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Chairman

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President & Executive Director



Application for South Carolina Residency Certification SREB Regional Contract Program

The Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) Regional Contract Program (RCP) is a cooperative tuition-savings program. It enables qualified students to pursue a first-professional health degree at selected out-of-state institutions and pay in-state tuition and fees at public institutions and reduced tuition at private institutions. Students who live in South Carolina and want to earn a degree in optometry or veterinary medicine are eligible to participate. Each institution provides a specified number of seats for South Carolina residents in three schools of optometry (Southern College of Optometry, University of Alabama at Birmingham, and Kentucky College of Optometry - Pikeville).

A student must apply directly to the institution of his/her choice for admission. However, the student must be certified as a South Carolina resident prior to being admitted as a contract student. If you are certified as a South Carolina resident, we will notify you and the institution(s). Residency status is made in accordance with South Carolina State Code of Regulations Chapter 62. **NOTE: Certification as a South Carolina resident does not guarantee a contract seat.** The institution(s) makes the final decision regarding admission.

General Information:

- Annual re-certification is **REQUIRED**. **You are required to reapply annually to be recertified as a South Carolina resident for the duration of your enrollment. The deadline for recertification is June 1.**
- You **MUST** remain a South Carolina resident during enrollment.
- You **MUST** have been a South Carolina resident during the previous two consecutive years (24 months).
- This form **MUST** be signed and notarized.
- The SREB Contract seats are **ONLY** for students entering his/her first year of optometry school.
- All facts of residency and domicile must be documented and must be verifiable.
- Applicants must provide a copy of College Transcript and 1098T

The burden to provide documentation for any legal residency determination rests with the student. Students are required to provide all documents necessary and complete steps required to establish and/or maintain eligibility for claiming South Carolina as their state of legal residence. The South Carolina Commission on Higher Education reserves the right to request additional documentation. Failure to provide the necessary documentation will invalidate your application. Students who are otherwise not residents of South Carolina may not establish legal residence in South Carolina by the mere fact of receiving mail at a South Carolina address or post office box. **Legal residency may not be acquired by an individual while they are residing in South Carolina for access to state supported programs designed to serve South Carolina residents.**

*The absence of indicia in other states or countries is required before a **dependent** individual can be certified as a South Carolina resident. Therefore, the parent, spouse or guardian must not be in possession of a driver's license or vehicle registration certificate issued by another state.*

Original application & documentation must be mailed to:
***Emailed applications and/or supporting documents will not be accepted.**
Kenita D. Pitts, M.S., Regional Contract Program State Coordinator
1122 Lady Street, Suite 400
Columbia, SC 29201
kpitts@che.sc.gov
803-856-0037

NOTE: Applicants are encouraged to contact the institution for application deadlines. Please submit the SC Residency Application to the SC Coordinator at least 60 days prior to the institutions deadline for review and to ensure that all submitted documents are correct.



803-737-2260

1122 Lady St, Ste 400
Columbia, SC 29201

www.che.sc.gov



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Independent Student

GLOSSARY

For the 2025–26 *Free Application for Federal Student Aid* (FAFSA®) form, an independent student is **one** of the following: [Independent Student | Federal Student Aid](#)

- born before **Jan. 1, 2001**
- married (and not separated)
- a graduate or professional student
- a veteran
- a member of the U.S. armed forces
- an orphan
- a ward of the court
- a current or former foster youth
- in a legal guardianship (now or in the past)
- someone with legal dependents other than a spouse
- an emancipated minor
- unaccompanied and homeless or at risk of becoming homeless

Your dependency status determines whose information you must report when you fill out the FAFSA form:

- **If you're a dependent student**, you'll report your and your parents' information.
- **If you're an independent student**, you'll report your own information (and, if you're married, your spouse's).

Request for Certification of South Carolina Residency Application Checklist

The Request for Certification of South Carolina Residency must be submitted via postal mail with notarized signature(s) and supporting documents establishing legal residency for the State of South Carolina for at least **24-months prior** to anticipated start date.

***Emailed applications and/or supporting documents will not be accepted.**

Please be aware that processing your request can take up to **six-eight weeks** and you are encouraged to contact the university's RCP Institutional Coordinator for deadlines and to allow time for processing. RCP certification cannot be applied retroactively to cover past coursework.

