

Welcome to S.A.F.E's Scholarship Program Application

Our goal is to help students with Autism reach their educational and prevocational dreams.

We welcome students of all abilities to apply and request applications to be submitted by email to admin@autismsafe.org in communication choice of the student – written or video. This can include videoing a submission essay using communication systems or verbal if the student wishes to in replacement of the essay portion of the application. Submission deadline is April 30th of the application year.

Eligibility Requirements

Filling out the application for scholarship indicates that the applicant meets the following criteria in addition to having a diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder:

- This scholarship is for individuals who are exiting high school and are at least 18 years old, or will turn 18 by September 1st of the application year
- The applicant has the desire and intent to enroll or continue enrollment in a post-secondary class (this includes vocational, job skill-based programs) that will enhance their life through employment skills, independent living or life skills and/or continuing education.
- Applicant will provide copies of high school diploma or GED, high school transcript if graduating in the spring of the application year, or proof of acceptance to or current enrollment in a post-secondary program.

Scholarship Expense Criteria

- S.A.F.E Scholarship funds must be applied toward tuition at a university, community college or post-secondary institution, including institutes of technology, vocational and trade schools, and including certificate, degree and non-degree programs. Note that the program must be located within the United States. Online programs must be accredited to be considered for a scholarship award.
- Scholarship funds can be used for tuition, books and tools if these costs are not already included as part of a tuition fee and course expenses that is being paid by a disability Waiver, State and/or Federal Programs.
- Up to 100% of scholarship funds awarded may be used for books and other coursework-related supplies if needed, including tools. In this case, a paid receipt will be required for reimbursement.
- At this time, classes based on physical activities do not qualify for funding (such as swimming, horseback riding or dance classes).

How to Apply

We are so excited to learn more about you and your journey toward higher education!! Please be sure to read through all of these instructions carefully to ensure you submit all required materials and that we receive everything in the correct format. Please don't hesitate to reach out to admin@autismsafe.org with any questions you may have after reviewing this document. We look forward to hearing from you!!

Application Overview:

This is the comprehensive application checklist and a Scoring Rubric. This scoring rubric details the criteria used by our Selection Committee to evaluate all S.A.F.E Scholarship applications. Please use both the checklist and the rubric to make sure you have provided ALL required materials for a complete application. Note that any materials or information received after the deadline will not be considered for review.

To be considered for a S.A.F.E Scholarship, you must submit all required materials by the submission deadline, including the following:

REQUIRED ELEMENTS:

- Completed and signed application form
- Two references with contact information
- Two letters of recommendation
- Parent/Guardian Information sheet
- Proof of high school graduation or upcoming graduation
- Applicant essay
- One or more photos of you (no more than 5 total)
- Proof of estimated tuition cost for one academic year of your intended educational program see examples of acceptable forms

Notification of Receipt and Status of Application:

Once we have received your application, you will receive an email confirmation of receipt. *If you do not receive a confirmation, please email admin@autismsafe.org to make sure your application was received.*

Once the application period has closed and scholarship determinations have been made, you will receive an email or letter notification to let you know whether we were able to award you a scholarship for this year. We intend to notify all applicants by mid-May.

Application Guidelines:

NOTE TO APPLICANTS: Please fill out the forms as independently as possible, to the best of your abilities. We understand that you may need assistance from a parent, guardian, or friend, but we want to read your own, individual responses to the following questions, so we can get a full picture of your accomplishments, goals and personality. Note that written responses are preferred, but audio-recorded responses are also acceptable.

NOTE TO PARENTS/GUARDIANS: We understand that some applicants need assistance with filling out this form. We do prefer to read applicants' own, individual responses to the following questions, so we can get a full picture of their accomplishments, goals and personalities. Once the applicant has filled out as much as possible on their own, please feel free to add information where needed, and note your assistance in the space provided in each section.

A rubric is an explanation of our scoring criteria, meaning how our Selection Committee will evaluate all S.A.F.E Scholarship applications. Our rubric is included in this document. Videos, Audio Files, Photos and Other “Extras” – Acceptable Submission Forms:

Any video or audio files submitted with your application must be less than five minutes in length. YouTube links are preferred when sharing video submissions; Vimeo links or iMovie files are also accepted. Photographs can be submitted online (preferred); emailed as JPG, PNG or PDF attachments to admin@autismsafe.org; **Please do not send any original or physical materials with your application**, such as disks, CDs or binders, as applications are shared electronically with our Selection Committee for review, and we cannot return any materials we receive!!

