



Tuition Assistance Timeline 2026-2027

Full Time Program

January 5, 2026: FAST Portal open for full-time tuition assistance

April 30, 2026: **Deadline for full-time tuition assistance applications**

Exceptional Minds Tuition Assistance Information

Dear Students and Families,

Exceptional Minds offers a Tuition Assistance (TA) program for students based on demonstrated financial need. Each year, we allocate a specific amount of funding for tuition assistance, with awards determined accordingly.

Our TA program uses a third-party provider, ISM/FAST, to ensure objectivity, confidentiality, and accuracy throughout the application process. You can access the ISM/FAST application here: [ISM/FAST Application](#).

For guidance with the application, families, supporters, and conservators may contact the 24/7 ISM/FAST Parent Help Line at 1-877-326-FAST (3278).

Regional Center Self-Determination Program Resource:

California residents receiving regional center services may use SDP for funding. Visit www.dds.ca.gov/initiatives/sdp for details. For tuition questions, contact info@exceptional-minds.org.

Important Notes:

- *Exceptional Minds does not provide full awards. All tuition assistance awards cover a percentage of total program fees.*
- *If the primary funding allocation is fully used during the initial application windows, additional application windows may not be offered for that academic year.*
- *Students accepting Regional Center funding are not eligible for tuition assistance.*



Information Needed for Your 2026-2027 Application:

1. **2025 Tax Returns** (or 2024 returns if 2025 has not yet been filed)
2. **W-2s or 1099s for 2025**
3. **Complete Family Income:** This includes all relevant sources of income, such as:
 - Social Security and disability benefits
 - Income from both parents, regardless of marital status (separated or divorced)
 - Financial support from extended family members
 - Trusts and/or investment income
 - Awards from the Regional Center

The family income requirement is waived if you meet ALL of these criteria:

1. Over the age of 18 and,
2. Entirely self-supporting financially, including living independently and,
3. Not claimed on the family's taxes as a dependent and,
4. Receives no financial support from the family or any other source including free or subsidized housing (unless government subsidy) and,
5. Files their own taxes and can document means of income (including Disability Benefits) and their personal expenses.

4. A personal statement/letter including the following questions:

1. What are your passions and interests, and what inspired you to apply to Exceptional Minds?
2. How would tuition assistance support your educational and career goals?
3. What skills and knowledge do you hope to gain from your experience at Exceptional Minds?
4. What is your ideal career path, and how do you see yourself making an impact in your field?

Tips for a successful application:

- Please be clear and complete in all of your responses. Give as much information as possible in the letter attached to the application. Numbers alone often do not tell the whole story of you or your family's financial circumstances. Please explain your financial position thoroughly.
- Exceptional Minds has instructed FAST to take into consideration family costs



related to expenses for the family member on the spectrum, including medical and non-medical treatment expenses, medications, etc. Please elaborate on these if applicable.

- The student's letter plays a significant role in the Board Tuition Committee's decision-making process. You are more than just a number—take this opportunity to inform the committee about yourself and your circumstances. There are no right or wrong answers; we aim to understand you better. This information is solely for financial aid purposes, is confidential, and will not impact your application to the Academy.

What else you need to know:

- There is a non-refundable \$53 fee to FAST for the application process. It is payable by credit card on the FAST site.
- After submitting your completed application – you will likely be contacted by a representative of EM for follow-up information.

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