

CALIFORNIA DREAM ACT SERVICE INCENTIVE GRANT PROGRAM

FAQ FOR STUDENTS

1. Who is eligible for the California Dream Act Service Incentive Grant Program (DSIG)?

- Completed and submitted California Dream Act Application (CADAA) for that academic year.
- Active recipient of a Cal Grant A or Cal Grant B Award. Cal Grant A recipients must have met Cal Grant B eligibility.
- Demonstrate enough financial need (determined by CSAC or the institution).
- Enrolled in a qualifying institution.

2. How many DSIG awards are available?

Beginning with the 2022-23 academic year the program is limited to 1,667 participants annually. Students must meet the criteria for an eligible student, attend a qualifying institution, and perform the required service hours with a qualifying organization.

3. How much can I receive?

Beginning with the 2022-23 academic year the California Student Aid Commission (CSAC) will award up to \$4,500 per academic year (up to \$2,250 per semester or up to \$1,500 per quarter).

4. What do I need to do to receive the award?

The California Dream Act Service Incentive Grant Program (DSIG) encourages California Dream Act Application (CADAA) students with a Cal Grant A with Cal Grant B eligibility or Cal Grant B award to perform community or volunteer service. Students shall perform at least 150 hours per semester or 100 hours per quarter of community or volunteer service.

5. Where can I perform my service hours?

Students can volunteer with any of the organization(s) on the List of Service Organizations or any organization not on the list if it meets the criteria for a qualifying community or volunteer service organization. On-campus community or volunteer service organizations affiliated with a Cal Grant eligible school, such as outreach, student services, and multi-cultural organizations are deemed eligible.

6. What volunteer activities are permissible under the requirement that “The community or volunteer service performed by the participating student is not advocacy of a political, social, or religious nature?”

You cannot volunteer for an organization that engages exclusively in political, social, or religious advocacy. Therefore, participating students can only work on tasks that are unrelated to advocacy efforts for organizations that have a mix of advocacy and non-advocacy programs.

We (CSAC) will validate this requirement by reviewing all of the activities listed on the Service Hour Tracker that accepted students submit with their Payment Requests and verify that the activities were not directly tied to any political, social, or religious advocacy, as described in the paragraph above.

We encourage you to contact dsig@csac.ca.gov if you still have questions about this requirement.

7. Am I required to complete a Live Scan to participate in DSIG?

No. Background checks are not required to participate in DSIG. However, some service organizations may require Live Scan or other types of background checks.

8. Can I volunteer at more than one service organization at a time?

There is no limit to the number of organizations you can volunteer with. All organizations must meet the requirements of a qualifying service organization and be listed on the Grant Application form.

9. How do I apply for DSIG?

Students will need to apply annually to participate in the California Dream Act Service Incentive Grant Program (DSIG). The DSIG Grant Application and directions can be found on the Apply webpage. Students must also meet Satisfactory Academic Progress and complete any necessary verification for their Cal Grant A or B award.

10. When is the application due?

Applications are available beginning July 1st and will be accepted through the end of the academic year (June 30th) or until all awards are exhausted, whichever comes first.

11. Does DSIG eligibility rollover?

No, DSIG eligibility is based on the corresponding Cal Grant award year. Students will need to apply annually to participate in the California Dream Act Service Incentive Grant Program (DSIG). The program is open from July 1 to June 30 and follows the annual academic year.

12. How long can I receive DSIG?

A student can receive DSIG for as long as they have an active Cal Grant A or B award. As a reminder, Cal Grant A recipients must have met Cal Grant B eligibility. Students can receive the grant for up to 8 semesters or 12 quarters. When a student has exhausted their Cal Grant A or B eligibility, they will also no longer be allowed to participate in DSIG.

13. My status changed and I no longer fill out the California Dream Act Application (CADAA), can I still receive DSIG?

No, a student must be eligible to complete a California Dream Act Application (CADAA) to participate in DSIG.