How to Submit Your Application:

SUBMITTING YOUR APPLICATION VIA EMAIL:

Once you have completed this PDF application, you can scan it and email it to admin@autismsafe.org. Please include applicant's name in the email's subject line. Applications can be sent in these forms:

1. Dropbox link (*preferred*)—make sure that it is not password-protected!
2. As an emailed attachment—we accept applications in PDF form and supporting materials in Word (.doc or .docx), JPG, PNG or PDF files

Note: Emailed applications and all supporting materials must be received by midnight on the submission deadline date.

If you choose to use USPS to submit your application materials, please register mail your application and supporting documents to the S.A.F.E. office at PO Box 299, Conyngham PA 18219. Do not send any materials you will want returned as we are unable to return ANY submitted items even if the applicant was not selected for the Scholarship Program for this year.

EXCLUSION TO SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATION:

Current board members of S.A.F.E. Inc and their families are prohibited from being awarded a S.A.F.E. Inc education/post-secondary scholarship, even if they meet the criteria in the application process.

S.A.F.E Scholarship Application Submission Deadline:
April 30th, 2024

Date: _____

Applicant name _____

Address _____

Email _____

Phone number _____ Age _____ Birthdate _____

Name of college/university and/or post-secondary program you are interested or enrolled in:

Total estimated tuition cost of program for one academic year: \$ _____

Are you currently enrolled? ☐ Yes ☐ No

How many semesters will it take to complete the program? _____

If already enrolled, how many semesters you have attended so far? _____

Relationship, if any, to any current board member of S.A.F.E. Inc _____

Parent/Guardian Information

(if applicable)

Parent/guardian name _____

Address _____

Email _____

Phone number _____

Relationship to applicant _____

Parents/guardians—please read and initial the following statements and then complete and sign the statement below:

_____ I certify that the person applying for a S.A.F.E Scholarship has Autism.

_____ I certify that the person applying for a S.A.F.E Scholarship is at least 18 years old or will be by September 1st of this year.

I understand that _____ *(applicant's full name)* is applying for a S.A.F.E Scholarship to help financially with a post-secondary education program or enrichment course. If the applicant is awarded this scholarship, I will help to ensure that he/she is able to attend the course. I understand that, if this scholarship is awarded to this applicant, documentation must be provided regarding how and where the scholarship funds are spent. I certify that the applicant meets the above-stated eligibility criteria and intends to enroll or continue studying in a post-secondary program or enrichment course.

Signature _____ Date _____

Print Name _____

Scholarship Amount

S.A.F.E Scholarship amount is up to \$1,000 depending on the availability of funds each year. Scholarship recipients must use their full scholarship awards within one academic year. Amounts not used are forfeited by the recipient.

Previous Education

Please list previous education in chronological order, starting with current/most recent enrollment and including high school, with start and end dates and level of completion:

SCHOOL/PROGRAM NAME AND LOCATION	DATES	TYPE OF STUDIES	LEVEL OF COMPLETION

Participation, Recognition and Accomplishments

Please list extra activities, clubs, special honors, accomplishments, awards and/or recognition you have received, including goals you have attempted to reach or succeeded in reaching that made you proud:

Work and Internship History

Please list any work and internship history, whether paid or unpaid, beginning with most recent:

Name of business/organization	Dates/duration of time there	Description of duties/title held

Community Impact

We love learning about our applicants' community involvement!! Please tell us about ways you have made an impact on your work, school, religious and/or local community, and why you chose to be involved in these activities. Also include volunteer work you have done, along with the dates/duration of your time there.

Hobbies and Personal Interests

Please tell us about your favorite hobbies, interests, sports, or pastimes. What do you LOVE to do? What inspires you, and why?

References

Please list **TWO** references (employers, teachers, co-workers, friends, or family members who are *not* immediate family members) along with contact information:

1. **Reference 1 name:** _____

Phone number or email address: _____

Relationship to applicant: _____

Years known: _____

2. **Reference 2 name:** _____

Phone number or email address: _____

Relationship to applicant: _____

Years known: _____

Additional Required Submission Items

1. **Please submit TWO letters of recommendation.** Letters must be current (dated within the past 12 months). Please note that we will read **ONLY TWO** recommendation letters from each applicant. If you have more than two, include *only* the two that you would *most* like us to read.
 - Recommendation letters should be no more than one page in length.
 - Letters may be written by (but are not limited to) teachers, employers, friends, co-workers, or family members who are *not* immediate family members. (Recommendation letters may be written by the applicant's references)
 - **Note to share with recommendation letter writers:** Please let us know how you are related to the applicant; how have you been inspired by them; why you believe they deserve a S.A.F.E Scholarship; and how you believe they could benefit from one.
2. **Please submit a personal essay (written or oral video) of 100 words or more**, addressing the following:
 - What are your educational goals for the next five years?
 - How will college/enrichment courses help you achieve them?
 - What are your personal goals for the next five years?
 - What personal strength or quality do you have that will help you achieve them?

