



# Frequently Asked Questions

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## GENERAL INFORMATION

### What is Route to Relief?

Route to Relief at Maricopa Community Colleges is offered in partnership with Maricopa County and the City of Phoenix and provides individuals with free tuition, monthly stipends, and employment assistance when enrolled in eligible programs across the 10 Maricopa Community Colleges. This project is designed to assist individuals whose employment or household income was impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. The expectation is for students to complete short-term training certificates to re-enter the workforce or obtain a better work opportunity.

### What is the purpose of Route to Relief?

Route to Relief is intended to help members of our community enter a short-term occupational training program, earn an industry credential, and transition to employment.

### How long will Route to Relief continue?

The project will continue through December 2024, with funding being subject to availability.

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## ELIGIBILITY

### Who is eligible for Route to Relief?

Maricopa County\* residents eligible for in-state tuition who have been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic under one of the following circumstances since March 2020 are eligible:

- Household income is reduced due to lost wages or reduced work hours
- Currently is or has been unemployed
- Qualified for unemployment or pandemic insurance benefits
- Laid off or furloughed from job
- Stopped working to care for a sick household member

- Loss of child or spousal support
- Stopped working to care for children home from school or daycare

\*Note: Services are currently paused for all City of Phoenix residents, but we are still serving individuals who live in other cities within Maricopa County.

### **Is Route to Relief only available to Maricopa County residents?**

Yes, you have to be a Maricopa County resident in order to qualify for Route to Relief. Services are currently paused for all City of Phoenix residents, but we are still serving individuals who live in other cities within Maricopa County.

### **If I am utilizing WIOA funding, do I still qualify for Route to Relief?**

As long as you are in a Route to Relief eligible program, and you meet the eligibility requirements for participating in Route to Relief, you are eligible to receive funding from both WIOA and Route to Relief.

### **If I'm a DACA student, am I eligible for Route to Relief?**

You may be eligible for the stipends, but are not eligible for tuition funding through Route to Relief. For resources to help with tuition, [check out this page](#).

### **Can multiple individuals from the same household benefit from Route to Relief?**

Yes, as long as each individual meets the eligibility requirements, members of the same household may apply.

### **If I have a past debt with Maricopa Community Colleges, am I still eligible for Route to Relief?**

Route to Relief is unable to pay for past debts. You would need to pay off the debt on your own before enrolling and using Route to Relief funding for future classes.

### **Are MCCCDC employees and their spouses/dependents eligible for Route to Relief?**

Employees of MCCCDC, including contract and student workers, who are eligible for employer-provided educational benefits or tuition assistance are not eligible for Route to Relief. This also applies to spouses and dependents of MCCCDC employees. These spouses/dependents are advised to use the MCCCDC tuition waiver instead. Any employee, including their spouse or dependent(s), that is not eligible for educational benefits or tuition assistance through MCCCDC may be eligible for Route to Relief.

## **Do I have to maintain a specific GPA to remain eligible for Route to Relief?**

There is no GPA requirement. Our focus is on supporting students through successful completion.

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## **PROGRAMS**

### **Are ESL and High School Equivalency classes/programs covered through Route to Relief?**

English as a Second Language (ESL), English Literacy, and High School Equivalency programs do not qualify for Route to Relief. However, we do refer students to the colleges for these services.

### **Am I able to enroll in classes at multiple colleges?**

Yes, you can take classes at multiple Maricopa Community Colleges, as long as all of the classes are required for your approved Route to Relief program.

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## **STUDENT APPROVAL PROCESS**

### **How do I become enrolled in Route to Relief?**

To start the enrollment process, please complete an inquiry form at [maricopa.edu/r2r](https://maricopa.edu/r2r). If you meet the eligibility criteria, you will receive an email to schedule a Career Navigation appointment. In this appointment, your Career Navigator will work with you to determine a career path that is the best fit for you. From there, you will meet with your College Route to Relief Advisor to register for classes. Your Career Navigator and College Route to Relief Advisor will work together to guide you through the entire process.

### **How soon will I find out if I am approved for the Route to Relief program?**

If initial and secondary assessments with your Career Navigator go well, and there is no formal assessment needed, you will have a preliminary approval after the Career Navigation appointment. However, you won't receive an official approval until you meet with your College Route to Relief Advisor and register for classes. After registering for classes, approval can take up to one week.

### **What is the required timeline between applying for Route to Relief and being provided funding?**

You must have submitted an enrollment request form, or registered for courses with your College Route to Relief Advisor, two weeks prior to the class start date to be eligible for Route to Relief funding for approved courses.

### **What is the required timeline for completion of my Route to Relief program, and what happens if I don't meet the deadline?**

You must complete your program by the funding deadline of December 2024. Anything past this point may not be paid for by Route to Relief.

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## **TUITION AND FINANCIAL AID**

### **Why am I receiving emails from the college about my classes being dropped due to non-payment?**

There is a hold on your account while we work with either Maricopa County or the City of Phoenix, depending on your residency, to finalize your Route to Relief funding. If you receive an email from the college about non-payment, please disregard and know there is no action required on your part.

### **I see a balance on my account from my Route to Relief program, will I get dropped for not paying it?**

A hold will be placed on your account until the balance is cleared for your approved program through Route to Relief funding, so you will not be dropped.

### **If I've been approved for Route to Relief, how will its funding be applied compared to other financial aid?**

Route to Relief funding will be applied first, followed by any additional aid such as grants and scholarships, so you will be able to receive those additional funds.

