



DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

OFFICE OF THE STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF

**EDUCATION**

## **Policy Updates Related to Coronavirus (COVID-19): DCTAG Grant Extended Deadline**

### **Background**

As a part of the District of Columbia's response to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, the Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE) is modifying, updating and re-circulating certain policies. In all decisions, OSSE will consider relevant federal requirements and fairness to new and returning applicants for the DC Tuition Assistance Grant (DCTAG).

### **Scope**

This document contains details and guidelines specifically for the submission of applications to the DC TAG program by new and returning students.

### **Effective Date**

This policy will take effect from **June 30, 2020** and will remain in effect until **September 7, 2020**.

### **DCTAG 2020-21 Academic Year Extended Deadline**

OSSE is extending the deadline for applicants to complete the [DCTAG application](#) and submit all supporting documentation from Thursday, July 23, 2020 to **Monday, September 7, 2020**.

The DCTAG application opened Saturday, Feb. 1, 2020 for the 2020-21 academic year, which includes the fall 2020 and spring 2021 semesters. Applicants must submit certain supporting documentation to prove domicile in the District of Columbia. A prior year Certified D-40 Tax Return from the DC Office of Tax and Revenue (OTR) is a commonly used document to demonstrate domicile.

In response to coronavirus (COVID-19), Mayor Muriel Bowser and OTR extended the District of Columbia's tax filing deadline from April 15, 2020 to July 15, 2020. OSSE extended the DCTAG application deadline to July 23, 2020 to allow families taking advantage of the extended tax filing deadline to use the Certified D-40 Tax Return to demonstrate domicile for DCTAG. **However, even with the extension, many families have not been able to access certified tax returns due to limited access to OTR. Extending the deadline to September 7, 2020 will provide families more time to complete the application and make decisions about college attendance for the 2020-2021 academic year.**

### **DCTAG 2020-21 Academic Year Change in Documentation to Prove Domicile**

**OSSE is also changing the requirement that D-40 Tax Returns must be certified by the OTR to be submitted to DCTAG for application purposes. D-40 Tax Returns must be processed by OTR but no longer have to be certified to meet DCTAG requirements. Through the receipt of domicile documentation supporting the D-40 Tax Return and a retroactive verification performed during the**

following application cycle, this temporary change in policy due to the ongoing national emergency will not affect OSSE's ability to ensure that only eligible applicants receive DCTAG awards.

The Office of Tax and Revenue and DCTAG have worked to help families obtain copies of their Certified D-40 Tax Returns. The two units have communicated with families about the availability of an existing electronic retrieval system built into the DCTAG application; provided online technical assistance to families on how to use the retrieval system; developed step-by-step technical assistance guides; created an alternative retrieval system; and worked with families individually. Despite these efforts, hundreds of families still do not have access to their certified tax returns.

Consequently, the DCTAG program is altering the requirement that D-40 tax returns submitted as part of the application be certified. DC regulations, specifically 29 DCMR 7003.2(h), provide OSSE with flexibility in determining what documents to accept in support of the DCTAG application. Further, federal policy guidance<sup>i</sup> received on June 23, 2020, indicates that reasonable substitutions can be made in supporting documentation for federal aid in emergency situations. Therefore, while OTR is closed, DCTAG will accept D-40 Tax Returns that are processed but not certified by OTR. This will enable residents to access their returns from the general tax retrieval tool on the OTR website.

If the information on the D-40 tax return meets general tax-related requirements and other required documentation is on file, then the application will be considered complete and the applicant will be considered for DCTAG eligibility. This policy is in effect for the 2020-21 application season only.

Students seeking 2021-22 academic year DCTAG funding who have a non-certified 2019 D-40 on file will be required to obtain certified 2019 and 2020 D-40 returns to complete their 2021-22 applications.