NOTE: This essay should be written by you, the applicant, to the best of your abilities. If you are unable to address all of the above on your own, a parent, guardian or other assisting individual who knows you well may choose to submit an optional Parent/Guardian Essay, and in that essay, address any points missed here.
3. **A current photo of you is required with your application.** You can also submit up to 5 photos total (including "Extras" photos). We LOVE seeing our applicants' smiling faces and learning more about your life!
4. **Please provide answers to the following:**
 - a. What would receiving a S.A.F.E scholarship mean to you?

S.A.F.E highly values individuals with Autism who strive to make important contributions to their communities. Tell us about a meaningful contribution you are proud to have made to your community. Note that you may expand on something

b. you mentioned under Community Impact.

c. What else can you tell us about your journey that got you where you are today?

5. **Proof of high school graduation or upcoming graduation:** Please submit a copy of your high school diploma or certificate of completion. If you haven't yet graduated, please submit your current transcript, a letter from an administrator verifying your projected graduation date, or an acceptance letter from the post-secondary program you plan to attend. These do not have to be official documents; copies are acceptable. These documents can be scanned and uploaded to the online application form, emailed to admin@autismsafe.org, or mailed with your paper application to S.A.F.E.

6. **Feel free to submit any of the following “Extras” in support of your application.** *While this is not a requirement, it is highly encouraged, due to the competitive nature of this application process! Sending extra materials helps us get to know you better. If you have applied for a S.A.F.E Scholarship in the past, you are welcome to include previously submitted items, but we would love to see new Extras that have not previously been submitted. Please see Scoring Rubric for more information, and note that any materials sent will not be returned.*

- Video/audio recordings; note that YouTube links, emailed to admin@autismsafe.org, are preferred, and Vimeo links or iMovie files are also accepted.
- Original artwork or photographs—these can be emailed as JPG, PNG or PDF attachments to admin@autismsafe.org (preferred), or printed and mailed. **You may submit up to 5 photos total with your application. Please be sure to include a brief description of each photo submitted.**
- Original poetry, short stories or other writing
- Résumé
- Anything else that will help us get to know you better! We love these!!
- **Reminder: Please do not send original or physical materials**, such as disks, CDs or binders, as applications are shared electronically with our Selection Committee for review, and we cannot return any materials we receive!

Application Checklist

Before submitting your application, please use this checklist to make sure you have included **ALL** required materials and refer to the Scoring Rubric for information about how your application will be evaluated. *Incomplete applications or supporting materials received after the deadline cannot be considered for review.*

REQUIRED MATERIALS:

- ☐ **Completed and signed application**
- ☐ **Two references** with contact information
- ☐ **Two letters of recommendation** (ONLY TWO, dated within the past twelve months)
- ☐ **Parent/Guardian Information sheet** (if applicable)
- ☐ **Proof of high school graduation or upcoming graduation** (examples: diploma, transcript, certificate of completion, letter from administrator verifying projected graduation date, post- secondary program acceptance letter, or transcript from your current post-secondary program). These do not have to be official documents; copies are acceptable.
- ☐ **Applicant Essay**, minimum 100 words in length
- ☐ **A current photo of you**
- ☐ **Signed Applicant Statement of Acknowledgement**

OPTIONAL MATERIALS (*we highly encourage all applicants to include some or all of the following “Extras” in order to submit the strongest possible application!!*):

- ☐ **“Extras”**—anything you feel will help us get to know you better! Examples include photos (up to 5 total), videos, artwork, poetry, etc.
- ☐ **Parent/Guardian Essay** – We welcome ONE family member or assisting individual to submit their own essay about the applicant and their journey (in addition to the applicant’s own essay). This essay should be no more than two pages in length and should focus on the applicant’s journey, strengths and challenges; how post-secondary education has helped or could help them reach their dreams; and anything else the Selection Committee should know about the applicant. This essay can also address any important points the applicant may have missed in their own essay, or in any other section of this application.

Applicant Statement of Acknowledgement

Applicant: Please read the following statements and sign below to indicate your agreement.

I understand that I am applying for a scholarship to help me enroll or continue current enrollment in a post-secondary education program or enrichment class(es). The information provided in this application is my own work (to the best of my abilities) and represents my own thoughts. If I am selected to receive this scholarship, I am aware that I will need to provide documentation regarding how and where my scholarship money will be spent and any unused scholarship money is forfeited at the end of the academic year.

