

## Transcript

### Best Practices for Participating Schools

Webinar for School Administrators

August 17 @ 10:00 am - 11:00 am

0:05

Good morning, everyone.

0:07

Welcome to the 10 o'clock webinar for this week on Wednesday, the 17<sup>th</sup>. We're glad that you're all here.

0:16

I'm Kathryn Marker. I'm the director of the division that administers the K 12 programs and we have our school support team on the line and ready to present to you today.

0:26

Take a few minutes and make sure everyone is situated. There are handouts.

0:31

Two important ones, so I'd urge you to take a minute to find those.

0:34

Some of them, if you attended last Wednesday, you may already have.

0:37

But make sure that you have the ones that you need.

0:45

Last Wednesday, we presented on the certification and endorsement process, both of which are available to schools now.

0:52

It's an extremely important webinar. If you did not attend that webinar last week the recording is available to you.

0:59

It's on the administrator events page on the school website, the school portion of our website.

1:07

And you can hit the back arrow to see the previous month, the previous webinars from this month, one of which is the Certification and Endorsement webinar. The other two were the ESA specific webinar and a financial review webinar. So we have the one today, of course.

1:25

And then the one next Wednesday to complete our summer series.

1:31

Again, if you're just joining us, good morning.

1:33

We're here for the Best Practices webinar, and particularly this year, an important set of material. With the additional funding and the growth in the programs comes a renewed attention to schools, to accountability, to processes.

1:50

We are under a great spotlight, and we know how important it is that schools have the tools they need to administer the programs with integrity and competence.

2:03

And this webinar will be key to offer you some of the tips and tools and strategies to make sure that you can administer the programs well, and that together, we'll be able to successfully manage these programs for North Carolina.

2:20

I'm really glad that you're here.

2:21

It's an important content.

2:24

So, again, I'm Kathryn Marker.

2:25

I'm here to assist a little bit. I'm glad to introduce the webinar to you, your presenter today is Lauren Bader.

2:34

She is the program manager, supervises our school support team, works extensively with Opportunity Scholarship, and she's going to present with you today, but the rest of us, several of us on the line, are going to be answering questions to the extent we can. So you're welcome to type those in.

2:52

With that, Lauren, I'll mute myself and let you take over if that's alright.

2:58

(Lauren) Thank you, Kathryn. Good morning, everyone. As Kathryn mentioned, I'm Lauren Bader. I'm one of our program managers so we're going to go ahead and jump right into things this morning.

3:12

So, this is our Best Practices webinar. This is our compliance and program expectations and responsibilities webinar. So this morning, we're going to go over an overview of the program timelines, the responsibilities of different K 12 program stakeholders, SEAA's expectations for schools, and best practices and compliance. We'll cover a variety of topics during that portion.

3:43

So, in terms of the parent timelines, in February all of our new student applications will open. So February first is typically when we open up those new applications for the Opportunity

Scholarship and ESA Plus programs for the upcoming academic year. I know that this year was a little bit of a delayed start for the ESA Plus program, since it was the first year.

4:08

We were offering that application, but we do anticipate that for the 23, 24 school year, that application will open on February first, as well. For both of the programs, it is to a family's advantage to apply in February before the priority deadline. However, they do not have to get it in February first. So really, any time during the month of February is the best time for them to apply. It is a lottery system. It is not first come first serve, so they don't all have to rush to get it in the first day it's open.

4:44

March first is the priority deadline for both of the programs for new student applications. We will try to keep the applications for both programs open for as long as we can. We will close them if funding is no longer available.

5:03

April is when the award offers for those families who applied by the priority deadline are expected.

5:10

Parents of award students must respond to the award offer. They will have the option to either accept or decline on their to-do list.

5:20

In May and June, over the summer, this is when we typically run verification for the Opportunity Scholarships. This will either be income verification or prior enrollment.

5:30

Then, in August, we open up the fall parent endorsement. And just as a reminder for schools, the schools will endorse first, and then the families will have the ability to endorse. We always have a couple of schools each year that are confused by that and think that the parents have to endorse first. But you completing your school endorsement is actually what controls the ability of the parent to access endorsement.

5:55

So, make sure you're completing those first.