The SC Commission on Higher Education reserves the right to request additional documentation. Failure to provide the necessary documentation will invalidate your application.

***Emailed applications and/or supporting documents will not be accepted.**

REGIONAL CONTRACT PROGRAM DEPENDENT STUDENT

☐ Copy of applicant's valid SC Driver's License or SC Identification Card

☐ Notarized signature of applicant and parent/guardian or spouse

Copy of parent/guardian or spouse SC Driver's License

Copy of parent/guardian or spouse SC Motor Vehicle Registration Card

Copy of College Transcript and 1098T

Copy of parent/guardian most recent Property Tax Receipt

REGIONAL CONTRACT PROGRAM INDEPENDENT STUDENT

☐ Copy of applicant's valid SC Driver's License or SC Identification Card

☐ Notarized signature of applicant

☐ Copy of College Transcript and 1098T

☐ Copy of SC Motor Vehicle Registration Card

☐ Copy of most recent Property Tax or Rent Receipt

This checklist and complete notarized request to determine out-of-state tuition waiver should be mailed to:

Kenita D. Pitts, M.S., RCP State Coordinator
1122 Lady Street Suite 400
Columbia, SC 29201

For questions and/or concerns please call (803)856-0037 or email at kpitts@che.sc.gov

**Application for South Carolina Residency
Certification SREB Contract Program-Optometry**

CONTACT INFORMATION:

Name: _____
(Last) (First) (Middle)
Social Security # (last four): _____ **Birth date:** _____ **Place of Birth:** _____
(mm/dd/yy) City/State

PERMANENT ADDRESS:

_____ **Years at this address:** _____
Street address (PO Box not acceptable) (City) (State) (Zip)

PRESENT ADDRESS:

Street address (PO Box not acceptable) (City) (State) (Zip)

Send correspondence to my _____ permanent address or my _____ present address.

Date your residence in SC began: _____
mm/dd/yy

Telephone: (H) _____ **(C)** _____ **Email:** _____

ENROLLMENT INFORMATION: Please select the appropriate institution(s).

Is this your first year entering optometry school? Yes No

If you are entering your first year of veterinary or optometry school, select the institution(s) you are applying to.

Optometry Medicine:

Southern College of Optometry
University of Alabama - Birmingham
University of Pikeville

Projected start date: _____ **Projected graduation date:** _____
mm/yy mm/yy

RESIDENCY STATUS: Basis of your application for residency status (select one)

_____ Independent student demonstrating domicile and residency in South Carolina. *(To qualify as an independent you cannot be claimed as a dependent or exemption on the federal tax return of her/his spouse, parent, guardian)*
_____ Dependent student demonstrating residency and domicile or South Carolina resident parent, guardian, or spouse)
_____ Seeking South Carolina residency status through duty in the armed forces.

Please list your addresses for the past five years, beginning with the most recent address: (use separate sheet, if needed)

If dependent, list addresses of individual(s) upon whom you depend. If independent, list your addresses.

Address(1)	City/State	Start mo./yr.	End mo./yr.
Address(2)	City/State	Start mo./yr.	End mo./yr.
Address(3)	City/State	Start mo./yr.	End mo./yr.

PRIOR EDUCATION:

High School: _____ **Graduation Date:** _____
City/State mm/yy

Institutions attended after high school: (Please list ALL institutions. Use separate sheet if more space is needed.)

Institution	City/State	Start mm/yy	End mm/yy	In-state or out-of-state tuition
Institution	City/State	Start mm/yy	End mm/yy	In-state or out-of-state tuition

Application for South Carolina Residency Certification SREB Contract Program

EMPLOYMENT HISTORY: (If **independent**, insert your employment information. If **dependent**, insert spouse's, guardian's or parent's employment information.) Use separate sheet if more space is needed.

Employer	City/State	Dates employed	FT or PT employment
Employer	City/State	Dates employed	FT or PT employment

I am providing verification of SC residency by submitting a copy of:

Dependent student: Send documentation of whomever you're dependent upon as well.

