

# prepaid529<sup>SM</sup>

## Benefits Guide



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This guide should answer many questions about accessing your account benefits, how benefits are calculated, and how and when funds are paid to schools. Additionally, learn more about the impact of your accounts on scholarships, federal financial aid, and tax reporting. For more detailed information, refer to the Prepaid529 Program Description & Master Agreement.

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## REQUESTING A WITHDRAWAL

If the beneficiary (student) is attending a Virginia school, the withdrawal request only needs to be submitted once. Virginia529 will pay the school each Spring and Fall semester until benefits are exhausted or otherwise requested. A new withdrawal request should be submitted each semester if the student attends a school outside of Virginia or to use benefits for Winter and/or Summer semesters.

### Review your account information

1. Visit [Virginia529.com](https://www.virginia529.com) and select **My Account** to log in or create an online user profile.
2. Select **My Profile** to access your account information and make any necessary updates.

### Submit a withdrawal request

Virginia529 will not distribute Prepaid529 funds until your contract is paid in full and a withdrawal request has been submitted to Virginia529. The most convenient way to request a withdrawal is through your online account. Follow the steps below to submit a request.

1. Select **Manage My Accounts**, then **Withdraw Funds**.
2. On the **Withdrawals** page, select **Get Started**.
3. Select the appropriate account, then **Continue**.
4. Enter the requested information about the school that the student is planning to attend.
  - If the student is attending a school outside of Virginia, you will also select a fund recipient and amount.
5. Review the details and submit the request.

#### Helpful tips:

- Submit a new withdrawal request if the student changes schools during the academic year. If the student stops attending school, immediately submit a **Stop Benefits** request (See Stopping Benefits section).
- Refundable or non-refundable deposits due to the school upon acceptance are not covered.
- If multiple Prepaid529 contracts are owned for the same student, they will be depleted in the order purchased. In addition, combination contracts (containing both Tier I and Tier II semesters) will be depleted in the order of Tier II first, unless otherwise requested.
- View previous withdrawals and the student's enrollment history on the **Withdraw Funds** page.
- All benefits must be used within a 10-year period from the student's projected high school graduation date.
- To avoid a delay in payment, submit your withdrawal request between March 15th and June 1st for the Fall semester or between October 15th and December 15th for the Spring semester.

**Using a Prepaid529 account became an online process beginning with the 2021-2022 academic year. An Intent to Enroll Form is no longer required.**

## PREPAID529 TIERS

Prior to closing the program, Prepaid529 contracts were made available at two coverage levels, Tier I and Tier II.

Tier I Contracts (formerly known as University Contracts) will cover one semester of Tuition at a Virginia public four-year college or university. Using a Tier I Contract to attend a Virginia public two-year or community college will cover multiple semesters of Tuition.

Tier II Contracts (formerly known as Community College Contracts) will cover one semester of Tuition at a Virginia public two-year or community college. Using a Tier II Contract at a Virginia four-year college or university will cover less than a semester of Tuition.

Use the Prepaid529 Tier Conversion Table below to calculate the conversion factor of your contract tier based on the purchase date.

<b>Contract Purchase Date</b>	<b>Tier I Semester Coverage at Two-Year Colleges</b>	<b>Tier II Semester Coverage at Four-Year Colleges</b>
Prior to Dec. 1, 2012	3.3333	.3000
Dec. 1, 2012 – Nov. 30, 2013	2.6638	.3754
Dec. 1, 2013 – Nov. 30, 2014	2.6466	.3779
Dec. 1, 2014 – Nov. 30, 2015	2.6130	.3827
Dec. 1, 2015 – Nov. 30, 2016	2.6076	.3835
Dec. 1, 2016 – Nov. 30, 2017	2.6077	N/A
Dec. 1, 2017 – Nov. 30, 2018	2.6084	N/A
Dec. 1, 2018 – Nov. 30, 2019	2.6017	N/A

## CALCULATION OF EXPECTED BENEFIT

Virginia529 calculates Prepaid529 benefits prior to the beginning of each academic year and will not estimate your benefits until the following three factors are determined:

- All Virginia public schools have established tuition and mandatory fees for the upcoming academic year, usually before July 1st;
- A withdrawal has been requested, identifying school selection (due when you have accepted admission and preferably at least 30 days prior to starting school, or when you are ready to use your benefits); and
- Prepaid529 reasonable rate of return calculations are finalized – typically mid-July.
  - Used to determine benefits when (i) a student attends school outside Virginia, (ii) cancelling a contract or (iii) determining the minimum benefits.

