



The NAEHCY Scholars Program

2026 Overview

The NAEHCY Scholars Program will award up to ten \$3,000 scholarships to postsecondary students who have experienced homelessness* and are actively pursuing their post-secondary education. Selected scholars are chosen from a pool of applicants who meet all eligibility criteria and submit all required materials by the deadline.

Selected scholars are invited, encouraged, and financially supported to attend NAEHCY's annual conference (November) where they participate in enrichment and professional development activities, share their experiences with NAEHCY stakeholders, and participate in an awards ceremony. NAEHCY Scholars will be invited to participate in two additional convenings designed to support their educational journey and provide personal and professional enrichment as well as mentorship opportunities.

Below you will find all of the important information necessary to apply. Please visit our website at naehcy.org/scholarships/naehcy-scholars-program to learn more about the program, read the Frequently Asked Questions, and find additional scholarship resources for students.

2026 Important Dates and Deadlines

- May 1, 2026 - Application Opens
- Friday, July 31, 2026 - Application Deadline (by 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time)
- By September 1, 2026 - Notification of Awards
- October 31 - November 3, 2026 - Annual Conference in Nashville, TN

Eligibility

To be eligible for the scholarship, applicants must meet the following criteria:

- Applicants must be under the age of 23, as of July 31, 2026. .
- Applicants must be actively pursuing postsecondary education/trade school.
- Applicants must be eligible for McKinney-Vento assistance or have experienced homelessness* (while in school) within the last six years.
- Applicants must submit a letter from their McKinney-Vento liaison, verifying their eligibility. (Liaison should be from their current school district or the district from which they graduated.)

- Applicants may alternately provide eligibility verification from a school official, outreach worker, shelter provider, religious leader, or other homeless service provider, confirming current or former homeless status.
- **Please note**, undocumented students who meet the above criteria ARE eligible. However, ***previous recipients of a NAEHCY scholarship within the past three years are NOT eligible.***

**The applicant's homeless status is defined by the federal McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Act, which defines a person considered to be homeless as one who "lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate night-time residence." This includes people living in shelters, cars, motels/hotels, campgrounds, or places not meant for human habitation. The definition includes children and youth who are living with friends/relatives temporarily (doubled-up) because they lack permanent housing.*

Terms/Conditions/Requirements

- Submit the [application form](#) and all application materials by July 31, 2026 (by 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time) to scholarship@naehcy.org.
- Be sure to include a current, working email, not a high school email.
- You will receive an auto-generated email confirmation if you submit your application form online. You will receive a confirmation email (by September 1) to let you know that you are being considered for an award.
- Incomplete applications will not be considered for an award.
- If selected for an award, you will be required to provide an official copy of your school's transcript as well as proof of postsecondary school or program enrollment prior to the release of funds.

How to Apply

Applicants will be evaluated on each component of their submission. If sending multiple emails, make sure to include the applicant's full name and date of birth with each message and attachment to ensure our reviewers can accurately identify materials. Accepted file formats include PDF, Word, JPG and PNG.

- [Complete the application form online](#)
(Or, complete the form on pg. 3 and email to scholarship@naehcy.org.)
- Gather required documents
 - Personal essay (guidelines on pg. 4)
 - Unofficial transcript (If there are barriers to obtaining a transcript, contact us at scholarship@naehcy.org.)
 - Letter verifying current or former homeless status (guidelines on pg. 4)
 - Minimum of one letter of recommendation (guidelines on pg. 4)
- Email all required documents to scholarship@naehcy.org
- If you need assistance or accommodation, or need a Spanish application, please contact us at scholarship@naehcy.org

If you have any questions throughout the submission process, please contact us at scholarship@naehcy.org.

2026 Scholarship Application: Form

We strongly encourage you to [complete this form online](#). Alternatively, you may complete the fields below and email the completed PDF to scholarship@naehcy.org.

