



Build HOPE Project Guide

What is the Build HOPE Project?

*Build HOPE is a project designed to help parents meet their financial needs while pursuing their educational goals. Unexpected and anticipated expenses can derail students' educational progress and the Build HOPE Fund will provide them with flexible financial assistance to support their success. The funds from the Build HOPE Project are considered a **gift** for tax purposes.*

The Build HOPE project funds can be used to address any unmet needs that students have. Students will know best how to use resources to meet their own unique needs. There is a monetary cap on the amount a family can receive each year, so families who have not met that cap can make a second application if another need comes up within that year.

Build HOPE is also a research project designed to gather information about the things that parents in school need to succeed. Participants will be asked about their needs and invited to provide feedback about how the Build HOPE financial support affected their ability to meet their own goals. You do not have to participate in the research to get help from the project, but we hope that many parents will tell us their stories and help us improve support programs in the future.

Who is eligible?

In order to receive assistance from the Build HOPE project you must be a parent enrolled in post-secondary education and participating in one of these programs:

- Higher Opportunity for Pathways to Employment ([HOPE](#))
- Parents as Scholars ([PaS](#))
- Receiving TANF and attending an approved training or education program at least half-time

How do I know if my education or training program is an approved program?

Your training and education program needs to:

1. Award a degree or certificate beyond high school. If it is a preparatory course or program, it must be necessary for enrollment into a training or education program beyond high school.
2. Be accredited or result in a credential recognized by trade or industry associations.

3. Lead to a job with at least an [average job outlook](#).

Maine Equal Justice will contact DHHS to confirm enrollment in an approved program.

How do I apply for the Build HOPE Project?

First, fill out the [online Maine Equal Justice Contact Form](#). If you are working with a Navigator through HOPE or PaS please work with your Navigator to do the online intake. This will confirm your enrollment in an eligible program and help you to receive the funds more quickly.

Next, Maine Equal Justice will reach out to you to schedule a phone interview.

Build HOPE funds are meant to help with expenses that can't be paid for by other programs. If your need can be met by another program, such as ASPIRE or Heating Assistance, we may work with you to apply to these programs. We will also provide advice on how getting help from Build HOPE could affect other benefits you receive, such as MaineCare, SSI, SNAP or General Assistance. After the interview we will contact DHHS to confirm program eligibility before sending the money.

What happens if I don't get approved?

There may be some rare circumstances in which someone is denied assistance from the Build HOPE Project. If you are not satisfied with the outcome of your application you can request an internal review to dispute the decision. The application will be reviewed by a Maine Equal Justice staff member who was not involved in the initial determination and a final decision and explanation will be issued. Contact Jackie Stearns at jstearns@mejp.org to request an internal review.