



COVID-19 Hardship Fund for School-age Child Expenses



Cornell recognizes that staff and faculty families with school-age children have faced unique and complex challenges since the beginning of the pandemic and in some cases, this has increased expenses.

Eligible Cornell employees with higher than normal expenses for their school-age child during the COVID-19 pandemic may apply for this fund. The fund may be used to obtain reimbursement, up to \$300 (non-taxable) per household, or \$500 for households with children with special needs, for the costs outlined below.

This program will be available until funding is exhausted, or until June 30, 2021, unless extended. The program is subject to change, and its existence is no guarantee of the future availability of funds or the award of grants.

This grant is not subject to federal, state, and other taxes as a national disaster relief fund. Child expenses unrelated to the COVID-19 pandemic or the purpose of this fund are not covered.

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Eligibility

Employees must be:

- In fully benefits-eligible positions associated with the Ithaca Campus (includes Geneva & NY Tech) at the time of incurring expenses and application.
- Have a combined annualized household income below \$150,000 per year.

This program does not cover Weill Cornell Medical employees, as funds were made available separately earlier this year. County extension employees and other affiliates that are not paid by and on university benefits are also ineligible.

Allowable Expenses

Reimbursable expenses must be reasonable and necessary and pertain to children's educational expenses that were due to, or increased, because of COVID-19. Examples include:

- Distance education resources (such as memberships to academic platforms)
- Additional child care expenses
- Tutoring fees/subscriptions
- Child desk and/or chair
- Computer (laptop or tablet), if needed to participate in distance learning and the equipment, was not/will not be provided by the school district

Unallowable expenses:

- Printer
- Internet service fees
- Internet/Wi-Fi equipment

Expenses paid or reimbursed by insurance or other sources are not qualified for reimbursement by this fund.

FAQ

What is considered "School-age" for purposes of this program?

Children enrolled in Preschool (age 4+ only) through twelfth grade. Infant, toddler, and college-age expenses are not eligible.

I am on university furlough. Am I eligible?

If you were in a fully benefits eligible position and have eligible expenses, you are qualified even if you are now on university furlough.

I am a temporary staff member that is not benefits eligible. Am I eligible?

No. You need to be in/have been in a benefits eligible role to qualify for this program.

Both my spouse/partner and I work at Cornell. Can we both apply?

You may both apply. However, the applications cannot be for the same expense reimbursement. Identify different increased educational costs within your application. The maximum reimbursement applies on a per household basis and is \$300 (or \$500 for households with children with special needs).

Are families with multiple children eligible for additional funding?

In order to serve as many eligible Cornell families as possible, the funding is available per family (not per child). Additional monies are not granted for multi-child households.

Are step-parents eligible to apply?

Step-parents are eligible to apply if they contribute to financially supporting the step-child(ren) and reside in the same household at least part-time.

What are some examples of eligible educational expenses?

- Your child is attending classes online and requires a tutor to stay on track with performance expectations. The fees you paid to the tutor are eligible under this program as long as the tutoring was not provided by an immediate family member.
- You incur extra child care expenses for younger school-age children attending half-day and/or partial week classes. The expenses above and beyond what you normally pay for these services are eligible for reimbursement.

I do not have receipts or documentation for increased expenses that I already paid. How do I demonstrate the additional expenses that I incurred?

Please do your best to provide an estimate and detailed explanation of your increased expenses.

Can I apply more than once?

You can apply as many times as you would like until you reach the cap amount of \$300 per household (\$500 for households with children with special needs).

When and how will I receive my award?

The review committee reviews applications weekly. If your application is approved, you will be notified, and if you are enrolled in direct deposit reimbursements you should see the payment in your bank account within a few days.

Please note: Not all employees who are signed up for direct deposit for paychecks are enrolled in direct deposit for reimbursements through the Division of Financial Affairs. When you complete your application, you will be directed to a link to confirm your enrollment in direct deposit for the purpose of reimbursements. If you are not already enrolled, please enroll to expedite the payment of your award.

If you prefer to receive a check, payments will take longer to be mailed and are at risk of being lost. Checks will be mailed to the address listed in Workday.

Can I appeal the review committee's decision?

Award decisions are final. However, if circumstances have changed, you may reapply or contact hardshipfund@cornell.edu for guidance.

Will this payment be reflected in my W-2 at the end of the year?

No, your hardship award is a non-taxable payment per the IRS emergency fund guidelines and will not show up on your W-2 for the year.

Where can I find a tutor for my child? What tutoring services are eligible for reimbursement?

Information about local and national tutors and services is available [here](#). Tutoring subscription fees and hourly fees are eligible. This program does not reimburse for tutoring provided by an immediate family member such as a grandparent or sibling.

Who do I contact with questions?

Email Work/Life in Human Resources at hardshipfund@cornell.edu.

Apply

[Apply online through the secure two-step login process](#) If you have documentation to support your application, you may

upload it as part of the online process. Your application is private and will be reviewed by the COVID-19 Hardship Fund Review Committee.

Applications are reviewed weekly and applicants will be notified via email of the determination. Approved awards will be distributed via ACH bank transfer or check.

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