### Minimum Benefit

Unless a withdrawal occurs prior to the third anniversary of when the contract was purchased, the payout on any Prepaid529 contract cannot be less than the total payments made plus the Prepaid529 reasonable rate of return; this value is known as the minimum benefit. It generally applies if you purchased a Prepaid529 contract for an older student, the student attends a lower cost school, or a school outside of Virginia. For more information, please refer to the description of contract benefits in the Prepaid529 Program Description & Master Agreement.

## PREPAID529 BENEFIT PAYOUTS

Although Prepaid529 is a defined benefit program, benefit payouts and payment methods vary based on when you purchased the contract and the type of school the student will attend. School types fall into one of three categories:

### Virginia Public College or University (two-year or four-year)

#### What Prepaid529 covers

Prepaid529 will pay tuition and mandatory fees for normal full-time course load (12 – 18 credit hours) in a general course of study at Virginia public two or four-year schools. Additional charges for a specific major, class, program or course of study, often referred to as “Differential Tuition,” are not covered by Prepaid529.

Helpful tips:

- Benefits used for less than a full-time course load (including Winter or Summer semesters) are prorated. Contact Virginia529 to discuss how this may affect remaining benefits.
- Winter term (or semester) refers to a consolidated session, which typically occurs between the Fall and the Spring semesters. Note: Virginia Community Colleges do not offer a winter term or intercession.
- If the student is not a Virginia resident at the time benefits are paid, the cost difference between in-state and out-of-state tuition and mandatory fees is the responsibility of the student.
- Students attending community college should do a financial check-in with the school.
- The Minimum Benefit is paid to the school for each applicable semester. This may create a credit balance with the school and, if so, it is the student’s responsibility to advise the school of how the excess funds should be applied to the student’s account (See Qualified Expenses section).

#### Payment of funds

Virginia529 will pay funds directly to Virginia public schools each semester after the school’s add-drop period and upon receipt of an invoice from the school. Virginia529 will pay the school each Spring and Fall semester until benefits are exhausted or otherwise requested.

Helpful tips:

- Do not pay the Virginia public college or university for tuition and mandatory fees covered by your Prepaid529 account – the school will invoice Virginia529.
- Some Virginia community colleges require students using Prepaid529 benefits to notify the college’s office of student accounts at registration. Failure to do so may result in dropped classes.

### Virginia Private College or University

#### What Prepaid529 covers

Prepaid529 will pay the lesser of:

- Contract payments made plus the actual rate of return – **OR** –
- The highest in-state undergraduate tuition and mandatory fees at a Virginia public college or university in the semester in which benefits are used.

Payouts to Virginia private colleges or universities may not cover the full cost of tuition and mandatory fees. However, it will never be less than the minimum benefit which, in most cases, is equal to the total payments made on the contract, plus the Prepaid529 reasonable rate of return.

Helpful tips:

- Virginia private or independent schools include both non-profit and accredited proprietary schools eligible to participate in the federal financial aid program.

#### Payment of funds

Virginia529 will pay funds directly to Virginia private schools each semester after the school’s add-drop period and upon receipt of an invoice from the school. Virginia529 will pay the school each Spring and Fall semester until benefits are exhausted or otherwise requested.

## College or University Outside of Virginia

### What Prepaid529 covers

Prepaid529 will pay the lesser of:

- Contract payments made plus the Prepaid529 reasonable rate of return, compounded annually - **OR** -
- The average in-state undergraduate tuition and mandatory fees at Virginia public schools in the semester benefits are used.



However, the payout will never be less than the minimum benefit (See Minimum Benefit section).