6:00

October first is going to be our final deadline for families to confirm their school choice, and also to submit documentation to complete any verifications that they've been asked to provide documentation for.

6:15

In January, the spring endorsements will open.

6:19

Then in late January, this is when renewal offers will be made available to eligible students. We do have a separate webinar recording that is available on our website and addresses the parent requirements and timelines in a little bit more detail if you're interested. And we do strongly

encourage families to sign onto My Portal at least once a week, as long as their students are connected to either of the K 12 programs.

6:48

As far as the schools are concerned, late January to June 15th is our registration window for new schools interested in participating with the K 12 programs.

6:59

April, for our schools that are already registered, is when your pending awards report of new and renewal students will become available.

7:08

Then, July 15th is our big deadline for schools to submit standardized test results and graduation data from the previous academic year, and the tuition and fee schedule for the upcoming academic year.

7:23

In August, this is when we always offer our training sessions for non public schools, And this is also when certification and fall endorsement will open. Just as a reminder, certification is the process by which your school reports the tuition and fees charged for each student.

7:40

And the certification training that we offered last week explains the policies and procedures around the reporting of tuition and fees in more detail. We strongly encourage everyone to go view that recording and download the slides, if they weren't able to make it.

7:56

January is when our spring endorsement will open.

7:59

And again, just like for parents, we encourage our schools to sign onto My Portal at least once a week, and make sure they're monitoring their records, notifications, everything else in there, as long as the school is connected to the K 12 programs. We tend to send a lot of notifications out of the system, and these will be stored in your notifications section. So if you miss something in your inbox, it's always a good idea to go back to My Portal and check your notifications. Everything will be housed there.

8:32

So, let's move on to responsibilities.

8:38

On the SEAA side, we are responsible for administering the K 12 programs in accordance with North Carolina State Law.

8:46

We manage student applications and new student registration.

8:50

We maintain student and school records.

8:53

We disburse funding to schools on behalf of students.

8:57

We collect required documents from schools and families, and we ensure compliance with program policies.

9:07

Parents are responsible for completing a new student application or a renewal offer for their student.

9:14

They are responsible for managing all processes related to the student record in My Portal.

9:19

They're responsible for accepting any award offers, submitting verification documents, and they're responsible for working directly with the school to enroll their students.

9:29

They're also responsible for endorsing their award twice per year to release funds to the school.

9:39

They're responsible for managing their program rosters and advising SEAA of missing students.

9:44

They're responsible for certifying students, whether they're attending or not, and endorsing student funds.

9:51

They're responsible for applying funds to student accounts, reconciling their accounts, notifying SEAA of student withdrawals, administering standardized tests, adhering to SEAA deadlines, and managing student enrollment.

10:06

Now, there is also a financial review requirement that is required of any large school, and for the 22, 23 year moving forward.

10:14

This is considered to be any school that is receiving funds for 70 or more students. So, this could be either 70 students from one of the programs, or 70 students combined. So long as your school has 70 program recipients, you will be required to submit a financial review.

10:35

We do also want to take a minute to talk about enrollment policies. So, if a school chooses to enroll a student who is a recipient of K 12 program funding, this is considered to be the school agreeing to accept program funding for that student.

10:52

Schools cannot refuse funding for a student that they have enrolled who has been offered an award through either of the K 12 programs, nor can they only accept a portion of the student's funding.

11:03

So, for example, if you admit a student who has been offered the Opportunity Scholarship, it's not possible to say, well, I only want to accept 50% of the student's award.

11:16

So, up to the cost of attendance is what we will pay out on behalf of students. So either that 6168 for the academic year, or 90% of tuition and fees, depending on the student's award offer. But schools cannot accept less than that maximum amount that we award.

11:41

Additionally, if a school previously indicated that they would accept funds for one of the K 12 programs and then enrolls a student who has been awarded funding through the other program, the funds for that other program will be directly disbursed to the school on behalf of the student, regardless of the school's previous indication to not accept funds from that other program.

12:08

Just a few reminders. The success of these programs does lie in the partnership between SEAA families and schools, and not just in how well individual stakeholders carry out their program responsibilities.

12:22

The responsibilities of each type of stakeholder do go hand in hand with one another. However, it is important to recognize when helping becomes overstepping.

