



2026-2027 Program Fee Waiver Policy Site Representative Guidance

Background

In an effort to streamline Student Fee Waiver determination and remove unintended barriers of access, the UConn Early College Experience (ECE) program has worked closely with the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE), to develop a simplified process which utilizes building/district student data already provided to the CSDE on an annual basis.

Continuing for the upcoming 2026-27 academic year, UConn ECE will provide a fee waiver for all students who qualify for free or reduced-price meals or free milk in accordance with the Income Guidelines for the National School Lunch Program or deemed “categorically eligible” (e.g., SNAP, TANF, homeless, etc.), as reported to the CSDE through the Direct Certification process and confirmed by each Partner School Site Representative during the course registration process.

Direct certification is a process utilized by all local educational agencies (LEAs) to certify eligible children for free meals without the need for household applications. Each week, the Direct Certification Web Application matches enrolled students to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Temporary Family Assistance (TFA), and certain income-specific Medicaid (coded as free Medicaid (FM) or reduced Medicaid (RM)) lists of children provided by the Connecticut Department of Social Services (DSS). On a monthly basis, the Direct Certification Web Application matches directly certified foster children (coded as Other or OT) with the Connecticut Department of Children and Family Services. The district’s direct certification contact person may access this information at any time.

UConn ECE is defined by the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) as a dual credit program and as such is considered a state education program and part of the state’s federal accountability system. This designation allows districts to share student eligibility data with authorized ECE Partner School Site Representatives to verify student fee waiver eligibility. **As a reminder, Site Representatives only verify Yes/No eligibility, not the ‘source’ for eligibility.** Site Representatives should work with District leadership to determine local verification procedures.

Process

- Each year, before UConn ECE Student Registration opens, Site Representatives whose high school qualifies for a whole-school fee waiver will be notified of their status by the UConn ECE office.
- Site Representatives whose high schools do not qualify for a whole-school fee waiver must work with district leadership to request access to student eligibility data, as reported to the CSDE, to confirm Yes/No student waiver eligibility for the given year in UConn.DualEnroll.com.
- Students who are identified as “yes” on the district’s reporting data are eligible for a UConn ECE program fee waiver. If a student is not on the list, they are not eligible for a UConn ECE fee waiver.

If a student has extenuating circumstances and/or hardships, please refer to the Hardship Request Policy below (also in the Policies & Procedures Guide) and/or reach out to ecebilling@uconn.edu directly.

Whole-School Waiver Qualifications

Partner schools often inquire about the eligibility requirements for a school to qualify for the program’s “whole-school fee waiver” status. Please note that Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) *Alliance District* designation and U.S. Department of Education (USDE) *Title I* designation are not automatically qualifying designations.

Partner schools may qualify for a ‘whole-school fee waiver’ if they meet either of the following eligibility criteria.

- The percentage of students eligible for free/reduced price meals at the school in the CSDE’s most recent October 1 enrollment snapshot meets and/or exceeds 75%; or
- The school has been deemed eligible to receive ‘schoolwide’ Title 1 services, as reported by the Connecticut State Department of Education, and at least 50% of prior year students qualified for UConn ECE eligibility waivers.

Each year, UConn ECE program staff will utilize the CSDE’s Performance Office Annual Public School Information System (PSIS) data (October 1st snapshot data) and publicly released Title 1 designations to make determination on whole-school eligibility for the upcoming academic year. Additionally, UConn ECE program staff will use school-based percentage data to audit the percentage of students receiving course fee waivers as verified by Partner School Site Representatives.

Private School Student Waiver Qualifications:

Students attending a private school (any non-public school) who receive a need-based reduction of tuition (a need-based scholarship) from their high school will receive a UConn ECE fee waiver for all courses. A UConn ECE fee waiver is only available in the same year a student receives their need-based high school reduction of tuition. Site Representatives are expected to notify these Students to indicate their qualification in the UConn.DualEnroll.com registration system, with instruction from the UConn ECE Program Office, and send supporting documentation to the UConn ECE Billing Department.

Additional information about program fees and fee waiver eligibility can be found on the Program Fees web page at ece.uconn.edu.

Hardship requests

The Office of Early College Programs recognizes that in some instances, students may require financial assistance regardless of whether they meet the established criteria or eligibility for a Fee Waiver. This may include, but is not limited to, students who have experienced the loss of a parent/guardian, whose parent/guardian’s employment or financial situation has drastically changed, or students who may be undocumented with limited access to banking/identification services. In these instances, UConn ECE program staff will review all hardship requests on a case-by-case basis. The official [Student Fee Waiver Appeal](#) must originate from the partner school Site Representative and additional information may be required.