Independent student: Send documentation with your information. Please redact first five numbers of all social security numbers before submission.

_____ SC Driver's license (valid) **applicant and parent**
_____ SC Motor vehicle registration
_____ College Transcript
_____ 1098T

The South Carolina Commission on Higher Education reserves the right to request additional documentation. Failure to provide the necessary documentation will invalidate your application. Students who are otherwise not residents of South Carolina may not establish legal residence in South Carolina by the mere fact of receiving mail at a South Carolina address or post office box.

Are you a United States citizen: _____ *If no, what is your VISA classification?* _____

I hereby solemnly swear and affirm that the information provided in this application is true and I understand it will be used to determine my eligibility as a legal resident of South Carolina. I certify that I have been a legal resident of South Carolina for at least two consecutive years prior to the residency application date. I further understand that the completion of this form does not guarantee certification as a Regional Contract Program participant. I understand that those decisions are to be made by the respective institution.

Signature of applicant (student):

Signature of parent/guardian/spouse (dependent student only)

NOTARY PUBLIC INFORMATION

Sworn and subscribed to before me on this _____ day of _____, 202____

Notary public's printed name

Notary public's signature

Title

My commission expires: _____

(affix seal to this document, if you are a South Carolina notary and do not have a stamp or seal, please include your title with your signature)

****Emailed applications and/or supporting documents will not be accepted.***

SREB Regional Contract Program (RCP)

Frequently Asked Questions

NOTE: The information provided is specifically pertaining to South Carolina (SC) residency for students seeking South Carolina residency to attend optometry school in Kentucky, Alabama, or Tennessee. It does not apply to SC residency for attending South Carolina institutions.

How long must I live in South Carolina before I can establish residency for an RCP contract seat for optometry?

A person must live in South Carolina for 24 consecutive months (2 years) to establish residency.

What documents can be used as proof of establishing intent to become a SC resident?

1. Statement of full-time employment;
2. Designating South Carolina as state of legal residence on military record;
3. Possession of a valid South Carolina driver's license, or if a non-driver, a South Carolina identification card. Failure to obtain this within 90 days of the establishment of the intent to become a South Carolina resident will delay the beginning date of residency eligibility;
4. Possession of a valid South Carolina vehicle registration card. Failure to obtain this within 45 days of the establishment of the intent to become a South Carolina resident will delay the beginning date of residency eligibility;
5. Maintenance of domicile in South Carolina;
6. Paying South Carolina income taxes as a resident during the past two **tax years**, including income earned outside of South Carolina from the date South Carolina domicile was claimed;
7. Ownership of principal residence in South Carolina; or
8. Licensing for professional practice (if applicable) in South Carolina.

*Please note that any single indicator may not be conclusive. (SC Regulation 62-605)

Once I'm certified as a South Carolina resident, do I have to be recertified every year?

Yes, once awarded a contract seat, you must be recertified prior to each subsequent academic year for which you are enrolled. Recertification applications will be accepted beginning in February 1 for the upcoming academic year (AY). The deadline for recertification is June 1. (SC Regulation 62-609 B Exceptions). **CLARIFICATION: Because your income taxes are used as proof of continued residency in South Carolina, the recertification period for each academic year begins in February. The recertification period annually is February 1- June 1.**

I was certified as a South Carolina resident last year, but I was not accepted for admission. I plan to reapply again this year. Do I need to complete and submit a new SC residency certification application or use the recertification application?

Yes, you must reapply for SC residency certification application. As the certification is only for the year specified in your certification letter. The recertification application is ONLY for students who are currently occupying contract seats.

Note: Electronic submission of application and supporting documents will not be accepted.

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SREB Regional Contract Program (RCP)

Frequently Asked Questions

If I get married and my wife/husband is a resident of another state and we file taxes jointly for that state, will that affect my South Carolina residency status?

Yes, you cannot be included on a tax return in another state and still claim South Carolina residency. Doing so will cause you to lose your SC resident status for tuition and fee purposes.

After I begin attending veterinary school or optometry, if I transfer my driver's license from South Carolina to the state in which I'm attending school, will that affect my contract seat status?