12:33

So under no circumstances should a school create a My Portal account on behalf of the family, access a family's My Portal account using their credentials, or complete program processes on a family's behalf.

12:47

These all represent a conflict of interest to us.

12:50

Schools can also not email SEAA to correct a student's application, request a reinstatement of an award offer, or request a school change. These all have to be initiated by the parent via email.

13:07

But there are ways you can help. So families often see their school as a familiar face, and because they are working with you on a more regular basis, they are more inclined to come to you first, sometimes, rather than SEAA staff to ask for assistance.

13:25

We are hoping to provide a few ways here that your school can help, without creating a conflict of interest.

13:34

So, oftentimes we see families struggling with carrying out program responsibilities due to things such as a limited access to technology, language barrier, there may be some other circumstances, but in those cases, offer a family access to a school computer for them to login to My Portal.

13:54

You can help provide translation services to parents. You can also try to help parents understand their responsibilities with the program.

14:04

You can set up a buddy system where you're connecting new parents with K 12 program families who have been receiving funds for a while and know how the programs work.

14:15

If you do use this, the new parent is still responsible for the student's application, and all program processes related to their student.

14:25

And then also just connect parents with the appropriate resource. Provide parents with the contact information for their program, or our login help team, and direct them to reach out to us for assistance.

14:41

Let's talk a little bit about policies for a moment. So one thing that we tend to deal with towards the end of every academic year is that we hear from parents who feel misled.

14:54

They either signed a contract that they didn't understand with your school or they thought that they were going to enroll their student and receive certain services that they don't feel like they're getting. And many of them are just unaware of your school's policies in general.

15:10

We do encourage schools to work with parents and vice versa.

15:15

We encourage parents to work with schools when they feel like there's been a misunderstanding in school policy and their expectations in enrolling their student at your school.

15:28

We are not able to provide assistance in matters concerning your school's policy, and it is up to you and the parent to work things out together.

15:38

We do try to encourage schools to have written policies for things like tuition payments. So how much is the family going to be billed, and how frequently are they going to be billed?

15:50

What happens if a parent does not endorse funding?

15:53

And what happens when a parent withdraws their student midyear?

15:57

Having clear and written policies that are communicated to your parents ahead of the school year starting can help mitigate some of these misunderstandings later on down the road.

16:13

In terms of training and communication, we'll talk a little bit more about email later on in the webinar, but please ensure that you are checking your email on a regular basis and responding to our requests in a timely manner.

16:28

Oftentimes things that we're trying to do with a student record hinge on receiving information from you about the student's enrollment. So we're not able to move forward and take certain steps with the student record until we've received a response from your school in many cases. And for auditing purposes, we do conduct most of that business via email, just so that there is a written trail of communication.

16:54

Then the trainings we're having, these webinars throughout the month of August. We do encourage your school to have more than one official attend. And we do strongly encourage you to go back and watch any of the recordings for the webinars that took place this month that you may not have been able to attend in person.

17:19

Moving on to compliance. We already covered certification and endorsement in last week's webinar, but we did want to give some kind of quick hitters here. We do expect schools to certify all students on their roster even if a student is not attending. So there is an option for you to report that a student is not attending during the certification process and it is our expectation that your rosters be clear. All of your students should be certified either as attending or not attending.

17:52

And certifying a student as not attending early in the fall is really important. Because this is our window where we're able to work with families who may have accidentally selected your school earlier on in the spring when they applied, but may be enrolled somewhere else, and forgot to tell us.

18:08

Once you certify a student as not enrolled, they then begin receiving emails on a weekly basis up until our October first school choice deadline, reminding them that their school choice is incorrect. It also allows us to go ahead and process a school change if the family has contacted us and said, hey, my student is actually at the school.

18:34

So, during certification, when you report the cost of attendance, we should be able to see a direct correlation between the standard cost that your school certifies and the cost of attendance listed on your tuition and fee schedule that was submitted to SEAA earlier in the year.

18:53

We do take endorsement very seriously because this is the next step in releasing funding to a school.

