



One of the important records that you will need to locate in anticipation of applying to college is a **transcript**, which is an official record of past coursework you have attempted or completed. The process of finding and sharing transcripts with the college you are applying to can be time consuming and frustrating, but you are not alone! Incarcerated college students have walked this path before, and this resource will help you make a plan and anticipate some of the possible hurdles along the way.

## THE LANDSCAPE

### HIGH SCHOOL COMPLETION

When you apply to a college, you will be required to show proof that you have graduated from high school or have successfully completed a high school equivalency test like the GED or HiSet.

### KEY TERMS

Key terms in **blue** can be found in the *Navigating Forward Glossary* if you'd like more information.

### PREVIOUS COLLEGE

When you are applying to a college, you will also need to report ALL previous college coursework, regardless of how long ago you took the course, whether you intend to use the course towards a future degree, or whether you passed or received credit for the course. Most often, you will do this by having your **official transcript** sent directly to your **receiving college**. Failure to disclose prior coursework may result in an admissions denial, the loss of financial aid, or dismissal from the college.

### PREPARING FOR THIS PROCESS:

Whether you are working to locate a high school transcript, a **GED** or **HiSET** transcript, or a transcript from a college you attended in the past, the process will vary by school, county, state, or even region of the country. This process may require contacting multiple offices, giving yourself time, and staying patient.

Use the tables later in this resource to learn more about the process used at each kind of institution, both college and high school. This resource also contains a **worksheet** that will help you do some of the pre-work to prepare, and we recommend that you start securing any needed transcripts at least 60 days before any application deadline.

Use the space provided to write a few questions you might have before exploring this resource:


### IMPORTANT NOTE

When it comes to admissions and enrollment, colleges will only accept an **official transcript**, which typically means the transcript has gone directly from one school to the other, or from the transcript processing company directly to the receiving school. Whenever possible, you will want your former college to send a transcript directly to the college you are applying to. If the registrar sends a paper copy of the transcript to your facility address, you run the risk that the mail will be opened, which will convert the official transcript into an unofficial transcript, which can no longer be used by the admissions office at your receiving college.





# 1

## HIGH SCHOOL OR HIGH SCHOOL EQUIVALENCY TRANSCRIPTS



Start by finding out how the college you are applying to accepts student records and where your official transcripts need to be sent. Can a transcript be mailed? Does it need to be submitted electronically? Does it need to be **notarized** or otherwise authenticated? Find out as much detail as you can to avoid setbacks.

If you earned a high school diploma, you will need to request your school to send your high school transcripts to your college. If you earned a high school equivalency (HiSET or GED), skip to the next page.

### HIGH SCHOOL TRANSCRIPTS:



If you graduated from a public high school, identify the county where the high school was located, and then locate the name and contact information for the **registrar** in that county. If you graduated from a private high school, find contact information for the person at the school who handles course enrollment and transcripts. You may need to ask a family member, advisor, or supporter with internet access to help find this information.



Once you have contact information for the registrar, reach out to that contact and find out:

- How can I request an official transcript sent to my college (in the correct way that the college will accept), and what information or paperwork is needed from me?
- Is there a fee to order an official copy of my transcript, and what payment methods are accepted?



Suppose someone is helping you secure these transcripts. In that case, you may need to provide additional documents along the way, including a waiver form permitting the collection of educational documents on your behalf or proof of your incarceration, like a notarized letter verifying that you are currently incarcerated. See the **Sample FERPA Waiver Letter** at the end of this resource for an example if you are being helped by someone (sometimes called a 3rd party).

Use this space to write down as much information as you remember or can find out about where your high school transcripts are and the process you will need to follow to send them to your college:






## HIGH SCHOOL EQUIVALENCY TRANSCRIPTS:



The simplest way to request records from the HiSET, GED, or other high school equivalency is online. If possible, identify a trusted person with internet access that can assist you. If this isn't possible, proceed to the section **Requesting Records Without the Internet**.



Each state provides high school equivalency transcripts and credentials in a different way. The first step is identifying which state you took your test in and which test you took. If you took a test in multiple locations, you can use the last state where you successfully completed the test.



If someone is assisting you, Share a signed **FERPA waiver form** with the person. Also, please share the name of the test you took (HiSET, GED, etc) and the state in which you took it.



Your credentials may be ordered through a company called Diploma Sender. If they do not have your record, they will usually give you suggestions for where to turn next. For this reason, this is a helpful website from which to start your search.

