

**HURRICANE IDA QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS  
FOR  
HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS AND POSTSECONDARY STUDENTS**

*Updated as of 10/8/2021 at 8:00 a.m.*

**On October 7, 2021, Governor John Bel Edwards signed Proclamation 183 JBE 2021. This Proclamation suspended certain provisions of law related to TOPS for students who were living in a parish or attending an institution in a parish in which an emergency declaration was issued due to Hurricane Ida.**

**As of October 07, 2021, the list of parishes affected by natural disasters includes:**

**Jefferson  
Lafourche  
Livingston  
Plaquemines  
St. Charles  
St. Helena  
St. James  
St. John the Baptist  
Tangipahoa  
Terrebonne.**

**High School Graduates of 2021**

**The deadline for achievement of a qualifying score on the ACT or SAT when the ACT or SAT testing site has closed due to the effects of Hurricane Ida has been suspended. Students are required to take the ACT no later than December 31, 2021.**

**1. I was scheduled to take the ACT on September 11, but my test site was closed because it was damaged in Hurricane Ida. I am unable to schedule a test by September 30. Does this mean I won't qualify for TOPS?**

No, students graduating from high school in 2021 have until December 31, 2021 to take the ACT/SAT.

**2. I already have a qualifying ACT score. If I take the ACT again before December 31, will I be evaluated for a higher award level than what I've already been awarded?**

Yes. Once LOSFA receives a new ACT score, your award eligibility will be re-evaluated, and if you are eligible for a higher award level, your award will be upgraded.

**\*\*NOTE: The above deadline applies to 2021 high school graduates ONLY. Graduates of 2022 have until April 30, 2021, to achieve a qualifying score on the ACT without penalty.**

### **Current High School Students**

- **The requirement that students must live in Louisiana and complete their last four (4) semesters at a Louisiana high school or that their parents must reside in Louisiana for the 24 months preceding high school graduation.**
- **The requirement that a student score a minimum of 23 on the ACT to receive the Opportunity Award if they graduate from an out of state high school.**

**1. I am a high school senior. We went to Texas to evacuate from Lafourche Parish, and now I'm going to school in Texas. Does this mean I will not be able to qualify for TOPS?**

The requirement that you live in Louisiana and complete your last 4 semesters of high school in Louisiana has been waived. A student meets the residency requirement if he/she actually resided in Louisiana the entire eleventh grade year and was enrolled in a Louisiana high school, or if a parent/court ordered custodian resided in an affected parish for at least twelve months preceding August 27, 2021.

The requirement that you complete the TOPS core curriculum has also been waived upon documentation by your principal that failure to complete the core curriculum is due solely to the fact that required courses were not available at the school you attended. The requirement that you must have a higher ACT score if you have to stay in Texas for your entire senior year and graduate from a Texas high school has also been waived.

### **College Students**

- **The annual hours requirements**
- **The steady academic progress requirements**
- **The minimum grade point average requirements**
- **The deadlines requiring that a student whose award is suspended for failure to meet the grade point average requirements must bring his grade point average up to that required in the applicable statute within a specified time period**

- **The requirement that one semester of TOPS eligibility be reduced for each semester attended full time at an out of state institution.**

**1. Is there anything I need to do to guarantee my TOPS award is not cancelled?**

If your FAFSA indicates that you lived in a parish for which a disaster was declared by FEMA, or if you were attending an institution in an affected parish, you will receive an automatic exception to this requirement for the Fall 2021 and Spring 2022 semesters.

**2. Do I need to file a request for exception if I withdraw this semester or if I don't earn 24 hours?**

If your FAFSA indicates that you lived in a parish for which a disaster was declared by FEMA, or if you were attending an institution in an affected parish, you will receive an automatic exception to these requirements for the Fall 2021 and Spring 2022 semesters.

**3. Do I lose a semester of TOPS because I had to withdraw?**

It depends on whether the 14<sup>th</sup> school day has passed, and if so, whether your school issues a TOPS refund. Your school will determine whether it will issue a TOPS refund or any other type of refund. If you withdraw on or before the 14<sup>th</sup> class day, your TOPS Award will not be paid and you will not lose a semester of TOPS.

**4. What happens if my school issues a full TOPS refund?**

If your school issues a full refund, you will receive credit for a full semester of TOPS funding as if you had never utilized the affected semester.

**5. What happens if my school only issues a partial refund?**

If your school provides a partial refund, you will receive credit for the portion of the TOPS award amount that is refunded. Credit for this portion will be available after you've exhausted your 8<sup>th</sup> semester or equivalent terms on TOPS.

**6. How do I find out if my school issued a TOPS refund?**

You will receive an email from LOSFA at the most recent email address in LOSFA's records. To verify that we have the correct email address for you, register for a Student Hub account at <https://mylosfa.la.gov/applications/student-hub/>. You will also be able to check your Student Hub account to see if your school provided a partial or full refund of your TOPS Award.

**7. My school will not issue a refund. What does this mean for me?**

If your school does not issue a refund, your TOPS eligibility will be reduced by one semester or term as it would have if you had remained enrolled throughout the semester.

**8. I am at the end of my two-year TOPS award suspension and I will not be remaining enrolled this fall because my home was destroyed in Hurricane Ida. Does this mean I have lost my TOPS Award permanently?**

The requirement that you bring your grades up by the deadline has been suspended. If the fall semester of 2021 is your last semester to bring your grades up, you will have until the end of the fall semester of 2022 to achieve the required GPA in order to have your award reinstated.

**9. I requested and was granted an exception for the fall semester of 2021 to participate in an internship, but I will no longer be participating. What do I need to do to make sure my TOPS is available for fall?**

You must enroll full time in the fall semester of 2021 if you will not be participating in the internship, unless your home of record or institution is in one of the parishes listed above. Your school will bill LOSFA for your TOPS Award as it usually does if you enroll full time.

**10. My GPA was below a 2.30 at the end of the spring semester of 2021, and I am not enrolling this fall semester because of Hurricane Ida. Will my TOPS Award be paid for the spring semester of 2022 if I enroll?**

If your TOPS Award was just suspended at the end of the spring semester of 2021, your deadline will be the end of the fall semester of 2023.

**11. I am at the end of my two-year TOPS award suspension and my home was destroyed during Hurricane Ida, so I am not enrolling in/withdrawing from school this fall. What happens to my award?**

The deadline to bring your grades up to that required by the TOPS statutes has been waived. You will have until the end of the Fall 2022 semester to bring your grades up.

#### **TOPS Recipients who are members of the National Guard**

For all TOPS eligible students who, as of August 27, 2021, were members of the Louisiana National Guard called to active duty to assist in the preparation for and response to Hurricane Ida, the following requirements are suspended:

- **The steady academic progress requirements**
- **The minimum grade point average requirements**
- **The deadlines requiring that a student whose award is suspended for failure to meet the grade point average requirements must bring his grade point**

**average up to that required in the applicable statute within a specified time period**

- **The requirement that one semester of TOPS eligibility be reduced for each semester attended full time at an out of state institution.**

**12. I am a member for the National Guard. I was called to active duty to assist in the Hurricane Ida response. Is there anything I need to do to guarantee my TOPS award is not cancelled?**

If you graduated in 2020 or before and you have not yet enrolled in school, please send an email to [custserv@la.gov](mailto:custserv@la.gov). All other members of the National Guard, who remain eligible for TOPS, will receive an automatic exception; therefore no further action is needed.

**THIS DOCUMENT WILL BE UPDATED AS MORE INFORMATION BECOMES AVAILABLE.**