19:00

So under no circumstances should a school endorse funding for a student who is not enrolled. And also, endorsing no is not a substitute for submitting a withdrawal form. If you have a student



who is not attending your school or maybe attended for a couple of weeks and then withdrew, endorsing no does not remove them from your roster. It does not open up their record for us to be able to complete a school choice change if they went somewhere else. We do have to receive a withdrawal form. This is both security for your school and for the family. We just want to make sure that the money is going to the correct place.

19:45

So what happens if you make an error during certification? So if an error is made in reporting the cost of attendance during certification and funds are disbursed, you must notify SEAA of the error within 10 days of disbursement.

20:00

Please reconcile your deposits immediately and notify SEAA as soon as possible if you notice there's been an error in the amount disbursed. Schools do have access to a payments section, where you can view all of your disbursements as well as any refunds your school may have returned to us.

20:18

The disbursements, I think, are really helpful. They're all listed by date.

20:23

And if you expand those out, you'll also be able to see details for each disbursement telling you exactly which students you received funds for.

20:33

So if you have made an error, please contact us via email and let us know the name of the student. We will need the name of the student in order to evaluate the situation and assist.

20:46

There are certain circumstances where, as long as funding has not gone out for the student just yet, we can maybe help you reset endorsement, and put that student back on your offered uncertified roster so that you can go ahead and make corrections without having to do anything else before the money ever leaves the building.

21:07

Now, if funding does go out erroneously and a mistake was made, you would need to create and complete an audit correction form and submit that to the programs to report the corrected cost of attendance. You would need to contact [NPS@ncseaa.edu](mailto:NPS@ncseaa.edu) to report those errors. And a task would be added to your task pad.

21:32

We cannot guarantee that additional funding will be available in the event of these errors. They are very time consuming and difficult to fix. So we do want to stress the importance of making sure, before you endorse, you're reviewing the amount of funding that has been calculated for each student and making sure that it's correct with tuition and fees you reporter earlier.

22:07

So, we've had some changes to part-time enrollment this year, and we do expect schools to know which of their students are enrolled part-time and in what other school the student is co enrolled. I know this won't apply to very many students out there, but it is a big topic for us this year. We do want to stress that if a student is enrolled at your school part-time, they have to be

co enrolled in some other eligible school, they cannot just be enrolled at your school part-time and then have no other form of enrollment for the rest of the day.

22:44

During certification, if you do have a part-time student, please just report their accurate cost of attendance, whatever you are charging them that year. The system will automatically calculate their award offer based on those costs. There's no additional math that your school needs to try to do, just whatever the bill would be to the family, please report that during certification.

23:07

We do ask that schools notify SEAA throughout the year if there are any changes to a student's enrollment with regard to full-time or part-time status. However, again, we cannot guarantee that an increase to a student's level of funding will be available if enrollment has changed midyear.

23:27

There are a couple of rules with regards to co enrollment that differ between the Opportunity Scholarship and the ESA Plus program. Please note that the biggest is for Opportunity. There cannot be any co enrollment with a home-school at all.

23:45

So Opportunity students can either be enrolled part-time in a participating school, and part-time in a public school, and receive half of the maximum award amount.

23:56

They can be enrolled in two participating non public schools and receive the full value of their award funding, but they cannot be co enrolled in a participating school and a home-school. They will lose funding if they are co enrolled in a home-school.

24:15

For the ESA Plus program, students can either be co enrolled in a non public school and a home school and receive full funding, they can be co enrolled in two participating non public schools and receive full funding, or they can be co enrolled in a participating non public school and a public school and receive half of their maximum award amount.

24:48

So, we'll be covering withdrawals in more detail next week, But, again, just some important points to note, schools are required to submit a withdrawal form within 10 days after a student stops attending, or withdraws.

25:03

And if a refund is owed back to SEAA, we must receive those funds no later than 30 days from the student's last day of attendance.

25:12

We will process those withdrawal forms for you. And in the event that a refund is owed, we will send you an email providing you with your deadline to return those funds, as well as an exact amount that you are being asked to return. So, please keep an eye out for those emails. We will try to set reasonable expectations with regards to that deadline. If it's taking us a while to process those forms, we will certainly try to accommodate that.

25:42

The withdrawal form is a program requirement and schools cannot withhold the withdrawal form from SEAA due to a dispute with the family.