If families have any questions about the DCTAG application, please contact a DCTAG counselor. Contact information for DCTAG counselors is listed below:

#### Counselor Assignment by Applicant Last Name

Applicant Last Name	Counselor Name	Phone	Email
A,B,D,E	Lincois Anderson	(202) 719-6646	<a href="mailto:Lincois.Anderson@dc.gov">Lincois.Anderson@dc.gov</a>
C	Melanie Fleming	(202) 741-6406	<a href="mailto:Melanie.Fleming@dc.gov">Melanie.Fleming@dc.gov</a>
F,G,H,I,M,N	Sirwalter Hemphill	(202) 654-6106	<a href="mailto:Sirwalter.Hemphill@dc.gov">Sirwalter.Hemphill@dc.gov</a>
J,K,L,O,P,Q,R	Tiffany Williams	(202) 741-6403	<a href="mailto:Tiffany.Williams@dc.gov">Tiffany.Williams@dc.gov</a>
S,T,U,V,W,X,Y,Z	JaiSun McCormick	(202) 741-6411	<a href="mailto:Jaisun.Mccormick@dc.gov">Jaisun.Mccormick@dc.gov</a>

#### Questions and Answers

**Q. What happens if my tax returns are not available by the September 7, 2020 deadline?**

A: If your family files DC taxes, a D-40 tax return is one of the required supporting documents for the DC OneApp and the application is incomplete without it. The new DCTAG deadline provides ample time for residents to file taxes, have the taxes processed, and obtain a D-40 tax return from OTR from the MyTaxDC portal on its website.

If you have questions regarding filing your DC taxes and/or accessing a D-40 tax return for the DC OneApp, contact OTR at <https://otr.cfo.dc.gov/page/coronavirus>. For DCTAG updates and to contact DCTAG counselors, please visit the DCTAG website at <https://osse.dc.gov/dctag>.

**Q. How can I obtain a copy of my D-40 taxes while OTR and OSSE are working remotely?**

A. Your taxes have to be filed and completely processed for a D-40 tax return to be available electronically. When completing the DCTAG application, you have the option to ask for the OTR interface to take place. With your permission, using this interface, OSSE can obtain your tax return information electronically. You will have to submit information from your tax return for the interface to work. See the DCTAG website for more information. You can also obtain a copy of your tax return from OTR's MyTaxDC portal located on the OTR website.

**Q: Is the deadline still September 7, 2020 if I am not required to file taxes?**

A: Yes, the deadline is September 7, 2020 regardless of whether or not you file DC taxes. If you are not required to file DC taxes, you must submit a different **domicile document** for review. Please see the following web link for a list of other possible documents:

[osse.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/osse/page\\_content/attachments/2020-21%20Supporting%20Documents%20Checklist.pdf](https://osse.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/osse/page_content/attachments/2020-21%20Supporting%20Documents%20Checklist.pdf)

**Q. What happens if the school I'm attending isn't open for all or part of the 2020-21 academic year?**

A. If your school has not made an announcement regarding its 2020-21 academic year, you should assume it will be open and apply for DCTAG by the September 7, 2020 deadline.

If your school is only offering classes for spring 2021, you should apply for DC TAG by the September 7, 2020 deadline as the current application is for the entire 2020-21 academic year.

If your college is not open for the 2020-21 academic year and you decide to attend another institution, you can apply for and receive an award under DCTAG for attendance at that institution, if the institution is eligible under DCTAG rules.

**Q. What happens if the school I plan to attend is only offering online courses?**

A. You may take online courses at DCTAG-eligible schools. Many students take both online and in-person classes during the school year.

**Q. If I'm not sure I will be attending school in fall 2020, should I still complete the DCTAG application?**

A. Yes, you should still complete the DCTAG application. OSSE is taking regulatory steps to further extend the application deadline beyond September 7, 2020 to better accommodate this scenario. However, any further extension is not guaranteed. Consequently, students anticipating attending college at any point during the 2020-21 academic year should submit an application and supporting documents by the September 7, 2020 deadline if at all possible.

## Questions?

If you have questions relating to this guidance, please contact Kenneth McGhee at [Kenneth.McGhee@dc.gov](mailto:Kenneth.McGhee@dc.gov) or Kenneth Howard at [Kenneth.Howard@dc.gov](mailto:Kenneth.Howard@dc.gov).

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<sup>i</sup> June 23, 2020 federal guidance email, the 2020 - 2021 FSA Handbook, AVG -95 and 2019 - 2020, AVG – 83 and DCTAG's COVID Response memo.