

Scholarships are one resource that can help students pay for college. Students with intellectual disability (ID) can access a range of scholarships.

There are numerous scholarships available, but sometimes it can be hard to find the ones that apply to your situation. We have identified some disability-specific scholarships that are appropriate for students with disabilities who are pursuing a non-degree program. As these types of scholarships can be extremely limited, offering only a few for the entire country, we share some other tips for finding local or college-specific scholarships as well. We encourage you to look beyond disability-specific scholarships to these opportunities as they can also be a great source of funding.

TIP



College programs for students with ID are typically non-degree certificate programs. Be aware if a scholarship you are interested in requires a student to be pursuing a degree. Don't be afraid to ask whether they can make an exception. Non-degree programs for students with ID are relatively new, and the scholarship program may not have considered offering the scholarship to students pursuing a certificate. They may be open to this option if you ask.

SCHOLARSHIPS OPEN TO ANY STUDENT

Scholarships awarded based on your location. Many high schools have a counselor dedicated to supporting students in the college search process. Counselors have a lot of information about scholarships that other students in your area have accessed. Local scholarships to consider include:

- » Scholarships specific to graduating seniors in your school district
- » Scholarships from local organizations, foundations, Rotary Clubs, and others

Scholarships awarded by your college or university.

Once you have decided on a college, you should discuss possible scholarship opportunities with the college program staff as well as the college financial aid office. They may have information about specific scholarship opportunities available through that college. They can assist you in navigating scholarships that other students may have been able to access.

TIP



Some scholarships require students to fill out the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). You can learn more about this application on the [FAFSA website](https://fafsa.ed.gov/).

SCHOLARSHIPS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

If you search for disability-specific scholarships, you will find a long list of national scholarships. To save you some time, we compiled a list of disability-specific scholarships for which students with intellectual disability are eligible to apply.



SCHOLARSHIPS BY DISABILITY

AUTISM

Autism Can Do Scholarship

Co-sponsored by John's Crazy Socks and Doug Flutie Jr Foundation for Autism, the program provides one scholarship to someone on the autism spectrum to advance their education.

- Award amount: \$5,000; \$2,500; \$1,000
- Due: March 15, 2025
- Number of awards: 3

Making a Difference Autism Scholarship

Kerry Magro has made it his mission to help others with autism via this scholarship program. The winning applicant will receive a \$500 scholarship to pay for their postsecondary education.

- Award amount: \$500
- Due: April 29, 2025
- Number of awards: 1

Organization for Autism Research

The Lisa Higgins Hussman Scholarship supports students attending 2-year colleges; life skills or postsecondary programs; or vocational, technical, or trade schools. Applicants typically make up the pool of talented students who face daily challenges related to autism and attend programs that assist in skill-building, job-readiness, and other transition-related skills.

- Award amount: \$3,000
- Due: April 21, 2025
- Number of awards: Varies

Synchrony Scholarship for Autistic Students of Color

This supports students attending any type of undergraduate postsecondary education, including 2- or 4-year colleges; life skills or postsecondary programs; or vocational, technical, or trade schools. Applicants must belong to an underrepresented racial and/or ethnic group.

- Award amount: \$3,000
- Due: April 21, 2025
- Number of awards: Varies

DOWN SYNDROME

Bright Future Fund (formerly O'Neill Tabani Enrichment Fund)

The mission of the Bright Future Fund (formerly O'Neill Tabani Enrichment Fund) is to offer financial assistance to adults with Down syndrome who are seeking to continue their educational journeys through a postsecondary educational program, an employment training program, a private-pay enrichment program, or local community classes.

- Award amount: Up to \$5,000
- Due: Spring 2025
- Number of awards: Minimum of 10 each year

Ruby's Rainbow

Ruby's Rainbow provides college scholarships for students with Down syndrome, spreading awareness of their capabilities and supporting their dreams of higher education and independence.

- Award amount: \$1,000-\$10,000
- Due: April 14, 2025
- Number of awards: Varies

United Parent Support for Down Syndrome Scholarship

The Katie MacDonald Memorial Scholarship will be awarded to an individual with Down syndrome who is pursuing educational or job training opportunities beyond high school. Personal connection and/or family involvement in support of UPS for Down syndrome activities or programs is a requirement.