- You or your supporter will go to Diploma Sender's website: <https://diplomasender.com/>
- Once on the website, click "Services," and you will be prompted to answer the following:

**How Can We Help You?**

☐ I am looking for my records.
 ☒ I am looking for someone else's records.

**What type of records are you looking for?**

☒ HSE - High School Equivalency  
High School Equivalency is commonly known as the GED, HiSET or TASC. This also includes anyone who qualified for a custom HSE program in their state.

☐ CAP - Credit-bearing and Proprietary  
Credit Bearing & Proprietary includes Undergraduate, Graduate, and Continuing Education programs from trade schools, colleges, vocational schools, and universities.

**Where did they last test?**

- If the state you indicate is one that partners with Diploma Sender, the site will show you the available documents and prices. Most records will cost \$20 each.
- At that point, you or the person helping you must create an account, order the document, and request that it be mailed or emailed to the college where you are applying. The person setting up your account will likely need your social security number, so make sure you trust them with this information and that you have shared it with them in advance.



If Diploma Sender DOES NOT partner with your state, the website will include a link to state-specific resources where you or the person helping you may be able to locate documentation of your high school equivalency results. If you took the GED, you can also find this information by visiting [www.GED.com/transcripts](http://www.GED.com/transcripts). If someone is helping you, be sure to provide them with a records release form (see the **sample FERPA waiver form**), as well the **information checklist for third party help**, which can be found at the end of this resource.

## REQUESTING RECORDS WITHOUT THE INTERNET:



Suppose you are navigating this process without the internet. In that case, you will likely need to contact your high school or Diploma Sender directly to determine how to request the necessary documents and pay fees (often \$20 per document). The Diploma Sender can be contacted:

- By phone: (855) 313-5799
- Or by email: [support@diplomasender.com](mailto:support@diplomasender.com)







## HIGH SCHOOL TRANSCRIPTS: WHAT BARRIERS MIGHT I FACE?

BARRIER	STRATEGY FOR OVERCOMING THIS BARRIER
Your school has closed.	The transcript may be in state or county archives or an attorney's office. You can start by contacting your state's Department of Education or contacting the school or district that absorbed the students from the closed school and ask where student records from the closed school are being housed.
You can't remember where you earned your high school equivalency.	You will need to know at least the state where you earned your high school equivalency. From there, you or a <b>third party</b> can start researching how the state keeps and distributes these records. You will want to start by using an online search engine and searching your state and "GED" or "HiSET" transcript.
You earned your high school equivalency while at a federal facility.	The Federal Bureau of Prisons contracts with the GED Testing Service, which means you will need to reach out directly to GED at <a href="http://www.GED.com/transcripts">www.GED.com/transcripts</a> (either on your own or with help).
You can't afford to pay the fee for the transcript.	A letter explaining your situation and asking the school, county, or company that is holding your transcript for help may be an option for you. See the <b>sample fee waiver letter</b> at the end of this resource for some language you can include in your letter.
You graduated before digital records. If you graduated 2010 or earlier, your high school records may not be digitally accessible.	Your transcript location may depend on your school's size or the district's policies. If stored on microfilm, processing may take longer and require mail or in-person delivery instead of email. You should be able to find out more from the department of Education in your state.
You attended a high school with a common name.	You or the person helping you may need to call or email several different schools if there are multiple schools within your state that have the same name. Having additional information, like the city, county or school district where the school was located will help eliminate the need to contact multiple schools.
You have taken college courses in the past, but you are still struggling to find your high school transcript.	If you have an unofficial transcript from your former college, it will often list your high school, so you can use that as a starting point for chasing down that record as well. If you can find someone to help you make calls and send emails, that will help your chances of finding the record you need.
Your high school won't release your transcript because of an unpaid fee.	Unpaid school fees (e.g., locker, textbook, activity fees) may block transcript requests. You can pay or request a waiver—see the <b>sample letter</b> at the end of this resource.
You need to verify your identity in order to get (or have a third party get on your behalf) access to your high school records.	Sometimes, a copy of your prison ID with your photo will work. Your department of correction may be able to provide you with a form of official ID. You (or a third party) may be able to use an online corrections database (in Tennessee, for example, this is called FOIL) to get a digital or printed document with your picture and your name. You may also have access to a notary who can supervise your signature and verify your identity.







