

LOUISIANA · STATE AID REFERENCE

Louisiana State Aid Cheat Sheet

TOPS, GO Grant, and the deadlines that change the size of the award. For counselors, and for the family refrigerator.

Two front doors. The FAFSA is the TOPS application, the GO Grant application, and the Pell application, all at once. The **LOSFA Student Hub** is where the official record lives: core units, core GPA, the score LOSFA actually received, and later the college GPA and earned hours the state uses to release payment. The college portal is not that record. **What changed:** Act 347 of the 2025 Regular Session created a fifth TOPS level, **Excellence**, at a 31 ACT, retroactive to 2024-2025 graduates. It is the only level that reaches mandatory fees and the only one tied to current tuition. Opportunity, Performance, Honors, and Tech are still calculated from **2016-2017** tuition. No level pays for housing or meals.

The Programs at a Glance

Program	What it pays, and who qualifies
TOPS Opportunity	A campus-specific tuition amount set from 2016-2017 tuition. Needs a 2.50 core GPA , the 19 core units, and a 20 ACT (1030 SAT / 66 CLT).
TOPS Performance	The same award plus a \$400 annual stipend. Needs a 3.25 core GPA and a 23 ACT (1130 / 80).
TOPS Honors	The same award plus an \$800 annual stipend. Needs a 3.50 core GPA and a 27 ACT (1260 / 91).
TOPS Excellence	Tuition and mandatory fees, or \$12,000, whichever is less at a public. At a LAICU private college, tuition and fees or \$8,500 . Needs a 3.50 core GPA and a 31 ACT (1390 / 101). New in 2025.
TOPS Tech	Up to two years of skill or occupational training. Needs a 2.50 core GPA and a 17 ACT , or ACT WorkKeys at the Silver level instead of a composite score.
GO Grant	Louisiana's need-based grant. Requires a Pell Grant , at least half-time enrollment, and remaining need after the SAI and all gift aid come off the cost of attendance. Each campus sets its own amount from a state allocation. Not paid for summer.
TOPS Tech Early Start	Pays for dual enrollment coursework in a top demand occupation for Louisiana public high school juniors and seniors . Runs through the high school, not the July 1 calendar.
M.J. Foster Promise	\$3,200 a year full time, \$6,400 lifetime over three years, for adults 21 and older earning credentials in high-demand fields. Cannot be combined with TOPS.
Chafee ETV	\$5,000 per academic year for students who have been in the foster care system. Chronically under-claimed. Ask for it by name.
Also worth naming	National Guard Patriot Scholarship (pays the fees the Guard tuition exemption does not), YCP GO Youth ChalleNge Grant , Rockefeller State Wildlife (forestry, wildlife, marine science), Geaux Teach , STEP for FITAP families, and the Regional Contract Program for optometry and podiatry.

Deadlines to Post on Your Wall

When	What has to happen
April national ACT day	The deadline that costs money. Last chance to earn a qualifying score with no penalty. A qualifying score from the June or July test permanently reduces the TOPS award by one semester .
March national SAT day	Same rule for the SAT. A qualifying May or June score costs one semester. CLT scores must land by the April ACT date.
Dec 5 to Jan 31	College scholarship deadlines, all earlier than the state's: Tulane Dec 5; Nicholls and Southern Jan 5; Louisiana Tech Jan 15; Southeastern Jan 15; ULM and Grambling Jan 31. McNeese wants admission by Dec 15 and scores by Mar 31.
July 1	FAFSA or TOPS Online Application on file. File months earlier: GO Grant is packaged from a finite campus allocation.
June into July	LOSFA processes eligibility and sends award letters by email and through the Student Hub.
9th and 15th class day	GO Grant enrollment is verified on the 9th class day (half time). TOPS full-time enrollment is verified on the 15th (10th at a quarter school).
End of summer	The TOPS academic year closes. 24 earned credit hours and the required cumulative GPA both have to be there.
The gap-year limit	TOPS requires full-time enrollment as a first-time freshman by the first semester following the first anniversary of high school graduation . A longer gap ends eligibility.

The Rules That Trip Families Up

- **The GPA is not the one on the report card.** TOPS uses a core GPA computed only on the 19 core curriculum units. A strong elective average does not count.
- **TOPS does not accept an ACT superscore.** Most Louisiana colleges do. A student will hold two different official scores at once, and neither is a mistake.
- **Honors is a 3.50 and Performance is a 3.25.** Those rose with the graduating class of 2022. Anything that still says 3.00 is out of date.
- **TOPS pays tuition, not housing.** Four of the five levels never touch mandatory fees either. Only Excellence does.
- **The TOPS year ends when the next fall starts.** Summer hours count toward the 24, which means a short spring is often fixable.