Contact Information				
Last Name	First Name	Class Year	DOB (MM/DD/YYYY)	Gender
Street Address				
City	State		Zip	
Mobile Phone	Email (working email address required)			
High School or Recently Attended College				
School Name		School Counselor or Trusted Teacher		
School Address				
Contact Person <small>A contact person is someone who is in regular communication with the applicant and is able to reach them if need be.</small>				
Name		Title		
Phone Number		Email		

Postsecondary Education Plans	
SAT/ACT Score (most recent)	
Anticipated (or Current) Field of Study	
Anticipated (or Current) College/ University	Have you been accepted? YES or NO
Applied for Financial Aid YES or NO	Awarded Financial Aid YES or NO
Long Term Professional Goals and Career Interests	

Additional Questions
We provide an opportunity for our scholars to attend our annual conference, taking place this year from November 17-19 in Orlando, Florida. If awarded, are you able to attend the conference which will include an award ceremony? Yes or No
If awarded, would you be interested in participating in a forum to tell educators and policy professionals what has worked well with your education, and what could be improved? Yes or No
If awarded, would you be interested in joining the NAEHCY alumni network and potentially mentoring future scholars? Yes or No

Signature	Date
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If you have any questions throughout the submission process, please contact us at scholarship@naehcy.org.

2026 Scholarship Application: Additional Materials

Personal Essay

Please complete a personal essay (500-800 words, double spaced) that addresses one of the following questions.

1. What would be the one thing you would change about the educational system for students experiencing homelessness, and why?
2. If you were an entrepreneur, what would you develop, and why?
3. As you look back, what would be one piece of advice you would give to someone starting High School, and why?
4. Looking forward, what is something you plan to change about yourself, or add to your life, and why?
5. What is your biggest challenge? If you woke up tomorrow and that obstacle was gone, how would you go about your day?
6. What activities or interests do you have that support your educational goals (i.e. church, community service, sports, the arts, etc.)?

Recommenders and References

- A letter from your local homeless education liaison, school official, outreach worker, shelter provider, religious leader, or other homeless service provider, confirming current or former homeless status. This individual must include their contact information and signature on the letter.
- A minimum of one letter of recommendation from a teacher, counselor, or other adult (not related to applicant) that can speak to your qualifications and experiences. This individual must include their contact information and signature on the letter.

Tips for Completing Your NAEHCY Scholarship Application and Essay

- Be Honest and Reflective
 - Share your personal story authentically. This scholarship honors resilience, not perfection.
 - Speak from the heart about how your experiences have shaped your perspective, values, and goals.
- Highlight Your Strengths Through Challenges
 - Show how you have navigated obstacles—resilience, responsibility, adaptability, or leadership in difficult times.
 - Don't focus only on hardships; emphasize how you respond to challenges.
- Share Your Educational Journey
 - Explain how homelessness or foster care impacted your education.
 - Highlight key academic achievements, even small ones, and moments of perseverance.
- Connect Your Story to Your Future Goals
 - Talk about your dreams for college and career. How has your past shaped what you want to pursue?
 - Show how receiving this scholarship will help you reach those goals.
- Include Moments of Growth
 - Reflect on what you have learned about yourself, others, or the world.
 - Discuss turning points: who helped you? What did you discover about your own strength?
- Don't Be Afraid to Show Emotion
 - It is okay to show vulnerability; your feelings are part of your journey.
 - Discussing how you have felt helps the reader connect with your story.
- Focus on Your Voice
 - Write in your own words, as if you're telling your story to someone who truly wants to understand.
 - You don't need big words; being authentic in your essay is your most powerful tool.

- Stay Organized
 - Use a clear structure: introduction, body, and conclusion.
 - Begin with a powerful opening, include key moments in the body, and end with a hopeful and forward-looking conclusion.
- Follow the Prompt and ALL Application Instructions
 - Answer one of the specific questions in the NAEHCY Scholarship application instructions.
 - Please adhere to the required word count of 500-800 words.
 - Be certain to verify your eligibility as a student who has experienced homelessness by including a letter from your high school McKinney-Vento liaison or eligibility verification from a school official, outreach worker, shelter provider, religious leader, or other homeless service provider confirming your current or former homeless status.
- Ask for Feedback
 - Have a trusted teacher, counselor, or mentor read your draft.
 - They can help catch grammar issues and ensure your message is clear and compelling.
- Proofread Carefully
 - Double-check your application and essay for spelling, grammar, and clarity.
 - Read your essay out loud to hear how it sounds.