA 2.9 and below

Merit Ranking: To determine the GPA ranking of students, a cumulative, un-weighted GPA will be used. OSFA will recalculate all GPAs to be considered on a standardized 4.0 scale. Transcripts will be required to determine a student's GPA ranking. High school transcripts will be used to calculate GPAs for entering freshman and students that have completed less than 12 college credits. Undergraduate level college transcripts will be used for students who have completed more than 12 college credits as an undergraduate student and less than 12 college credits as a graduate student. Graduate level transcripts will be used for students who have completed more than 12 graduate level credits.

Need Ranking: To determine a student's need ranking, a FAFSA must be filed by the July 1 deadline. It is not mandatory that students complete a FAFSA to be eligible to receive an award. However, when determining the order in which a student is awarded, students with the greatest need within each GPA range will be given highest priority. If a student chooses not to file a FAFSA, it will be assumed that the student has no need, and therefore will be placed at the bottom of the appropriate GPA range to be considered for an award.

4.   Can I fax my application to Maryland Higher Education Commission?
No. Faxed Documents are not acceptable. Documents must be uploaded through your MDCAPS account using the Electronic File Upload tool on or before July 1 for final consideration.

5.   How do I apply for the WSSAG?

You must apply online in our MD CAPS system at https://mdcaps.mhec.state.md.us. You will be required to create a user id and password before you can log in to the system. You will then be sent an email with an activation link. You MUST activate your account prior to your first login. You will then be able to apply online for programs, as well as check the status of your application.

6.   What is the awarding process?

If you are awarded, you will be notified by email with an award offer. You must login to the MD CAPS system to accept your award within three (3) weeks of the date of notification. You must also submit the online promissory note.

7.   I have filed my application. How do I find out the status?

You can access that information on the MD CAPS system at: https://mdcaps.mhec.state.md.us

8.   I am already enrolled <u>as a nursing or physical or occupational therapist student</u>. Do I need to include a letter of acceptance from my Nursing Department or Physical or Occupational Therapy Department? That information is on my transcript.

All nursing and physical or occupational therapy students **<u>must</u>** include an acceptance letter from their department. There are no exceptions to this requirement.

9.   If my current institution lists my credits from a prior institution on my transcript, do I still need to send the prior school's transcript?

Yes, you do. Transfer credits on most transcripts only list the number of credits. Usually, the grade earned is not listed. Since a cumulative GPA is required to rank students for this scholarship, we must have transcripts from each institution.

10.   How will the scholarship funds be paid to my institution?

At the beginning of each semester, your institution will be asked to certify that you meet the requirements of the award. When the institution completes the certification in MDCAPS, your award will be processed for payment. Payment to the institution will be made approximately four weeks after the institution completes the certification. Contact your institution's financial aid office if you have questions about the payment status of your award.

11.   If I filed my application on time and I meet all the requirements, can I assume I will receive an award?

No. **<u>All awards are subject to the availability of funding</u>**. You should seek financial aid from all sources - state, federal, private and public institutions - as well as local clubs and organizations within your community. There is a limited amount of funding for each scholarship program. It is not wise to assume you will receive an award.

12. I am a high school student. Schools in my county do not distribute official transcripts until after the July 1 deadline. Is there anything I can do?

You can obtain an official, sealed transcript that covers grade 9 through 1st semester grade 12. You can then ask for a certified copy of your 12th grade 2nd semester report card from your guidance counselor and send the transcript and certified report card with your application by the July 1 deadline. You must, however, send the
official transcript when it becomes available. This information is for high school students **only**. All college students must submit an official transcript(s) by July 1.

13. If I change majors (i.e. if I currently have an award in education and want to change my major to occupational therapy) do I still receive the award?

No. You must reapply for the program under the Occupational/Physical Therapy area. In addition, if you received an award in both Area C award and Area E, you would be required to satisfy the promissory note agreement for both awards.