Yes, if you transfer your driver's license to another state, that indicates that you no longer have intent to be a South Carolina resident. Thereby, making you ineligible for a contract seat, since you would no longer be considered a South Carolina resident. SC residents who change their state of legal residence lose their SC resident status for tuition and fee purposes.

I am a member of the military. How does that affect my SC residency?

Members of the military permanently assigned in SC on active duty and their dependents qualify under an exception category. Military members and their dependents may be charged in-state tuition and fees without having to establish a permanent home in South Carolina.

SC residents who are members of the military stationed outside of SC and their dependents may receive in-state tuition and fees if they continue to claim SC as their state of legal residency. This must be reflected on the individual's taxes and Leave and Earnings Statement (LES). SC residents who change their state of legal residence lose their SC resident status for tuition and fee purposes.

My parents are divorced. How does that affect my residency?

If one of the following scenarios applies to your situation then you can claim SC residency:

- Joint Custody and one parent is a SC resident; or
- Parent that is SC resident claiming the child on income taxes; or
- Parent that is SC resident pays child support over the cost of attendance as dictated by the college.

What happens if my parents are transferred out-of-state?

Generally, the student may continue to claim SC residency if he/she is continuously enrolled during all regular academic terms (fall and spring terms or their equivalent) if the family had lived in South Carolina for over three years.

What is the difference in applying for residency as dependent or independent?

- If a parent, guardian, or spouse provided more than half of the student's support for the past twenty-four months, the student is considered dependent, and it is the parent, guardian, or spouse that must meet the residency requirements.
- If the student provided most of the support, then the student may be eligible to apply as independent. An independent student must have his/her own SC domicile. Dormitory housing cannot be used as one's domicile, as it is temporary in nature.

Note: Electronic submission of application and supporting documents will not be accepted.

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SREB Regional Contract Program (RCP)

Frequently Asked Questions

Am I required to provide over 50% of my total financial support to be considered independent?

You must provide over 50% of your total support with earnings coming from your own earnings or income from employment, investments, or payments from trusts, grants, scholarships, commercial loans, or payments made in accordance with court order. Total support must also be greater than total expenses.

Can gifts from parents and relatives be counted as support that a student has provided?

No. Gifts are considered money coming from elsewhere and do not count toward financial independence. Financial support must come from the sources listed in the law/regulations.

Can I use the money I've saved in my savings and checking accounts to establish my financial independence?

A student may be allowed to use money saved in a savings or checking account if he/she can prove that the funds are from allowable sources. *Allowable sources consist of his/her own earnings or income from employment, investments, or payments from trusts, grants, scholarships, commercial loans, or payments made in accordance with court order.*

Does owning property in South Carolina allow students to receive in-state tuition?

No. For independent students, owning property, by itself, does not allow students to receive in-state tuition, as the other requirements still must be met. For parents of dependent students, South Carolina must be the primary state of residence. Simply owning property is not sufficient.

If I have lived in South Carolina for more than two years, does that make me eligible for in-state tuition?

No, there is nothing automatic about residency. You must meet all the requirements, submit a residency application, and be approved before you become eligible.

If I move here and live with a relative, does that make me eligible for South Carolina residency?

Not unless the relative has permanent court-ordered guardianship and claims you on their taxes.

Am I eligible for residency if I use a South Carolina address on all my records and legal documents?

You still must meet the other requirements. For admission, other factors are important, such as the source of transcripts and addresses of parents.

Can I use my on-campus apartment to prove my South Carolina residency?

No, on-campus housing is considered temporary because you must be a student to live in it. Therefore, on-campus housing does not prove in-state residency.

If I was enrolled as an out-of-state student in undergraduate and was eventually allowed to receive in-state tuition will I be considered a South Carolina resident?

No. You would need to establish residency and show you were in SC for reasons other than attending college.

Who do I need to contact regarding the SREB Contract Program for Optometry Medicine? Kenita D. Pitts (803) 856-0037 or kpitts@che.sc.gov.

For more information about SC Residency see <https://www.scstatehouse.gov/coderegs/Chapter%2062.pdf>

Please note that the information provided is subject to change.

Note: Electronic submission of application and supporting documents will not be accepted

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