Helpful tips:

- The [Prepaid529 reasonable rate of return](#) currently tracks quarterly performance of the Institutional Money Funds Index (reported in the Money Fund Monitor™ by iMoneyNet).
- The minimum benefit amount will be calculated and made available for withdrawal each semester.

### Payment of funds

The account owner is responsible for submitting a new withdrawal request each semester. Funds can be sent to the school, the student, or to reimburse yourself for other qualified higher education expenses.

Helpful tips:

- Virginia529 will not directly communicate with an out-of-state school to arrange payment.
- Refer to the Minimum Benefit section for more details.

## STOPPING BENEFITS

If the student stops attending school, immediately submit a Stop Benefits request. This is a convenient online process. Follow the steps below to submit a request.

1. Select **View My Accounts**, then **Withdrawal History**.
2. In the **Enrollment** section, locate the appropriate student and school.
3. Click the **Stop Benefits** button.

Helpful tips:

- Virginia529 will no longer make payments to the school once the request has been submitted and accepted.
- To begin using benefits again, the account owner should submit a new withdrawal request.

## REDEPOSITS

Account owners may redeposit funds that were previously withdrawn from Prepaid529 accounts. The redeposit cannot exceed the amount of the original payout. To avoid certain tax consequences and penalties:

- The funds you wish to redeposit must have been refunded by the student's school and redeposited into a 529 account for that same student.
- Refunds from the school are typically sent directly to the student and must be redeposited within 60 days.
- The portion of the refund you wish to redeposit must be a refund of qualified higher education expenses only.

The Redeposit Request Form can be found at: [Virginia529.com/resources/forms](https://Virginia529.com/resources/forms).

# FINANCIAL AID AND SCHOLARSHIPS

## Impact on financial aid

In most cases, when the student is a dependent and resides with the parent who owns the Virginia529 account, the value of all accounts owned are included as an asset of the account owner when calculating federal financial aid. These accounts will be assessed at a maximum of 5.64 percent of the value when calculating the Expected Family Contribution (EFC) for financial aid eligibility.



If the student is a dependent, the Virginia529 account will be considered a parent asset. If the student is not a dependent, the account is considered a student asset. Funds withdrawn and sent directly to the student from an account owned by someone other than the parent or the student (a grandparent, for example) are considered reportable income for the student.

Helpful tips:

- Some schools require additional information to determine financial aid awards. Inclusion of 529 accounts owned by someone other than the student or custodial parent depend on the school's requirements.
- The best resource for detailed financial aid information is the student's school's financial aid office or a college access or financial aid advisor in your area.

## Completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)

In most cases, all Virginia529 accounts owned by the custodial parents and students must be reported, including accounts for a different student.

FAFSA requires the total account value as of the date you submit the form. Access your total account value online at Virginia529.com by following the steps below:

1. Visit Virginia529.com and select **My Account** to log in or create an online user profile.
2. After logging in, scroll down to the **Account Summary** section. The total value of your accounts can be found at the bottom.

Withdrawals made to the student from a 529 account that is owned by someone other than the parent or student must also be reported.

Helpful tip:

- When submitting the total account value of a Prepaid529 account, report the value of payments made on each contract, plus the Prepaid529 reasonable rate of return earned, less any benefits already paid out. This value is called the "refund value" in your online account summary.

## Scholarships and your Virginia529 account

529 accounts should not affect receipt of merit-based financial aid, like academic or athletic scholarships, and may be used to pay for qualified higher education expenses not covered by a scholarship or retained for future years, for either undergraduate or graduate school expenses. A scholarship refund may also be requested from your Virginia529 account, penalty-free, up to the amount of the scholarship, but not more than the minimum benefit amount. Requests for refunds must be submitted each semester and include documentation of the scholarship.

Helpful tips:

- Scholarships often cover the same expenses covered by Prepaid529 benefits. Work with the school's financial aid office to coordinate scholarship and Prepaid529 benefits.
- NCAA scholarship rules may impact 529 withdrawals – contact your school to discuss any interplay between your accounts and any NCAA scholarship.