25:52

We understand that schools may have policies about withholding grades or transcripts or other materials until the bill for the family has been reconciled, but the school cannot withhold the K 12 program withdrawal form.

26:11

We also have a number of schools come to us with students who have just stopped attending. They've just kind of, you know, disappeared and they're no longer showing up to school. And they want to know, how do we handle that in terms of withdrawals?

26:27

So, if a student stops attending and is not at your school for 10 or more consecutive days, without any communication from the parent, you should consider the student withdrawn and you should submit a withdrawal form to the program.

26:43

This is not a policy for students that have some kind of medical emergency where they have to be out of school due to an illness or a hospitalization or something of that nature. This really hinges on communication with the parent. If the parent is still actively communicating with you and your school is working to set a time when the student will return, we don't consider that student withdrawn. If you have any questions or a unique circumstance, we encourage you to email us with details so that we can help you assess whether or not a withdrawal form is needed. But really, what we're talking about with this policy is 10 days or more of absence, with absolutely no contact from the parent, no explanation as to why the student has not been in school.

27:37

We do consider schools out of compliance with program requirements if a program recipient withdraws or stops attending, and a withdrawal form is not submitted to SEAA.

27:53

Moving on to reconciling records, we often hear from families at the end of the year that maybe they didn't receive funds that year. Something happened, and funding was not disbursed. These families are understandably upset. But unfortunately, we are not able to fix these errors months, or a year, after they happened. Schools can help prevent many of these parent errors by reconciling their student accounts in a timely manner.

28:22

So you must apply program funds to student accounts within 10 days of the funds being disbursed.

28:28

You should be able to identify the student recipients at your school.

28:32

And you should be able to use your rosters to look at students who have been endorsed by their parent, and those who have not yet been endorsed by the parent. If you go to your rosters and

you look at your endorsed roster, this is an informational list, and it will tell you exactly which of your students have been endorsed already by their parent, and which ones have not.

28:57

So please be sure to reconcile your student accounts in a timely manner, and ask about funds that have not yet been disbursed.

29:03

Families may be unaware that some of their requirements are incomplete, and if a school asks for the funds from the family months after the start of the academic year, that student may be at risk of losing funds. If you contact us as soon as you notice that student is not on your roster, or if you contact the parent and say, hey, we noticed that your student is not there, that's a trigger for either us or the parent to go look at the record and say, does this person have any outstanding requirements.

29:35

Once we get close to that end of the fiscal year, there's a decreased chance of schools being able to receive funds from SEAA if there are things that were not completed in a timely manner. Schools do risk losing funds if a family does not endorse the endorsement deadline. So, please stay on top of your records. Please do reconciling throughout the year, and please stay in touch with your families.

30:01

We do deal with a number of situations every year where somebody misses out on funding and it's always unfortunate that these just cannot be resolved in some cases.

30:17

So we spent a lot of time talking about compliance. Now let's talk about non compliance. So, failure to comply with SEAA policies and deadlines may result in limited access to My Portal functions.

30:31

A hold on the school's account preventing disbursements from SEAA, deactivation of the My Portal account.

30:39

Schools can be placed on probationary periods for additional monitoring.

30:43

Or, school participation with the K 12 programs in extreme cases can be revoked.

30:49

Schools which are removed from participation with the K 12 programs must wait one academic year before re-applying for participation as a new school.

31:02

So, let's talk about contact information real quick. So how you can stay in touch with us and how we can stay in touch with you. Schools are ultimately responsible for updating their contact information in the school information section of My Portal. I've included a screenshot of your contact information here, and I have circled each of the three email addresses that we communicate with, so please be sure to update your contact information, especially when your

school experiences some staff turnover. If your school is not updating this information we have no way of knowing how to contact you.

31:39

You can list up to three different emails to receive communications from SEEA.

31:46

This is the Director of School email, the primary contact email, and then the notifications email. I've noticed a couple of schools recently in the notifications field entering in two email addresses separated by a comma.

32:03

Even though this field says notifications, just consider it a third resource to list an additional email address. We send communications to all three of the addresses that you list here. When we send communications out of My Portal, My Portal is looking at those fields as one singular data field. So, it cannot read two email addresses separated by a comma.

