

## **EXPLAINING TUITION ASSISTANCE**

TDSA believes that every Jewish child deserves a Torah education. We are committed to helping families better afford a great education through tuition assistance.

The full tuition price charged by TDSA is comparable to the cost TDSA incurs to educate a child. Therefore, for the Tuition Assistance Committee (TAC) to grant financial aid, it means the TAC feels that the need presented by the applicant justifies asking our donors to fund that amount of aid. TDSA donors give their tzedakah to fund scholarships for families who would not be able to afford the cost of living if they were to be asked to pay above their assessed amount. Assessments are based on the data provided by applicants and as verified by their tax returns. A third party system, FACTS, is used as part of the assessment process and every family is assessed using the same system. This can unfortunately feel like an intrusive process, but is necessary as the school must solicit funds from donors, and ensure communal funds are handled in an appropriate manner. The TAC uses the utmost discretion in making an evaluation and does so knowing that every Jewish child deserves access to a Jewish education. Our goal is to ensure that happens.

The following represents the guidelines of TDSA in regard to applicants for tuition assistance for their family:

## **TUITION ASSISTANCE PROCESS**

Please go to the [FACTS website](#) to complete the online Financial Aid forms. Please be sure to complete the entire form, responding to all questions and including all requested and supporting documentation.

Supporting documentation includes:

- Copies of your most recent (2022) Federal tax forms including all tax schedules.
- Copies of W-2 forms (2023) for both parents.
- IRA/401K documentation (if applicable)
- Brokerage documentation (if applicable)
- Divorce documents/decrees (if applicable)
- You may be asked to provide additional documentation

## **REQUIREMENTS FOR EXPEDITED TUITION APPLICATION PROCESSING**

- Change in income of 5% or less and none of the following:
  - Purchase or sale of a home or other real estate
  - Purchase of a new car
  - Home improvement in excess of \$10,000

- New student/matriculated student (a child starts at TDSA or graduates TDSA)
- New job
- Change in personal (i.e. raise) or business earnings of more than 5%
- Inheritance/Estate or other gifts more than \$10,000

If you satisfy the requirements for the expedited process, your decision should be the same as last year + 5%.

Tuition Assistance Timeline:

<b>Tuition Assistance Application through FACTS</b>	<b>January 8-February 28, 2024</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Please remember that you must first complete the re-enrollment and/or new-student application <b>BEFORE</b> the Tuition Assistance Committee (TAC) will evaluate your Tuition Assistance assessment.</li> <li>● Application for FACTS requires a \$40 processing fee</li> <li>● Go to <a href="https://www.torahday.org/financialaid">https://www.torahday.org/financialaid</a> for the FACTS Grant and Aid online form</li> <li>● TDSA will send out Enrollment Contracts, which will include tuition amounts, no later than March 25, 2024.</li> <li>● New Families should submit Tuition Assistance Application within 2 weeks of completing the New-Student Application</li> </ul>
<b>Deadline for Tuition Assistance Application through FACTS for returning families</b>	<b>February 28, 2024</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● FOR RETURNING FAMILIES ONLY: Tuition assistance assessment will increase by a minimum of 15% for families submitting incomplete or late applications for tuition assistance.</li> </ul>
<b>Enrollment Contracts</b>	<b>March 25, 2024</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Enrollment contracts (for those completing their tuition assistance application on time) will be sent out with tuition decisions no later than March 25, 2024.</li> </ul>
<b>SIGN ENROLLMENT CONTRACTS AND FINALIZE PARENTLOCKER PAYMENT PLAN</b>	<b>April 15, 2024</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Deadline to submit signed enrollment contract and to finalize ParentLocker payment details.</li> <li>● After this time, a \$500 non-refundable late fee will be charged. This fee is not applicable to tuition.</li> </ul>
<b>PARENTLOCKER PAYMENTS BEGIN</b>	<b>July 20, 2024</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● ParentLocker Tuition Payment plans begin no later than this date.</li> </ul>

\*One may request reconsideration of tuition assessment within two weeks of receipt of Tuition Assistance decision letter by contacting [eschulgasser@torahday.org](mailto:eschulgasser@torahday.org).

