



# Frequently Asked Questions

## What is Burlington's First Steps Scholarship Program?

As a pilot program of the City of Burlington's Early Learning Initiative (ELI), the First Steps Scholarship Program aims to increase access to high-quality child care for eligible Burlington families by awarding tuition scholarships and facilitating access to Vermont's Child Care Financial Assistance Program (CCFAP), a financial assistance program for low- and middle-income families.

By combining both state assistance and City scholarships, First Steps will support 20 or more new Burlington families to afford and access high-quality child care. Eligible applicants are Burlington residents whose household income is at or below 65% of Area Median Income and are not currently enrolled in CCFAP. Recipients will be awarded a one-year scholarship in preparation for September 2019 child care enrollment.

HOUSEHOLD SIZE	2 person	3 person	4 person	5 person	6 person	7 person	8 person
HOUSEHOLD INCOME AT 65% AMI	\$47,775	\$53,755	\$59,670	\$64,480	\$69,225	\$74,035	\$78,780

Although this opportunity is for Burlington residents only, the scholarship awarded may be utilized at qualifying high-quality center- or home-based child care programs in the state that meet the pilot criteria and enter into an agreement with the City.

The planning for this pilot program has benefited from the input of a range of community stakeholders, including representatives from the Burlington School District, the UVM Medical Center, Head Start, the Vermont Community Loan Foundation, Let's Grow Kids and many early educators. As a pilot, we will evaluate the number of scholarships awarded, the level of increased participation in CCFAP and the number of income eligible families who otherwise would not have the opportunity to access child care.

## Who can apply for the First Steps Scholarship Program?

Here are the eligibility requirements for the program:

1. Must be a Burlington resident.
2. Must have a child or children born between 8/31/17 and 7/1/19 and not currently enrolled in high-quality child care.
3. Family household income must be at or below 65% of the Area Median Income (see above).
4. Must apply for CCFAP.

All applicants that meet these eligibility requirements will be considered.

## **How many Burlington families will be awarded a scholarship?**

The goal is to support approximately 20 or more new Burlington children. If more than 20 families apply and meet these requirements, scholarship recipients will be selected on a lottery basis to ensure equitable distribution awards. Eligible applicants not selected in the lottery will be placed on a waiting list. If fewer than 20 children apply, the remaining award funding will be apportioned on a first come, first-served basis.

## **How much of a scholarship will be awarded to families?**

The total award pool for the pilot year of First Steps is \$210,000. Scholarship awards will range \$2,000-\$6,000, depending on the level of CCFAP and the average cost of high-quality programs based on survey research of Burlington programs conducted by Let's Grow Kids. Because Burlington and the surrounding area has a higher cost of care compared to the rest of the state, the scholarship award rate is thus higher than the prevailing statewide market rate for all centers.

## **How much financial assistance will families receive from CCFAP?**

The Vermont Agency of Human Service's Child Development Division determines how much financial assistance a family will receive as a recipient of CCFAP.

## **What happens if the family is unable to find child care?**

Scholarship recipients will be assisted to help secure a high-quality child care slot either in or near Burlington or at their desired location based on family need. Although receiving a scholarship does not guarantee that a high-quality child care space will be available, the City has worked with program directors in and around Burlington to facilitate access for families awarded the scholarship.

## **If a Burlington family has a child or children who are already enrolled in a child care program, may they still apply?**

It depends. If the Burlington family is eligible for, but not enrolled in CCFAP, and they have a child or children born between 8/31/17 and 7/1/19 enrolled in a child care program that is not licensed or regulated, they would qualify.

If the Burlington family is enrolled in CCFAP and their child or children are already participating in a high-quality child care program, they would not be eligible to participate in this pilot program.

## **What is considered high quality?**

The paramount concern is that children receive the best care that supports their healthy development. One indicator of quality that we will consider is a program's STep Ahead Recognition System (STARS) rating. We understand that there are special circumstances that may need to be considered, and in these circumstances, we will evaluate programs based on other quality indicators that ensure children are receiving the best possible care.

## **When is the deadline to apply?**

Applications for First Steps will be available on March 1st and the deadline is April 5th to receive scholarships for the September 1, 2019-August 31, 2020 year.

Learn more at  
[www.burlingtonvt.gov/earlylearning](http://www.burlingtonvt.gov/earlylearning)



**first  
steps**  
Scholarship  
Program