I verify that I meet the following eligibility requirements to receive a S.A.F.E Scholarship (*please check each item to confirm*):

- ☐ I am an individual diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder.
- ☐ I am at least 18 years old or will turn 18 by September 1st of this year.
- ☐ I am currently enrolled or intend to enroll in a post-secondary program or enrichment course.
- ☐ I am not related to any current S.A.F.E. Inc Board Member.

I understand that my application and all related materials may be shared with the S.A.F.E Scholarship Selection Committee and any other individuals involved in selecting scholarship recipients.

Applicant signature _____ Date _____

Print name _____

If Applicant received assistance filling out this application, please provide the following information regarding the individual providing assistance. Please be sure to note the specific sections in the body of the application that were completed with assistance.

Full name: _____

Relationship to applicant: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Scoring Rubric

This scoring rubric details the criteria used by our Selection Committee to evaluate all S.A.F.E Scholarship applications.

Each S.A.F.E Scholarship application is evaluated based on five categories: **Personal**, **Accomplishments**, **Goals**, **Community Impact** and **Extras**. Applicants may be awarded between 0 and 5 points in each of these categories based on the following criteria:

	4–5 points	2–3 points	0–1 points
Personal	The applicant has provided a full picture of their personality, interests and values. They have richly demonstrated what is important to them by sharing their hobbies, passions and/or hopes for the future. The selection committee is able to gain a clear vision of the applicant's life, individuality and what makes them unique.	The applicant has provided information about their personality, interests and values. They have shared hobbies, passions and/or hopes for the future that give the selection committee a general sense of the applicant's life, individuality and what makes them unique.	The applicant has provided little to no information about their personality, interests or values. They did not share hobbies, passions or hopes for the future that would enable the selection committee to gain a sense of their life, individuality or what makes them unique.
Accomplishments	The applicant shared several accomplishments, including but not limited to personal, academic, sports, advocacy or work-related efforts or achievements. The selection committee gained a clear impression of their drive, initiative or committed effort.	The applicant shared one or more accomplishments, including but not limited to personal, academic, sports, advocacy or work-related efforts or achievements. The selection committee gained a general sense of their drive, initiative or committed effort.	The applicant shared few or no accomplishments that would allow the selection committee to gain a sense of their drive, initiative or committed effort.
Goals	The applicant clearly states and describes their educational and personal goals for the future. They demonstrate obvious ambition, drive and/or passion, clarify how their post-secondary program supports their path, describe a personal quality that will help them reach their goals, and show genuine commitment to achieving them.	The applicant generally states their educational and personal goals for the future. They demonstrate some ambition, drive and/or passion, but may not indicate how their post-secondary program or personal qualities support their path. Their commitment to achieving their goals may also be somewhat unclear.	The applicant does not clearly state their educational and personal goals for the future. Their ambition, drive, passion and commitment are unclear to the selection committee, in part because they do not indicate how their post-secondary program or personal qualities support their path.
Community Impact	The applicant has made a clear and significant impact on their school, work, religious, local or other community. This could include extensive volunteer history, ongoing or multiple instances of serving in their community, or ongoing advocacy/awareness efforts. The applicant has clearly demonstrated their community impact by listing specific related programs, persons or experiences.	The applicant has made an impact on their school, work, religious, local or other community, but did not include many specific or ongoing examples of volunteer work, advocacy/awareness efforts, or times they served in their community.	The applicant did not include sufficient examples of volunteer work, advocacy/awareness efforts, or times they served in their community to demonstrate their community impact to the selection committee.
Extras	Applicant has submitted multiple "Extras" in an above-and-beyond effort to help the selection committee get to know them better. These items might include (but are not limited to) up to 5 videos, drawings, poems, paintings, photographs, articles, etc. The materials they shared gave the selection committee a clear vision of their life, interests and personality.	Applicant has submitted at least one "Extra" in an effort to help the selection committee get to know them better, such as (but not limited to) a video, drawing, poem, painting, photograph, article, etc. The item/s they shared gave the selection committee some insight into their life, interests and personality.	Applicant included few to no "Extras" (photos, videos, artwork, etc.) that would help the selection committee get to know them better.

Frequently Asked Questions

Please contact admin@autismsafe.org with any questions not covered below!

When will the next S.A.F.E application be available?

Applications for a S.A.F.E Scholarship open in April of each new calendar year for funds to be granted for the fall of that same year.

When is the deadline for applications?

The deadline for the S.A.F.E Scholarship is midnight of April 30th of the year of application. Anything received electronically after this deadline will not be considered.

How do I submit my application?

