

## **Financial Aid Frequently Asked Questions**

### **What is financial aid?**

Financial aid is designated funds the school sets aside each year to make Cambridge Friends School accessible to families who could not otherwise afford tuition. Financial aid is designed to bridge the gap between the cost of a CFS education and a family's ability to contribute toward it. All families who receive financial assistance must qualify for need-based aid according to the School and Student Service for Financial Aid (SSS) and the CFS Financial Aid Committee.

### **Who can apply for financial aid and how is need determined?**

Anyone can apply for financial aid, and all applicants for aid will be evaluated by the Financial Aid Committee. Only those who qualify for assistance and have been accepted by the Admission Committee will be considered for a financial aid grant. We encourage families to apply for financial aid only after they have determined that, after considering all of their family and external resources (grandparents, other relatives, religious institutions, etc.), they will still be unable to pay the full cost of a CFS education. Your family's qualification will be initially calculated by SSS and grants will be determined by the CFS Financial Aid Committee. The Committee uses the SSS Estimate of Family Contribution (EFC) and the available budget to determine need.

### **How do I apply for financial aid?**

You can apply for financial aid through the School and Student Service (SSS). Parents or guardians complete and submit the Parents' Financial Statement (PFS) online at <https://www.solutionsbysss.com/>. Additional documentation must also be submitted to SSS.

### **How many students receive financial aid at CFS?**

About 40% of our student body receives assistance.

### **Does the school offer merit, athletic, or artistic scholarships?**

No. All financial aid is need-based.

### **Will applying for financial aid affect my child's chances for admission?**

The admission and financial aid processes are separate. After the Admission Committee recommends students for acceptance, those students who have applied for aid are reviewed by the Financial Aid Committee. Only students who are deemed acceptable by the Admission Committee are considered for Financial Aid. In considering financial aid requests, the School is "need aware" and may decide to offer spaces only to those students to whom we can also offer aid. If financial need cannot be met or cannot come close to being met by CFS, we may place your child on an admission wait list. Thus, by applying for financial aid, a child is entering a more competitive segment of our applicant pool.

We are fortunate to have many outstanding applicants for admission, and the financial need of those accepted for admission exceeds what we can afford to support. While our financial aid budget is significant, we are unable to award aid to all applicants who meet our admission criteria and who qualify for assistance. We encourage families to apply for financial aid only after they have determined that, after considering all of their family and external resources, they will still be unable to pay the full cost of a CFS education.

**If we are offered aid and decide to enroll at CFS, can we expect the same level of funding for the future?**

As long as your situation remains the same or similar, CFS can guarantee that you will receive the same grant with which you initially enrolled. If your financial situation changes, we may adjust your award accordingly, up or down. Families receiving aid are required to re-apply for aid each year for this reason.

**If we decide to enroll at CFS without receiving financial aid, can we apply for assistance in future years? OR can a currently enrolled family *not* receiving aid apply for assistance?**

Yes. However, students who enter CFS without receiving financial assistance should not expect to receive it in future years unless there is significant change in their financial status, in which case, the family may request consideration for assistance by contacting the Admission Office to discuss the circumstances. Generally, CFS will use your ability to pay one year as an indicator that you will be able to pay in subsequent years. If there is a change in family circumstance, we encourage families to talk to us about the possibilities of financial aid, as returning families are our first priority.

**How are financial aid awards and decisions made?**

Priority consideration for financial aid is given in the following order: returning students already receiving assistance, returning students whose family circumstances have significantly changed and are now requesting assistance, and new families. SSS uses calculations based on (but not limited to): household income, assets, debts, age(s) of the parent(s)/guardian(s), the number of dependents, and the number of children in tuition-charging schools.

**\* What if I am self-employed or own a business or a farm?**

You must fill out the SSS Business/Farm (B/F) Statement and submit the form along with your Parents' Financial Statement (PFS) in January. You must also fill out an SSS B/F Statement if you are self employed and report business income or loss on your 1040 and fill out a Schedule C or C-EZ.

**\* What if I have children at other schools where I pay tuition?**

SSS computes the total funds available for education (Estimated Parental Contribution) and divides this amount by the number of children attending tuition-charging schools. That number is what SSS deems appropriate per child. It is important to note that CFS may not consider day-care facilities as "tuition-charging." CFS does not consider graduate students in the calculation. We expect that families will apply for aid at each of the institutions their children attend. Copies of enrollment verification as well as grant awards from other institutions (elementary through college) may be requested and must be sent to SSS with a cover sheet.

**\* What if I plan to return to graduate school or go into business for myself?**

Parents returning to graduate school, changing jobs, or starting a new business as a personal choice must realize that any decreases in income from this choice will not be subsidized by the financial aid budget at CFS. Choosing to reduce your household income will not make you eligible for an award or eligible for a larger award. In fact, a minimum income may be imputed for parents who do not work or who earn less than \$15,000 per year.

**\* In a two-parent/guardian household, what if one parent/guardian does not work?**

CFS believes that able-bodied adults in the household can contribute toward the household income. Therefore, CFS may impute a minimum income of \$22,500 for each adult in the household (MA state minimum wage at 40 hours per week). If one parent/guardian does not work because there are children in the household under five years old, we do not impute an income. If one parent/guardian earns less than \$22,500 per year, we impute the total of \$22,500 as that parent/guardian's yearly income. This will change the results of the initial SSS calculation.