14. What is unmet need and how does it affect DSIG?

Need is established by taking the cost of attendance and subtracting expected family contribution (EFC). If a student does not have enough need they will not qualify for the award. Students should consult with their financial aid office for information regarding their current unmet need.

15. I am attending school less than full-time, am I eligible for an award?

Beginning with the 2022-23 DSIG award year, grant amounts will no longer be reduced based on enrollment.

16. I am attending school less than half-time, am I eligible for an award?

No, in order to receive the grant, a student must be enrolled at least half-time.

17. I dropped below half time, what happens to my award?

DSIG will follow your standard Cal Grant A or B payment process. Payments will be made based on the recipient's enrollment status using the institution's add/drop date, financial aid census date, or its equivalent. Students should consult with their financial aid office for information on how changing enrollment status can affect their financial aid.

18. I completed the required service hours. How do I receive payment?

Students can request payment after performing at least 150 hours per semester or 100 hours per quarter of community or volunteer service. Students must submit the Payment Request form along with documentation of the service hours performed. The Payment Request form and directions can be found on the Request Payment webpage.

19. Do I need to complete my hours within the term I will be requesting payment?

No. If you have been accepted into the program and have completed the required 150 hours per semester or 100 hours per quarter, you can request payment as long as those hours are completed within the academic year (July 1 through June 30).

20. How do I show CSAC I completed the required number of service hours?

Documentation of service hours performed can be submitted on the California Dream Act Service Incentive Grant Program (DSIG) Service Hours Tracker or on any other type of documentation utilized by the service organization(s) if the documentation includes the name and signature of the certifying official.

21. How will I be paid for my service?

You and the Financial Aid Administrator listed on your Payment Request will be notified via email when you are approved for payment. Payment will be processed by the institution of attendance and can take 4-6 weeks. Initial DSIG payment will occur after you receive at least one Cal Grant A or B payment.

CSAC will mail check to your institution. A check will be made out to you and the Financial Aid Office will need to notify you once the check is available for pick up or disbursed into your student account at the institution.

22. What are the DSIG disbursement policies for check handling?

For check handling, if you are accepted into the program and your Payment Request has been approved, no one, under any circumstance, is allowed to pick up your check on your behalf. Your school may require you to provide your signature to verify that you received your check.

23. Can DSIG funds be used to pay an existing balance I have at my school?

DSIG disbursement must align with existing published school policies for Cal Grant A or B. Contact your financial aid office to discuss your DSIG payment options.

24. Are DSIG awards considered taxable income?

Students are advised to seek guidance from a tax advisor.

25. Is there a deadline to request a DSIG payment?

Yes. DSIG payment deadline is in September following the award year. However, you must complete the required hours for DSIG (150 hours per semester/100 hours per quarter) within the academic year you are accepted into the program.

26. How many hours must I complete before payment?

Students can request payment after performing at least 150 hours per semester or 100 hours per quarter of community or volunteer service.

27. I completed less than the required number of hours can I request a partial payment?

No, a student may only request payment after completing the required number of hours.

28. What if I transfer to another institution?

Student needs to re-register and submit a new Grant Application form with validation from the new institution.

29. What if I attend more than one institution?

Students must select one campus in charge of disbursement. Students should consult with their financial aid office for more information.

30. Is the DSIG program open to undergraduates only?

No, Teacher Credential Program (TCP) students are eligible. Students can only receive the grant for up to 8 semesters or 12 quarters. When a student has exhausted their Cal Grant A or B eligibility, they will also no longer be allowed to participate in DSIG.

31. Are 5th year programs eligible?

Yes. However, students can only receive the grant for up to 8 semesters or 12 quarters. When a student has exhausted their Cal Grant A or B eligibility, they will also no longer be allowed to participate in DSIG.

32. Do Foster Youth qualify for extended eligibility?

No, students can only receive the grant for up to 8 semesters or 12 quarters. When a student has exhausted their Cal Grant A or B eligibility, they will also no longer be allowed to participate in DSIG.