Applications to be filled out and submitted electronically via email or Dropbox to admin@autismsafe.org. Please note that applications and supporting materials sent after the submission deadline will not be considered.

How my application will be evaluated? How can I know what makes a great application?

We have supplied the Rubric for evaluating applications that our Selection Committee will take into consideration. We encourage our scholarship applicants and any assisting individuals to refer to this rubric to learn the elements that make for a great application.

Do I have to have been accepted into a program or class to apply?

No! We encourage you to apply even if you are just thinking about applying for a post-secondary program or considering taking courses. Applications received past the deadline will not be considered, so even if you are just considering a post-secondary program, it is best to get your application in and be prepared!

If I don't have Autism but I have another developmental or intellectual disability, am I eligible to apply for a S.A.F.E Scholarship?

No. To be eligible for a S.A.F.E Scholarship, the applicant must have Autism. This is the mission of S.A.F.E, applicants can have other disabilities along with an Autism diagnosis to be eligible.

Who can I ask to write a letter of recommendation for me?

We love to hear from others how you have inspired them or touched their life in some way!! A few examples of people you can ask are good friends, teachers, employers, coworkers, or religious leaders. Please ask them to keep their letters to one page or less in length.

Can I still apply if I am in high school?

Yes, if you will be at least 18 years old and graduating by September 1st of the application year.

What do I need to include in my application for it to be complete?

Please see the Application Checklist to see everything you will need to submit for your S.A.F.E application to be considered complete. If any required items are missing, we will be unable to consider your application. **We highly encourage you to submit “extras”**—items that will help us get to know you better and give us a clear vision of your personality, strengths, accomplishments, and future goals. Extras are not required, but they are highly recommended due to the competitive nature of the application process! Also be sure to refer to the Scoring Rubric for more information about what makes for a great application.

What do you mean when you ask me to submit something to help you get to know me better?

You can submit pictures, artwork, drawings, poems, a video of you doing something you are proud of, a personal video you made...the possibilities are endless!! We want to get a clear vision of your personality, accomplishments, activities you enjoy, and your future goals. We want to know what is important to you, so be creative! If you send pictures or video files, please be sure they are not password-protected and are able to be downloaded, so we can share them with the Selection Committee for review. Please keep videos to five minutes or less in length.

Will the items I submit with my application be returned?

No. All submissions become property of S.A.F.E and will not be returned. Please do not submit items that you will want back.

I need a little help filling out my application. Is that ok?

Yes, but we ask that you fill out the entire application as independently as possible and to the best of your abilities. We recognize that you may need assistance from a parent, mentor, or friend, but we want to read your own, individual responses so we can get a full picture of your accomplishments, goals and personality. Note that written responses are preferred, but audio-recorded responses are also acceptable. An assisting individual may wish to add to the application whatever they feel is needed to help us get to know you better. We also welcome one family member or friend to submit their own essay if they would like to provide additional information or inspirational stories about you.

How will my S.A.F.E Scholarship application be evaluated or scored?

All S.A.F.E Scholarship applications are evaluated by our Scholarship Selection Committee—a group of caring individuals who are committed to the S.A.F.E mission. The Selection Committee uses the criteria detailed in our Scoring Rubric to evaluate all applications based on five different categories: **Personal**, **Accomplishments**, **Goals**, **Community Impact** and **Extras**. Applicants may be awarded between 0 and 5 points in each of these categories. Please see the rubric for more information.

How much money is awarded per scholarship recipient?

S.A.F.E Scholarships are up to \$1,000.00 for reimbursable tuition, books or equipment per awarded individual.

NOTE: Scholarship recipients must use their scholarship funds within one year and any unused awarded amount will be forfeited by the award recipient.

If I am awarded a scholarship, how and when will I receive the funds?

With proper documentation, S.A.F.E can send the scholarship funds directly to the university or program you are attending. Scholarship recipients (or their parents/guardians) can also be reimbursed for tuition, books or other qualified expenses if they submit receipts and other required documentation showing payment information. If you are awarded a S.A.F.E Scholarship, you will receive detailed instructions about how to access your scholarship funds.

When and how will I find out if I am awarded a S.A.F.E Scholarship?

We will contact all applicants via email and U.S Mail by Mid May. If you have not heard anything by that time, feel free to send an email to admin@autismsafe.org.

If I do not receive a S.A.F.E Scholarship this year, can I apply again next year?

Yes, individuals who apply for a S.A.F.E Scholarship are welcome to apply again the following year, whether they are selected to receive this year's scholarship award.

If I have received a S.A.F.E Scholarship before, can I apply for another this year?

Yes! Prior recipients can reapply as soon as the following year!