**\* What if I own additional property? Will this be considered in the application process?**

Yes. Income from a non-primary property (such as rental income), as well as the total value of property, is considered in the calculation. In addition, the CFS Financial Aid Committee often adds depreciation from property and businesses back into the calculation as income. This will change the results of the initial SSS calculation.

**\* My child has a trust set aside for college education. Is that money protected?**

Trust funds and other savings plans, investments, or other assets in a student's name, held for student for any reason, or restricted in any way, are taken into account for funding a CFS education. CFS follows the guidelines set by SSS which considers these assets over the number of years the child will be in school, including college. For example, if your child is applying for Pre-Kindergarten and has 18 years left of school and has a fund of \$10,000, we would expect that 1/18<sup>th</sup> (or \$556) of the fund could go toward the first year at CFS.

**\* Is retirement taken into account in the SSS calculation?**

SSS factors in parent/guardian's ages, therefore taking into account how close parents/guardians may be to retirement. The calculation will protect more income as parents get older. Pre-tax funds set aside for 401K, 403B, or other similar plans are calculated into non-taxable income and are not "protected."

**Do I apply for financial aid each year?**

Yes. It is important that families fill out the Parents' Financial Statement (PFS) and other required documents on time each year. Funds will not be reserved beyond the initial round of awards for those whose PFS or tax forms are received after the deadlines. We cannot emphasize enough the importance of submitting the required forms on time.

**How do I know my information is kept confidential?**

All awards are confidential agreements between the recipient family and the School. A family's application is retained on file for a limited period of time to document possible regulatory auditing, after which the records are destroyed. Financial aid recipients are not publicly identified at the school to the faculty or other families. The Financial Aid Committee considers awards strictly confidential. Families may not discuss financial aid information or disclose award amounts with others. Failure to adhere to this guideline may jeopardize future financial assistance.

Materials submitted to SSS are highly secure. Please see the SSS website at:

<https://www.solutionsbysss.com/Parents/> for more information about the security of submitting your information to SSS. If you feel more comfortable, you may blacken social security and/or bank routing numbers when submitting your tax and income information.

**Are there other payment options to finance a Cambridge Friends School education?**

Yes. CFS provides several avenues for tuition payment: (1) Families may pay all tuition by June 1 for the following year and receive a 1% discount. (2) Tuition may be paid in two installments, due on June 1 and February 1. (3) Tuition may be paid in ten monthly installments by debit authorization through Blackbaud Tuition Management beginning in May and ending in February. (4) Families may also look into additional loan options through [www.yourtutionsolution.com](http://www.yourtutionsolution.com).

SSS also provides a list of other resources at: <https://www.solutionsbysss.com/parents/resources>

**How are financial aid applications handled in situations where parents are separated, divorced, never married, remarried, or cohabitants?**

In the case of divorced or separated parents, we require all information from both parties. A separate PFS is required for *each household*, along with the additional required documents, or they may submit one PFS with their information combined. In making grants to families with separated or divorced

parents, we will not be governed by the terms of the separation or divorce agreement as to who is responsible for tuition. It is the parents' responsibility to work out how the parent share is to be divided between them. If one parent refuses to file an application, the application may not be processed. If a parent is unavailable or uncooperative, the School may decide not to require his/her financial information provided a disinterested party (lawyer, clergy, etc.) can verify the relevant circumstances.

If a parent has remarried or has a partner, we will consider the resources of that adult, bearing in mind the obligation they may have to their other children. In cases of cohabitation, we need and will include information from all adults in the household. CFS considers the entire household income, whatever the legal status of the family may be. Financial information will be held in the strictest confidence and will not be shared between divided families. All parties are expected to communicate with each other as necessary and participate in good faith in submitting information.

**What does financial aid cover?**

Financial aid covers the cost of the day tuition at CFS, as well as books, sports equipment, and field trips. We also offer financial aid for covering part of the cost of our auxiliary programs.

**What does financial aid *not* cover?**

Financial aid is not offered for our instrumental music or dance programs.

**What is the purpose of submitting IRS Form 4506-T if I am already submitting my taxes to you?**

This form gives CFS permission to request a copy of a family's federal income tax transcript as filed with the IRS. Sometimes, we will randomly submit a handful of 4506-T forms to double-check accuracy within our financial aid process. In addition, if a family fails to submit taxes, we will submit the form to receive verification that taxes were filed with the IRS. If we submit your 4506-T form, the School will pay the fee. A family should sign the form but should not date the form.

**Why do other schools offer different financial packages?**

Each school has different financial aid policies and therefore may recalculate the initial SSS family contribution based on such policies. Schools may also have differing policies on how much need they can meet. For instance, some schools only meet a certain percentage of need, while others meet full need. CFS attempts to meet need; however, we cannot always do so.

**We know that another family makes more than we do and received a better financial package. We want to appeal our financial aid. What do we do?**

Since financial aid is a confidential agreement between the School and your family, discussing the details of an award or financial circumstances is a breach of that confidentiality. It is important to note that failure to adhere to the guidelines of confidentiality may jeopardize future financial assistance. In addition, most families do not know the details of a friend or neighbor's financial circumstances, and it is impossible to fully know all the variables that are considered in the process. If you feel that important, pertinent, and factual information about your own resources or financial position has been left out of your application, please contact the Admission Office with the new information.