### **If I don't pass a class, will I be responsible for paying back tuition for the failed class?**

No, you will not be responsible for paying back the tuition.

### **What happens if I need to retake a class because I did not receive a passing grade?**

It is up to your college and academic program as to whether you are eligible to retake a class. The Route to Relief program will pay for retakes on a case-by-case basis. You will need to

make an appointment with your Career Navigator to discuss your options for continued participation in Route to Relief.

**What happens if the total Route to Relief grant funding runs out before I've completed my program?**

Once you've identified and been approved for a program, the funding will be allocated for your entire program cost. This means that your funds won't run out in the middle of the program.

**If I've made a payment towards my program/classes, can I still utilize Route to Relief funds?**

Yes, depending on the approval time frame. We can request the remaining funds to be paid off.

**Why is there a hold on my account that prevents me from dropping classes?**

The hold prevents changes to your classes that could potentially result in a balance on your account. This ensures that your classes will be covered by Route to Relief funds. If you need to drop a class, please notify your College Route to Relief Advisor ASAP.

**What do I need to do if I decide to add classes?**

Should you choose to add additional classes, please notify your College Route to Relief Advisor ASAP. They will ensure that you qualify to take the classes, and have eligible funds available.

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## **FUNDING - GENERAL INFORMATION**

**What stipends am I eligible for?**

You are eligible for a stipend of up to \$500 for training-related expenses, a stipend of up to \$500 for job search expenses, and monthly stipends for the duration of your educational program (up to 6 months): \$1,500/month for students with a dependent that is 13 years old or younger \$1,000/month for all other students. Funding is subject to availability.

**What can the stipends be used for?**

You're encouraged to spend the money first on training-related expenses related to your certification program, and additionally on living expenses needed while attending school.

More answers to frequently asked questions can be found in your respective Program Guidelines and Information:

- [Participants funded through Maricopa County](#)
- [Participants funded through the City of Phoenix](#)

### **What is considered a training-related expense?**

Training-related expenses are those expenses required to participate in a training program but are not included as part of the total program costs charged by the Maricopa Community Colleges. Training-related expenses may include such costs as physical exams and immunizations for a particular training program, the costs of certification testing provided by the third-party vendor, specialized uniforms or clothing, and tools or equipment. Laptops are not considered a training-related expense.

### **Can I be reimbursed for purchases I make towards books and other training-related expenses?**

You are eligible for up to \$5,000 in tuition, books, and fees. This amount is separate from the \$500 allotted for training-related expenses. If you purchase books or other training-related expenses using personal funds or your stipend funds, you may \*submit your receipts for reimbursement (see next question for receipt qualifications). Please reference your respective Program Guidelines and Information for more information:

- [Participants funded through Maricopa County](#)
- [Participants funded through the City of Phoenix](#)

### **What information do my reimbursement receipts need to include to ensure they are approved?**

If your purchases are eligible for reimbursement, your submitted receipt must show the following:

- Your name
- Item name
- Price total
- Date of purchase
- Completed purchase status

Along with the aforementioned requirements, you may also want to include any other important information relevant to the purchase.

### **Will the stipends be considered income for tax purposes?**

Because the stipends are considered "emergency assistance", they are not considered income for tax purposes.



## **How do I know if I am funded through Maricopa County or the City of Phoenix?**

You can refer back to the email you received which said you were approved for funding, and see which entity it lists there. If you're still unsure, you can reach out to your Career Navigator for assistance.

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## **STIPENDS - PARTICIPANTS FUNDED BY MARICOPA COUNTY**

### **When and how will my funds be distributed?**

Stipends will be loaded to your student account within a week of class(es) starting. After that, they will be loaded at the beginning of each month you are in class. If you qualify for the additional \$500/month because you have a dependent that is 13 years old or younger, the additional \$500 per month will also be loaded to your student account.

### **If I drop out of my program, what happens to my stipends?**

Once we're notified that you've dropped your program, stipends will no longer be loaded to your student account, and any remaining funds will be canceled. You will not be required to pay back any stipend funds that you've already used.

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## **STIPENDS - PARTICIPANTS FUNDED BY CITY OF PHOENIX**

### **When and how will my funds be distributed?**

Stipends will be loaded onto debit cards within a week of class(es) starting. After that, they will be loaded at the beginning of each month you are in class. If you qualify for the additional \$500/month because you have a dependent that is 13 years old or younger, this will be on a separate debit card. The card(s) can be mailed to you or picked up at the District Office, which will determine whether you receive the card(s) in your name or a more generic version.

### **Can the stipend debit cards be used to withdraw cash?**

Students with a dependent that is 13 years old or younger will receive an additional \$500 per month on a cash-enabled debit card. This is intended to provide flexibility in paying for childcare costs.

### **If I drop out of my program, what happens to my stipends?**

Once we're notified that you've dropped your program, your stipend debit card (including any remaining funds) will be canceled. You will not be required to pay back any stipend funds that you've already used.

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## **MISCELLANEOUS**

### **Can I pursue more than one certificate through Route to Relief at the same time?**

The maximum tuition, books, and fees amount, which is \$5,000 per student, cannot be exceeded. Because of this finance cap, additional programs may not be paid in full, or you may not receive additional stipends depending on the length of your original program. If you're still interested in pursuing more than one certificate at a time, please bring this to the attention of your Career Navigator.