32:30

If you've entered that in, you do need to go in and take that secondary email out, and just list the one there. Otherwise, it's going to create a system error when we try to send you an email.

32:45

So, please just list one email per field. We will send communication to all three of those addresses. I personally think that it's really beneficial to a school to list at least two, if not three different email addresses, just to ensure that multiple individuals at your school are receiving program information.

33:10

Now if your highest decision making authority changes, you do need to update the contact information, but doing this in and of itself does not update your HDMA with the programs. There are still additional steps that need to be completed, such as a background check for the HDMA and the My Portal credential request form.

33:33

So please be sure you contact NPS directly. If you do have a change in your head of school, we will need to assist you with some additional steps.

33:43

And we do ask that you do not enter in contact information in the Director of School fields for someone other than the HDMA. We do need to be able to contact that person.

33:58

That concludes our presentation for today. I'm going to go ahead and leave up our slide with our contact information, our website, our email address and then the two phone lines. Please note that the NPS email and the NPS phone line are for school officials only. We are trying to funnel your requests off to a dedicated team of specialists for quicker assistance with school-related problems. If you were emailing the individual programs, or calling the parent line, you're not going to reach our NPS team first and it might take some additional time to get back to you as we sift through the parent emails and find your requests.

34:47

Additionally, parents should not use school only line, because for the exact same reasons. They're going to end up speaking with somebody who is trained to assist with the schools, and while there is some assistance that they can provide, it's far better for them to contact the line dedicated to parents and speak with somebody who is going to be better positioned to assist with their questions.

35:16

The NPS line we do have open from 9 am to 12 pm Monday through Friday. We do try to return our voicemails within 48 hours.

35:26

Again, if you are calling and leaving a voicemail on the regular program line, it may take us a little bit longer to get back to you because we are triaging those.

35:38

And right now, with certification open, we are experiencing an uptick in inquiries. So it might take us a little bit longer than that 48 hours.

35:48

I do want to put in a little plug for our website, as well. We did recently update the NPS pages of our website, so please visit our school administrators page. We've provided a lot of information on annual requirements and best practices, and a variety of different documents for you to access there.

36:10

That being said, Kathryn, I think we're going to start the Q and A portion.

36:15

Are we seeing anything that should be addressed at this time?

36:21

(Kathryn) A couple of things. I made some notes.

36:23

I know we have a webinar next week that's going to address withdrawals and transfers and I would say to the audience is a very important topic because it is a sign of how well your school's administering the program if you handle the withdrawals and transfers timely. I also wanted to say that our withdrawal processes are meant to protect the school. So if a student is appending one school and transfers to the second school, we are trying to protect the first school to ensure that that school receives funding that it's due. If students were to transfer and we were lax about that withdrawal process, the first school might not get paid as is appropriate.

37:07

So, wanted to urge you to pay attention to this process because overall, it's meant to make sure that schools get the funding that they are due.

37:16

And Lauren, the one thing that has come up several times in the chat is students who attended last year but have transferred over the summer and aren't attending this year. Can you just talk through that briefly?

37:29

(Lauren) Yeah, in terms of the withdrawal process. So if you have a student who withdraws after the end of the school year, that is the one time we do not need a withdrawal form. If they finish out the school year with you, we do not expect to receive withdrawal form. I think that we would be completely inundated with forms if schools tried to submit a withdrawal form for every student that transferred over the summer.

38:00

After the conclusion of the school year, we do not consider that to be a period of time for which we need a withdrawal form. If they transfer in-between semesters, we do need a withdrawal form there because that student likely still has funding for the spring that needs to be transferred over to the new school.

38:18

But if the student finishes out the school year with you and then transfers somewhere else, you are not obligated to submit a withdrawal form.

38:29

(Kathryn) Another couple of questions that have come up are about the part-time enrollment, which I would preface our responses to you by saying that we are working through the policy surrounding the part-time enrollment. It's a little tricky, because the two programs don't treat the part-time exactly the same.

38:46

The most important difference being that the Opportunity Scholarship cannot be used for a student who is going part-time to a non public school and is being homeschooled the other part of the time. There is no home-school option whatsoever for Opportunity. So there is no part-time award if a student is in a home-school part-time.