*NOTE: Scholarships may include grants awarded to students for academic, athletic, musical or other special abilities, certain tuition remission benefits for children of university employees, and appointments to a U.S. military academy. Scholarships do not include need-based financial aid, including student loans or work-study programs.*

## QUALIFIED EDUCATION EXPENSES

In addition to paying for tuition and mandatory fees as described in the Program Description, excess funds may also be used for other qualified higher education expenses, including:

- Non-mandatory fees including but not limited to Differential Tuition
- Meals
- Room & board (the student must be enrolled for at least half the normal full-time workload to qualify)
- Textbooks & supplies
- Other equipment required for attendance, to include special needs services



Helpful tip:

- Prepaid529 benefits can be rolled over to an Invest529 account for use toward K-12 tuition, student loan repayment, or registered apprenticeship programs. Request a rollover using the [Change Investments or Move Funds process](#) in your online account.

## ELIGIBLE EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

Prepaid529 funds may be used at any college, university, or vocational school in the U.S. or abroad that participates in federal financial aid programs.

Search for eligible schools or school codes on the U.S. Department of Education's website, [Studentaid.gov](http://Studentaid.gov).

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

### View a webinar about using your Prepaid529 benefits

- Visit [Virginia529.com/webinars](http://Virginia529.com/webinars)
- Register for a live webinar or view an on-demand video

### Read the Program Description

- Visit [Virginia529.com/invest/prepaid](http://Virginia529.com/invest/prepaid)
- Download or view a copy Prepaid529 Program Description & Master Agreement



## TAX INFORMATION

### Keep accurate records

You are responsible for maintaining documentation of all qualified higher education expenses. No documentation is required to be submitted with a withdrawal request, but should still be retained for your records and tax purposes. This includes copies of tuition invoices, meal plan contracts, documentation of rent if living off campus, receipts for textbooks, and other qualified higher education expenses.



### Tax treatment of withdrawals

Earnings on Virginia529 accounts grow free from federal and Virginia state taxes (for Virginia state taxpayers) and are excluded for income tax purposes when funds are used to pay for qualified higher education expenses.

### Non-qualified withdrawals

The earnings portion of non-qualified withdrawals are taxable as ordinary income and, unless an exception applies, are subject to a federal penalty of 10 percent on the taxpayer's federal tax return. Non-qualified withdrawals may result in the recapture of prior Virginia income tax deductions for Virginia taxpayers. Non-Virginia taxpayers should contact their state's department of taxation for more information.

Exceptions to the non-qualified withdrawal rules include a withdrawal made due to the student's death, disability or receipt of a scholarship. Exceptions are not subject to the 10 percent penalty or recapture of income tax deductions, but the earnings portion is taxed as ordinary income.

### Reporting withdrawals in your tax returns

It's not required to report withdrawals used for qualified higher education expenses on your federal tax return. Virginia529 will issue an IRS Form 1099-Q (Qualified Tuition Program Payments) each year in which a withdrawal is made.

- For withdrawals made payable to the account owner, the Form 1099-Q is sent to the account owner. A digital copy can be accessed through your online account.
- For withdrawals made payable to the student or a school, the Form 1099-Q is sent to the student. The student may also create an online user profile to view a digital copy.

**NOTE: Account owners *will not* be able to view the digital copy in their online account; it is only available in the student's online account.**

- Non-qualified withdrawals will incur a 10 percent penalty on the earnings portion of that non-qualified withdrawal, and should be reported as income by the Form 1099-Q recipient.

Helpful tips:

- The same qualified higher education expense may not qualify for more than one tax benefit (for example, tax-free withdrawals and a federal tax credit).
- For more information, review Virginia529's [1099-Q Fact Sheet](#).

**NOTE: For more information on the tax treatment of withdrawals see IRS Publication 970, "Tax Benefits for Education," available at [irs.gov](https://www.irs.gov). You may also call the IRS at 1-800-829-3676 OR consult your tax advisor.**

**IMPORTANT NOTICE: Individual tax situations vary greatly. Please consult a tax advisor concerning any legal or tax implications arising from opening or using your Virginia529 account. Virginia529 cannot provide legal, financial or tax advice and the information in this Benefits Guide should not be construed as such with respect to the consequences for any particular individual as a result of contributions to, investment of, or withdrawals from a Virginia529 account.**

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