TOPS: Check These Things Early

- 1. **The 19.0 core units.** Track them in the Student Hub starting in tenth grade. A missing unit found in tenth grade is a scheduling problem. Found in senior spring, it is a lost scholarship.
- 2. **The core GPA, and a single-sitting score by April.** Compare the core GPA to the ladder below, not the transcript GPA. No superscores. Put LOSFA's codes on every registration: **ACT 1595, SAT 9019.**
- 3. **The Student Hub account itself.** Personal email, not the district one, which shuts off at graduation right when award letters go out. Name exactly as it reads on the Social Security card, and have the student grant the parent access.

The TOPS Ladder

Level	Core GPA	ACT	What it pays
Tech	2.50	17 or WorkKeys Silver	The TOPS Tech amount, up to two years
Opportunity	2.50	20	The campus TOPS award amount. No stipend.
Performance	3.25	23	The campus award amount plus \$400 a year
Honors	3.50	27	The campus award amount plus \$800 a year
Excellence	3.50	31	Tuition and mandatory fees, or \$12,000, whichever is less. \$8,500 at a LAICU private.

Opportunity, Performance, and Honors amounts are set per campus from that campus's 2016-2017 tuition, so they differ by school. LOSFA publishes the list at mylosfa.la.gov/tops/; we do not reprint it, because a wrong number in a family budget is worse than no number. **Renewal:** 24 earned hours a year, full time on the 15th class day, continuous enrollment, and a 3.00 cumulative GPA for the top three levels. Below a 3.00 but at or above a 2.30 (24 to 47 hours) or 2.50 (48 or more) drops the award to Opportunity rather than cancelling it.

Counselor Calendar: What to Tell Students When

When	What to say
10th and 11th	Open a Student Hub account with the LASecure ID and check the core curriculum tracker against next year's schedule. First and second ACT attempts, with LOSFA's codes attached. Compare the core GPA to the ladder above and name the level in play.
12th, fall	FSA IDs for parent and student, both required. File the FAFSA. Warn families that several college scholarship portals close in December and early January, long before the state deadline.
12th, winter and spring	Final ACT attempts have to land by April, and college scholarship applications by the Dec 5 through Jan 31 window. Do not let a student register for a June ACT without calling LOSFA first. Confirm the FAFSA is on file well ahead of July 1.
Summer after	Award letters arrive by email and in the Student Hub. Tell students to check the Hub, not just the college portal.
Freshman year	Full time on the 15th class day. Count earned hours in April, and register for summer if the total is under 24.

Three Mistakes That Cost Louisiana Students Money

- **Registering for a June ACT.** One semester of TOPS, gone permanently, for a test that felt free.
- **Dropping a class in week two.** Full-time status is checked on the 15th class day, so a schedule change made for good reasons can cancel that term's payment.
- **Reading the transcript GPA as the TOPS GPA.** A 3.4 on the report card is not automatically a Performance award, and a weak overall GPA can hide a stronger core.

Louisiana's Signature Trap: The April Mirage

LOSFA's testing page carries two rules side by side. First: the April national ACT test day is the last chance to earn a qualifying score without a penalty, and a qualifying score from June or July reduces the award by one semester. Second: **the highest score must be used to qualify for TOPS, even if it was taken after that deadline.** So a senior who already qualifies in April and then retests in June can end up evaluated on the later score. **Tell families to ask.** Before a student registers for a June ACT, call LOSFA Scholarships and Grants at **(800) 259-5626** and ask directly: if my student tests again in June and scores higher, does the one-semester reduction apply? Write down who answered and when.

Free Resources: No Account, No Cost, No Data Collection

What	Where
The full Louisiana guide, plus the current version of this sheet	collegereadyparent.org/louisiana/
FAFSA 101 for parents, written for first-generation families	collegereadyparent.org/financial-aid-101/
Scholarship search across our college database	collegereadyparent.org/crp-scholarship-search-tool/
Grade-level checklists, ninth through twelfth	collegereadyparent.org/checklists/
LOSFA Student Hub, TOPS status, and award amount files	mylosfa.la.gov · (800) 259-5626

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Verified against the Louisiana Office of Student Financial Assistance, a program of the Louisiana Board of Regents, in August 2026, and against Act 347 of the 2025 Regular Session. Program rules change. This sheet is a reference, not financial advice. Confirm current details with LOSFA and with the college's financial aid office before making a financial decision.