39:04

Now, having said that, someone asked about kindergarten students who are in a half day program, which of course is not uncommon, and doesn't necessarily mean that the student is being homeschooled the other half of the time.

39:18

Lauren, I don't know if you have run into this or if this is one of those situations where we need to take it under advisement and released some guidance later, but what would you respond to the schools who are asking about knowing the co enrollment for a K five student?

39:32

(Lauren) We have come across this a couple of times, and if you have a K five program that only goes part day, we consider that to be in a similar vein as being part-time with no other co enrollment, which would make the student ineligible. So, either a full day program or a part day program with some other type of co enrollment.

40:03

(Kathryn) OK, thank you.

40:06

So you had mentioned that the student, excuse me, the school, cannot take less than the award amount for the students. A couple of schools may have misunderstood that.

40:16

In the sense that if their cost is not that high, can you re-iterate that? Because, of course, a school is not going to receive more than their costs, but you might want to say that again, so that it's clear to everyone?

40:30

(Lauren) Absolutely. So we will pay schools up to the cost of attendance, or in the event that your cost of attendance is greater than the student's award offer, we'll pay up to the maximum value of the student's award offer.

40:48

We've had a couple of schools approach us, and they have questions about maybe only accepting a certain percentage of the student's program funding. That is not possible.

41:05

So what they're asking for is to report their regular cost of attendance and their cost of attendance would exceed the value of the student's funding, but they don't want to take the maximum value of the funding, even though that's what's been awarded to the student. They're asking to accept a percentage. We will not do that.

41:28

The funds are awarded to the student for that family's benefit, to assist them in paying tuition and we cannot disperse a partial award amount. Anything that is less than the maximum value of what the student is owed based on your certified tuition and fees.

41:51

(Kathryn) I just want to piggyback on that for just a second, because there are a couple of folks who are separating in their mind tuition from fees and whether the student has a 90% award, or we're talking about part-time, or whatever it is. Tuition and fees are together, you report tuition and fees. And it's one amount.

42:11

I don't know if you want to add anything to that, Lauren, if I'm explaining that well, but it's not separate, you don't have a process for tuition and then a process for fee?

42:23

(Lauren) Absolutely.

42:24

So it's one amount reported during certification, so your standard cost reported for the student should be, what does the average cost that you're charging every single student at that particular grade level? So, if we're talking about a third grade student, for example. How much do you bill in tuition for a third grader to attend your school? And what additional fees are required of every student at a third grade level? That combined should be your standard cost of attendance.

43:00

(Kathryn) Right, so I have two more things that I kind of see from several of our members of our audience, but after that I think we're about ready to close out. So, one important question just has to do with the awarding.



43:16

There have been a couple of people who have asked if families will still be receiving awards, families who have applied later this summer.

43:23

And the answer is maybe.

43:25

As you know, there were some dramatic changes to the Opportunity Scholarship amount, as well as to various processes.

43:33

And it's not as easy to see how that's going to shift out.

43:39

So, we can't guarantee that there will be any more awards.

43:43

According to our calculations, our projections, we have awarded all of the students that the funding will allow. Now, having said that, every year we make changes and updates as you certify. It's another reason for you to certify as efficiently as possible because it's only when you certify your students that we know who is actually attending.

44:04

We have to give the families a chance, if you say they're not attending, so it takes a while to know how many of our students are actually enrolled, how many are actually going to benefit from funds, which then tells us how much more money we might have for additional students. So it's important that you certify so we can determine with confidence how much more money we can award to additional students.

44:26

What we're telling the families and what is now on the website is an announcement that says, if you applied after the priority deadline and have not yet been awarded, we hope to notify you by the end of October.

44:42

Now that may be a notification that we're sorry and the awards have been fully allocated and no funding remains for the year, or it may be an award email, and there's no guarantee. So families should not enroll their students.

44:58

They would be going at risk, at any rate, if they enroll their students because there's no guarantee that there will be additional awards.

45:04

We hope there will be and we will calculate through September and October to know what funds permit.

45:13

Anything else on that, team?

45:15

If you know of other questions that schools might have to the award amount.

45:24

OK, well, it is on the website, and there's something in the chat that went to everyone in terms of wording to explain to families what additional awarding might mean. The other thing that came up was about the pending awards versus the not yet certified roster.