PLEASE NOTE: These deadlines will be strictly enforced. There will be a minimum of 15% tuition increase from last year's tuition for applications submitted after Feb 28, 2024.

All families who intend to make monthly tuition payments for any academic year must begin those payments via ParentLocker no later than July 20, 2024 and complete those payments no later than May 20, 2025.

**1. Who is involved in deciding if a family is eligible for tuition assistance?**

The Tuition Assistance Committee (TAC) consists of 3 or more people who are members of our community. Each member is anonymous in order to ensure objectivity. Members of the TAC are selected for their discretion, confidentiality, and objectivity.

**2. Is the Head of School involved at any stage of the process? Are members of the Board of Directors of the school involved?**

No. The Head of School is not only not involved in the decision making but is not even informed as to the decisions reached. Board members (except if they are on the school's TAC) are likewise not involved, nor do they have any insight into any assessments of the TAC.

**3. What about the usual fact that Jewish living expenses tend to be higher than the national averages considered by the FACTS formulas?**

The TAC does make adjustments for Jewish living within certain limits, described below.

**4. What allowance is made for day care expenses for younger children in a family and for summer camps?**

**If both parents work** then reasonable day care expenses are considered a family expense. Likewise, summer camp is treated to be the equivalent of day care. Only an amount equal to the costs of local day camps are considered. If a family chooses overnight camp or a more expensive camp (for example, in Israel or out of state), then that is considered discretionary income and is not considered, beyond the charges for local camps.

**5. If I purchase or renovate a home, how does that figure into the tuition assistance calculation?**

We include reasonable living expenses including housing in the calculation of assistance. Home purchases or renovations which exceed market norms are considered discretionary and are not included.

**6. What is allowed for bar/bat mitzvahs and weddings?**

The TAC allows for reasonable and customary expenses for family simchas. It is realized that these events often cost more but the school considers any excessive amount to be discretionary. The idea is that it should not be the school budget that suffers when a family incurs larger expenses, in essence asking the school to subsidize the event.

**7. Will the TAC consider our family's application if all required and requested information is not provided?**

No. Full tuition will be assessed until and unless full documentation is provided by the deadlines listed above. This includes filling out in full the FACTS application and providing all required documents such as the previous year's Federal tax returns, including returns of all business entities in which the family has an equity interest. In the case of divorced parents this will usually require a copy of the decree of dissolution and the settlement agreement so that the TAC can understand the obligations of each parent in regard to educational expenses of the children and the expenses/income relating to child support and maintenance. In the case of capital gains the TAC may require more detailed asset information.

The TAC reserves the right to request any additional information and documentation they deem necessary beyond the minimum documentation listed above at any time in order to make a proper assessment. Failure to comply with these requests in a timely fashion may likewise result in an assessment of full tuition.

**8. What year's tax returns are required?**

Generally, by the time families make their financial assistance applications the only returns available are for the previous year. An application made, for example, by the deadline of February 28, requires the tax return for the previous year. Thus, the tax information is a year plus a few months out of date, i.e., not updated for the school year in which the assistance is requested. All tuition reduction decisions are explicitly tentative pending receipt of the current year's tax returns, because it is understood that the FACTS application requires the parents to estimate their current financial situation. Since all returns are required to be filed no later than October 15, more than a month and a half into the current school year, that is also the deadline for providing the school with the return so that adjustment can be made to the tuition assistance for the current school year.

**9. What if the family financial situation deteriorates during the school year? What if it improves?**

The school has a policy of re-evaluation if a family's financial situation deteriorates during the school year. The TAC encourages parents to give the TAC the opportunity to adjust the charged tuition downward. The school also requires a family to inform the TAC when the

resources available to the family improve during the year. Examples are bonuses, capital gains, inheritances, new job with a higher salary, major gifts and so on.

**10. What if a family forgets to inform the TAC of the improvements in family finances discussed immediately above?**

If a family does not inform the TAC of improvements in financial situation, then the TAC will re-compute what the tuition should have been for the year in which assistance was provided and add it to the current year's tuition.

