

Native American Tuition Waiver Guidelines

Introduction

Over the last two decades the Massachusetts Commission on Indian Affairs has assisted in the determination of eligibility of Native Americans in Massachusetts for tuition waivers at state colleges and universities. It is authorized by the Board of Education to certify that individuals are of Native American descent and eligible for the tuition waiver. The Commission uses membership in a Massachusetts tribal group (tribe, band, or clan) that is acknowledged by the Commission as a legitimate, historical tribal group as a criterion for making recommendations about tuition waivers. In addition, the Commission uses official state and federal recognition status for issuing tuition waivers to individuals whose tribes are located outside of Massachusetts.

Reason for Issuing these Standards

The reasons for issuing these standards are (1) to establish base eligibility for tuition waivers to state colleges and universities, and (2) to clarify eligibility requirements for individual applicants in order for them to apply for the waivers.

Eligibility for Tuition Waivers versus Massachusetts State Tribal Recognition

In considering the issue of tuition waivers, the Commission wishes to make clear that recognition of a student's eligibility for a tuition waiver is **not** synonymous with the issue of state recognition of a Massachusetts tribe. State recognition of a tribe in Massachusetts is a separate issue. Certification of eligibility for the tuition waiver only means that the individual descends from an indigenous, historical tribal entity of Massachusetts.

Explanation of Eligibility of Massachusetts Acknowledged Tribes

Eligibility of the Massachusetts acknowledged tribes for the Tuition Waiver Program has a legal and historical basis. The eligibility of these tribes is based on historic acknowledgement, treaties and legal documents from the colonial era through statehood i.e. the Earle Report of 1859; current statutes, and executive orders.

List of Tribes for Tuition Waivers

In order to assist Native American college applicants with tuition waiver opportunities, the Commission on Indian Affairs has developed a list of Massachusetts's tribes with whom an individual from a Massachusetts tribe must have an affiliation. This list has been approved by the Commission and will be revised, if necessary, and published annually. Those tribes are:

Aquinnah (Gay Head)

Assonet Band of Wampanoags

Chappaquiddick Wampanoag

Chaubunagungamaug Nipmuck (Dudley)

Hassanamisco (thru Nipmuc Nation Tribal Council)

Herring Pond Wampanoag

Mashpee Wampanoag

Natick Nipmuc (thru Nipmuc Nation Tribal Council)

Pocasset Wampanoag (Fall River, Troy)

Ponkapoag

Seaconke Wampanoag (Rehoboth)

Tribes outside of Massachusetts will be verified as being state or federally recognized through the following process:

- For federally recognized tribes, the Commission will refer to official listings and directories published by the Bureau of Indian Affairs in Washington, DC
- For state recognized tribes, the Commission will call the Governor's Office of the tribes' respective states or the Commission on Indian Affairs in those states (if one exists).
- For Canadian Tribes, the Commission will call the appropriate band office.

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS AND PROCEDURE FOR APPLYING FOR THE NATIVE AMERICAN TUITION WAIVER

I. Eligibility

Eligibility for Native American Tuition Waivers is limited to individuals who are Native American Indian and who live in the State of Massachusetts as set forth in these standards. To be eligible for tuition waiver the applicant must meet the criteria listed below:

A. Certification of Tribal Affiliation

- (1) Applicant must be a certified member of a federally recognized tribe. To be eligible, the applicant must be a member of a federally recognized tribe as set forth by the Bureau of Indian Affairs, and have a tribal identification card or letter of membership from the federally recognized tribe, or
- (2) Applicant must be a member of a Massachusetts acknowledged tribe or band as determined by the Commission on Indian Affairs. Refer above to the "List of Tribes for Tuition Waivers", or
- (3) Applicant must have a parent or grandparent who can document tribal affiliation to categories 1 or 2 above, or
- (4) Applicant must be a certified member of a tribe recognized by another state as being "state recognized" by that state government, or

(5) Applicant must be a Canadian tribal member with status recognized by the Canadian government or whose parents or grandparents can document tribal affiliation with a Canadian tribe.

B. Massachusetts Resident

The applicant must be a bona fide resident of the State of Massachusetts as determined by the college or university.

C. Accepted by a Massachusetts state higher educational institution

The applicant must prove he/she has been accepted for admission and enrollment by a state college or university.

II. Initial Application Process (New Applicants)

To apply and be eligible to receive a tuition waiver, the applicant must take the following steps:

1. Please fill out and mail or fax the **Tuition Waiver Application**.
2. Submit proof of residency – Mass. Driver’s License or Mass. Identification Card, utility bill in the student’s name, etc.
3. Present a letter of acceptance from the college or university at which he/she has applied to and will attend.
4. Demonstrate that he/she is a member of or has a formal affiliation with a Massachusetts indigenous tribe, a federal or state recognized tribe, or a Canadian tribe by presenting one of the following:
 - a. A valid tribal identification card
 - b. A letter on official letterhead from the tribal enrollment officer, committee, or other appropriate tribal official verifying membership status of applicant, parents, or grandparents,
 - c. A Canadian band card or status card,
 - d. Family tree with accompanying birth records or documentation of Native American parents or grandparents (lineage or adoption records: the applicant must be Native American by blood and have proof of parents’ or grandparents’ tribal affiliation),
 - e. Genealogical records of lineage to a Native American person listed in Massachusetts 1859 Earle Report.

III. Continuation of the Tuition Waiver (Continuing Students)

To continue to receive the Native American Tuition Waiver, the student must take the following step:

- Please fill out and mail or fax **Tuition Waiver Application**.

Native American Tuition Waivers *must* be verified with the colleges and universities twice a year; in the Fall and in the Spring. New applicants and continuing students should notify the Commission, in writing, before the beginning of each semester so that the Commission can send their names to the colleges or universities. Letters from the applicant should be received at the Commission office by these deadlines:

July 15th for the Fall Semester
December 15th for the Spring Semester

A copy of the letter [that we send to the college or university] will be sent to the student as official notification of the tuition waiver award. This letter is kept by the student for his/her records.