- Award amount: \$1,500
- Due: April 1, 2025
- Number of awards: 1

Varghese Summersett Down Syndrome Scholarship

Varghese Summersett offers an annual scholarship for students with Down syndrome to honor two of their attorneys who have children with disabilities. It is intended for a child who needs financial aid to support educational or recreational opportunities. Recipients may use the scholarship toward a camp, tutoring, education, or any tool to help the child prosper.

- Award amount: \$500
- Due: April 1, 2025
- Number of awards: Varies

Down Syndrome Association of Central Ohio

The Down Syndrome Association of Central Ohio offers college scholarships to assist Ohio residents with Down syndrome or those who are siblings, parents, cousins, or other relatives of individuals with Down syndrome. Specifically, recipients must pursue careers that will positively impact the lives of individuals with Down syndrome. People with Down syndrome who are enrolled in a college program are eligible and strongly encouraged to apply.

- Award amount: \$2,500 - \$5,000
- Due: January 31, 2025
- Number of awards: 5

NDSC Jake Pratt Scholarship Program sponsored by UPS

The NDSC Jake Pratt Scholarship presented by UPS will provide individual grants to people with Down syndrome who are currently enrolled in an inclusive postsecondary education program that will enhance their life through employment, independent living, life skills, or interests in any other areas.

- Award amount: Up to \$25,000
- Due: December 1, 2024
- Number of awards: Varies

Jake Pratt Scholarship Program sponsored by UPS - Alabama

The Jake Pratt Scholarship Fund sponsored by UPS provides individual grants to Alabama residents with Down syndrome who intend to enroll or continue enrollment in a postsecondary program that will enhance their life through employment, independent living or life skills, or interests in any other areas.

- Award amount: Varies
- Due: July 1, 2025
- Number of awards: Varies

OTHER DISABILITY SCHOLARSHIPS

Children's Hemiplegia and Stroke Association Scholarship

Scholarships are for individuals who have hemiplegia, hemiparesis, or hemiplegic cerebral palsy due to any cause, or a diagnosis of pediatric stroke. Students must be attending a postsecondary school leading to a degree or certification or attending a postsecondary vocational education program.

- Award amount: Varies
- Due: August 31, 2025
- Number of awards: Varies

Dylan's Journey Memorial Scholarship

Dylan's Journey Memorial Scholarship will be awarded to one student with Neurofibromatosis (NF) and/or a learning disability of any kind.

- Award amount: \$1,000
- Due: March 21, 2025
- Number of awards: 1

Williams Syndrome Association Educational/ Vocational Postsecondary Scholarship

The Williams Syndrome Association (WSA) provides scholarship funding to young adults who are members of the WSA and are pursuing postsecondary education in academics and/or vocational and life skills programs. WSA awards scholarships based on financial need.

- Award amount: Varies
- Due: Two opportunities per year - March 31 and July 31
- Number of awards: Varies

Buckfire Law Disability Scholarship Program

The scholarship is available to students of any age, with any type of disability, including but not limited to physical disabilities, medical conditions, mental or psychiatric conditions, speech and language disabilities, learning disabilities, behavioral conditions, and all other conditions. Students must have completed one semester of college classes to apply.

- Award amount: \$1,000
- Due: October 1, 2025
- Number of awards: 1

Wells Fargo Scholarship Program for People with Disabilities - deleting this - they require ACT/SAT scores

Wells Fargo has developed this scholarship program to help people with disabilities obtain their education or training necessary to succeed in the career path of their choice.

- Award amount: \$2500
- Due: March 20, 2025
- Number of awards: varies

STATE SCHOLARSHIPS SPECIFIC TO STUDENTS WITH ID

Several states have developed scholarships specifically for students with intellectual disabilities who are accessing inclusive postsecondary education options. For many of these scholarships, students need to be enrolled in an approved Comprehensive Transition Program (CTP). This list on the Think College website shows the programs that are currently approved. We encourage you to check with programs about other state or program specific scholarships that may exist.