**11. How does the TAC treat parents who have incurred voluntary major debt such as car purchase, purchase of a second home, or home remodeling?**

Such expenses are not usually considered. Such expenses are considered to be a matter for normal family budgeting which is included in the allowances for living expenses.

**12. Is there a minimum tuition regardless of financial situation?**

Yes. The school's minimum tuition is \$6,063 per student enrolled and does not include application fee or family building fund or give/get obligation.

**13. What is the appeal process if we feel the decision of the TAC is unfair?**

There is no formal appeal from the decision of the TAC. There is a reconsideration process by which a request can be made to the school's Director of Operations to ask the committee to reconsider. A request for reconsideration must be submitted within two weeks of receiving your enrollment contract. During this process the families are required to submit additional information and documentation which would be used to potentially change the initial decision. Without additional information the TAC did not previously have, an initial assessment may not be adjusted. The Director of Operations is the sole conduit of communications between the TAC and the family in this reconsideration process.

Regardless of circumstances, any family who does not have an established tuition assessment amount because they are in the process of initial assessment, tuition reassessment, or assessment reconsideration, must make monthly tuition payments based on a temporary assessment amount if their children are attending school. The temporary assessment amount shall be equal to 75% of the most recent assessment or \$500/month/family if no initial assessment has been established (whichever amount is greater.)

**14. Is family lifestyle considered by the TAC?**

Yes. When it is obvious that the information submitted, including tax returns, is inconsistent with lifestyle, further explanation and supporting documentation may be required. The same is true when there is an inconsistency between previous years' applications and the

information submitted in previous years. The TAC has available all applications previously made.

**15. What about the family whose income is irregular and highly variable such as realtors, personal injury lawyers, commissioned sales people, caterers, and family business owners?**

These are situations in which the TAC understands that estimated income is hard to predict. The family should do the best it can in its estimates and then submit updates periodically to the TAC so that tuition levels can be adjusted during the school year. This must include information on both improvements and reductions of expected income.

**16. How does TAC evaluate a family with children in TDSA and other local community schools?**

All local community schools use the FACTS program to help decision tuition assistance. As such, all tuition costs are factored into their recommendation. TDSA seeks to evenly divide the tuition assistance recommendation by the number of children in all schools.

**17. What if a parent needs to attend school, taking time off of work, in order to gain the skills required for a profession?**

TAC factors in these expenses while the parent is enrolled in the educational program and as long as it is completed within a reasonable time period.

**18. How does the TAC consider the situation of divorced parents?**

It depends who has financial responsibility for the children and is then computed accordingly. As above (FAQ 6), a divorce agreement must be provided.

**19. What is the school's policy toward requiring volunteer hours from parents receiving tuition assistance? Conversely, should parents who devote a lot of volunteer time to a school be given extra breaks when requesting tuition reduction?**

Torah Day School of Atlanta requires all student families to fulfill a give/get obligation of a minimum SSO contribution of \$1,000 You can learn more about how to do this at <https://www.torahday.org/ssso>. Additionally, a contribution of \$500 which may be fulfilled by:

1. Paying this amount
2. Raising this amount from individuals who are not regular donors to our school
3. Volunteering for give/get assignments which the school periodically publishes. Every hour of volunteer time equates to \$33.33 which means that a family can fulfill its

give/get obligation by completing 15 hours of give/get assignments.

**20. Are there any additional requirements for those who receive tuition assistance?**

After a student family benefitting from tuition assistance graduates TDSA, we ask that they prioritize TDSA in their tzedaka budget to help other families benefit as you did and continue to make Torah education possible for the future.

We also require all families receiving tuition assistance to maintain complete confidentiality about their tuition assistance awards. Any breach of confidentiality may result in a family losing its tuition assistance.

**21. How can I use my Section 529 plan to pay for tuition?**

The Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017 contains a provision that allows use of Section 529 savings to pay for private K-12 education up to \$10,000 per year, per child. Establishing and funding a Section 529 plan can provide significant tax benefits. See your investment advisor and accountant for more information.