

Virginia Commonwealth Emergency Assistance Guidelines

The State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV) provides these guidelines for the usage of Virginia Student Financial Assistance Program (VSFAP) general funds for student emergency assistance.

Description

The purpose of the Virginia Commonwealth Emergency Assistance Fund is to provide short-term financial assistance to enrolled undergraduate students with demonstrated financial need who experience unforeseen emergencies that would disrupt progress to term completion or degree attainment.

Examples of eligible emergency expenses include, but are not limited to:

- A. Food.
- B. Temporary housing (rent/utilities).
- C. Medical expenses/dental care/mental health related expenses.
- D. Family emergency (visiting a sick family member; attendance at a funeral).
- E. Technology (replacement for a damaged/stolen item).
- F. Transportation (repairs to primary vehicle or temporary for-hire service)
- G. Child-care related to an emergency.

Emergency Fund Eligibility

- A. If the emergency is the result of a job loss, students are encouraged to seek a financial aid professional judgment review from the institution's Office of Financial Aid before applying for emergency assistance funds.
- B. Student must be enrolled at the institution during the term in which assistance is requested.
- C. Student must meet satisfactory academic progress standards.
- D. Student must have submitted a complete federal FAFSA or, if not eligible to file the FAFSA, the state VASA application. Recipients must be up to date with all institutional requests for documentation needed to complete the financial aid process.
- E. Student must demonstrate student financial need, as defined by the institution.
- F. Students with demonstrated need must accept all offered student financial aid offered prior to applying for emergency assistance funding. The institution may require that the student apply for and accept subsidized federal student loans, either prior to or as a condition for being offered emergency assistance.

Fund Usage

- A. For those award years in which this authorization is granted by state law, institutions may use a portion of its appropriated undergraduate VSFAP funds for emergency assistance. The institution should review restrictions and limits as described in the annual Act of Appropriation (budget language) applicable for the year in which making awards.

- B. Funds are awarded based on the amount supported by documentation from the student, not to exceed \$2,000 dollars per incident.
- C. Use of emergency assistance funds must be directly related to an unforeseen circumstance or emergency and cannot supplant existing sources of funding.
- D. Students can apply for emergency assistance funding no more than once per academic year.
- E. Emergency assistance funds are not considered financial assistance and do not impact or reduce availability of other financial assistance. Emergency assistance funds are not restricted by any financial need, remaining need or return to title IV calculations.

Application Steps

- A. Complete the institution's designated Virginia Commonwealth Emergency Assistance Fund application. The application should include:
 - 1. Contact information.
 - 2. Description of emergency situation (documentation provided where applicable).
 - 3. Amount requested.
 - 4. Other information as deemed necessary by the institution.
- B. Application is reviewed by the designated committee and awarded based on a consensus agreement, prioritization of other outstanding applications and available funds.
- C. Student will be notified as soon as circumstances require and expediency permits.

Application Review Committee

- A. Committee must have an odd number of member(s).
- B. Representation is required from the Office of Financial Aid and may include representation from other institution offices.
- C. Committee should be satisfied that approval and provision of funds is necessary for, and is more likely to result in, continued enrollment or completion for the recipient.
- D. Committee may review award recipients to ensure that all funds are spent for the need designated on the application. Institutions may spell out consequences for inappropriate use of funds.
- E. The institution may, but is not required to, provide for an appeal process. The decision at the conclusion of the institutional review and appeal process is final.

Reporting

- A. Emergency assistance funds are not considered financial assistance and will not be reported on the financial aid data file.
- B. Total dollars projected for use, if applicable, will be reported on the annual S5 report.
- C. Summary results - total students and total dollars - will be tracked on the annual S1/S2 reports.