Delaware Advance Scholarship Program

H.B. 326 created the Delaware Advance Scholarship Program (DASP), seeking to defray tuition costs for eligible students with intellectual disabilities to attend Delaware comprehensive transition and postsecondary (CTP) programs. To qualify for DASP financial assistance, students must apply for federal Pell grants as well as state grants, such as those provided by the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation and Division of Developmental Disabilities.

- Award amount: Varies
- Due: N/A – The college program supports students to access these funds. Currently, the University of Delaware’s Career and Life Studies Certificate program is the only in-state CTP program, but H.B. 326 will apply to any other programs established in the future.

Florida Postsecondary Comprehensive Transition Program Scholarship

The Florida Postsecondary Comprehensive Transition Program Act established the Florida Postsecondary Comprehensive Transition Program Scholarship for eligible students to attend approved Florida Postsecondary Comprehensive Transition Programs (FPCTPs).

- Scholarships are available to students with an intellectual disability who have provided required documentation regarding their intellectual disability, who physically attend the eligible institution, and who are enrolled in the FPCTP.
- Award amount: Up to \$15,000
- Due: N/A – The college program supports students to access these funds

Kentucky Educational Excellence Scholarship (KEES)

Students are eligible for the KEES if they received an alternative high school diploma, or if they have an intellectual disability and attended a Kentucky public high school. Eligible students must also enroll in an approved CTP in Kentucky.

- Award: \$500 (enrolled in at least 6 credit hours) & \$250 (enrolled in less than 6 credit hours)
- Due: N/A – The college financial aid office works with students to access these funds

Minnesota Grants for Students with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities

The Minnesota Legislature established the Grants for Students with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (ID Grant) program to provide students with intellectual and developmental disabilities with financial assistance for tuition and fees. To qualify, a student must be enrolled in and attending an eligible CTP in Minnesota; have tuition and fees not covered by the Federal Pell Grant, state grant, or institutional aid; be a Minnesota resident; and complete the FAFSA or MN Dream Act application.

- Award amount: Varies - Awards are equally distributed among eligible students.
- Due: July 1 - Priority deadline

Tennessee Step Up Scholarship

This program is designed to assist students with intellectual disabilities who have completed high school and enrolled in an individualized program of study of up to four years at an eligible postsecondary institution.

- Award amount: \$2,250 (freshman, sophomore) & \$2,850 (junior, senior)
- Due: Fall – September 1; Spring – March 1; Summer – May 1

There may be other scholarships awarded by local disability organizations in addition to the scholarships in this list. There are several organizations that have chapter-specific scholarships. As these frequently change based on funds available, we've provided some examples of the types of groups you might contact in your local area to ask about scholarship opportunities:

- Chapters of: United Cerebral Palsy, Autism Society, Council for Exceptional Children, state chapters of The Arc
- Down Syndrome Associations
- Disability advocacy organizations

Finding resources to help pay for college can be time consuming. Scholarships are only part of the solution, but they can be an important resource. These general strategies for finding out about scholarships and this list of disability-specific scholarships can assist you to identify possible scholarships they can use as a part of your college funding plan.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Visit our **Paying for College** page with a variety of resources for families and others looking for ways to fund college.

Find out which schools accept federal financial aid and a lot of other information by visiting our **College Search**.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

MATTHEW L. MCCLELLAN is a Research Associate for the Think College National Coordinating Center, Institute on Community Inclusion, University of Massachusetts Boston.

CATE WEIR is Program Director for the Think College National Coordinating Center and is a national expert on inclusive higher education for students with intellectual disability.

HOW TO THINK COLLEGE, ISSUE NO. 11, 2025 UPDATE

HOW TO THINK COLLEGE is a publication of Think College National Coordinating Center, a project of the Institute for Community Inclusion at the University of Massachusetts Boston, funded by the Office of Postsecondary Education (Grant No. P407B200001). The opinions contained in this document are those of the grantee and do not necessarily reflect those of the funders.

Recommended citation for this publication: McClellan, M.L., and Weir, C. (2025 update). Scholarships for Students with Intellectual Disabilities. How To Think College, Issue No. 11. Institute for Community Inclusion, University of Massachusetts Boston.

A new edition of this resource is updated annually to reflect the most current information about the scholarships listed.