45:41

And I know this is a question every year, as what's the difference? And why do students appear on the first roster but not on the second?

45:49

We offer the pending awards as a courtesy to your school. It's by design going to be inaccurate because families choose a school in February when they apply, and over the spring and summer they make other plans, they drop off that list of pending awards as they choose another school.

46:08

That's also representative of students before they get verification. We're required by law to verify students. If we verify and they are no longer eligible, we have no choice but to remove them from consideration.

46:22

So that pending awards report is offered as a courtesy to let you know the universe of students who have applied for a scholarship and have been conditionally awarded and have selected your school.

46:35

So we don't have the ability to make that any more accurate in the spring than it already is.

46:41

Lauren, you want to just hit the highlights of why students aren't on the Not Yet Certified roster? Because that's been another question.

46:50

(Lauren) Yeah, absolutely, The big difference, as Kathryn highlighted between the Pending Awards report and the Not Yet Certified roster is that the students appearing on the Pending Awards report have been offered funding and have selected your school.

47:04

Again, it doesn't take into account the verification.

47:09

So the students that appear on your Not Yet Certified roster, those are the students for whom every single requirement has been completed and they are ready to move on to the disbursement pay phase.

47:21

If you have students missing from your Not Yet Certified roster, it could be due to a variety of reasons.

47:30

Obviously the easiest ones to diagnose are the family has a missing document, they haven't completed everything yet. However, if they have submitted documentation and that documentation is still under review by program staff, that could also delay them from moving onto the Not Yet Certified roster.

47:49

If you have students who are new to the Opportunity program this year, and in grades three or higher, we have had delays in processing the prior enrollment verification. So, we're still waiting to finalize that for a number of students. And that's probably going to be the biggest reason why you have students missing at this time, is because we have not been able to verify that prior enrollment.

48:15

We are working to get that data uploaded to the system.

48:20

There will inevitably be a handful of families that are asked to provide report cards to confirm prior enrollment, but we're not yet at a place where we can request that information just yet.

48:33

Another potential reason that you may be missing a student. We do, every single year, see a handful of students that are accidentally certified or endorsed by their school as not attending.

48:48

And in those cases, if you certify a student is not attending, or if you accidentally endorse their funds as no, they get removed from your roster. So if that happens, usually the family will be notified that their school choice is incorrect, that they're not considered to be enrolled at a participating school, and they'll reach out to us. But if that happens, your school will need to contact us via email and let us know that that student is, in fact, attending your school. When that happens, we just have to reset the record for you, but because the student's been removed from your rosters, obviously you guys aren't going to have access to make any corrections on your end. So we'll have to help reset it for you.

49:36

(Kathryn) OK, there's one other, real quick question I'll squeeze in here, and that is, if a school certifies the student as not attending because they are trying to certify efficiently, the student's not there, but the student then does enroll later.

49:50

Is it true, Lauren, that they simply need to reach out to NPS via email and make that happen?

49:57

(Lauren) Absolutely. So if the student re enrolls at a later date, we just need an email from your school to confirm the enrollment. Again, thinking about that school choice deadline, we do require that students be enrolled for the fall no later than October first. So if they're coming to your school in November, their fall funding may be at risk, but we can certainly still place them back on your rosters for the spring.

50:29

(Kathryn) There were a couple of topics that really aren't for the group at large. There's a small subset of schools, but I think it would be better addressed individually.

50:37

So, if you're out there and you've asked a question, we just wanted to hit the more common concerns with this large group.

50:47

So, I took some notes and I'll make sure that we figure out how we're going to address some things.

50:55

And, if there's nothing else, Lauren, then I would say that you could wrap up with any final comments you might have.

51:04

(Lauren) Thanks, Kathryn. Yeah, I don't really have anything else. Just thank you all again for joining us this morning. Please be sure to tune in next Wednesday for our student withdrawals webinar. Really pertinent this time of year, as we know, that there's typically a lot of student movement in those first couple of weeks. So if you already have students who are considering a withdrawal or a transfer, it would be really beneficial to tune into that webinar next week. So, we hope to see everybody next Wednesday. And other than that, have a great rest of your day.