## 2

## COLLEGE TRANSCRIPTS

### ORDERING TRANSCRIPTS FROM YOUR PREVIOUS COLLEGE(S):

There are typically three ways to request college transcripts: in person, by mail, and online. The vast majority of transactions are done online, but your college may have other processes or allow a third party to request the records online for you. The first step will be to find out your options and processes you need to follow.



Start by writing down the names of colleges where you have previously taken courses. Using the internet or with the help of a family member or advisor, visit your college's website to find out how transcripts can be ordered. It may be simplest to do a Google search with the name of your college and "order transcripts" to be directed to this information.



On your college's website, there will be instructions for how to order electronic copies of your official transcripts. See the next page for further steps on ordering transcripts online.



If you cannot use an online ordering platform or third-party site for any reason, your next step will be to locate the registrar's phone number, email address, or mailing address of the registrar at the college. Contact the registrar's office (or have a supporter contact on your behalf) and ask:

- How can I request that an official transcript be sent to my new college, and what information or paperwork is needed to do so?
- Is there a fee to order an official transcript, and what payment methods are accepted?
- How can a third party assist me with this process since I am incarcerated?



Also, consider using the following follow-up questions if these are not already answered:

- Do I need to fill out a specific waiver for someone to help me with this process?
- If so, can that waiver be sent to me by mail?
- Do you know if there is a specific request form that I need to fill out?
- If so, can I send that form to me by mail?
- Since I can't show my ID in person, will my signature be sufficient?
- Do you know if I need to get anything notarized?

#### IN PERSON



Someone helping you can visit the physical office of the registrar at your former college and request an official transcript. Before they go, you must provide them with a signed **FERPA** waiver form and other identifying information - such as your full name, social security number, and the enrollment dates. Once they have your official transcript, this document will need to be kept in the sealed envelope and sent to your receiving college.

#### BY MAIL



Some colleges still allow you to submit a transcript request using a paper form. If you or your supporter can reach out to the registrar and request this form, it can be emailed or mailed. Once the transcript processing fee has been paid, the registrar will share an official transcript with the college listed on the request form. You may need to ask your college about this option because it will likely not be listed on their website.





## REQUESTING COLLEGE TRANSCRIPTS ONLINE



In most cases, an online request will be the easiest way for someone on the outside to help you request your old transcripts to be sent to your new college. Here are the steps someone can follow to assist you:



Many colleges use a transcript distribution company to process online requests (also called **credentialing services**). Determine which transcript company your college uses (if any). You can find this on your college's website or on each of the following sites by searching for your school's name. Remember, you will search for the college you want records from, not the new school you are sending records to. The two credentialing service sites are:

- Parchment: <https://www.parchment.com/students/how-it-works/#on-behalf>
- National Student Clearinghouse: <https://tsorder.studentclearinghouse.org/school/select>



If your school uses one of these sites, the next step is to create an account and request your records. You should expect the following questions to be required:

- Student's full name
- Student's date of birth
- If the student's name has changed since they were a student
- The years the student attended the school
- Student ID number or the student's full Social Security Number
- If the student is currently enrolled in this college or another college



After you place your order, you will be required to grant permission to send these records. You (or the person helping you) will need to print, sign, and upload a scanned copy or digital photo of this signed Authorization to Release Educational Records form. This form needs to be signed by you, not anyone helping you (which means they may need to mail the form to you to return to them). When you or your supporter is ready, you will return to the website, log back into the account, and finalize the transcript request. You may also use the **sample FERPA waiver form** included in this resource as a release.



Before the transaction is processed, the person helping you will have to pay a fee, which is typically \$3 - \$30 per record, depending on the school and the transcript service you are using.



Make sure that the person helping you prints or saves a digital copy of the transcript request confirmation, which should also include an order number. After the request is submitted, it goes to the registrar at your college, who processes the order and then sends the records to the place you requested.

**NOTE:** Sometimes, a college won't allow a third party to make a transcript request through Parchment. The person helping you won't discover this until they go through the process of signing up for a third-party account and searching for a transcript. If you attended a college that doesn't allow third-party requests through Parchment, the person helping you will need to call the registrar at the college directly and find out what process they should use to get and then send your transcript.





## COLLEGE TRANSCRIPTS: WHAT BARRIERS MIGHT I FACE?

BARRIER	STRATEGY FOR OVERCOMING THIS BARRIER
Your college has closed.	Before closing, your school must make accommodations for you to access your academic records indefinitely, so you need to identify where they are being housed. Fact Sheets on each major school closure can be found online. Try searching “closed school fact sheets” and visiting the <a href="http://studentaid.gov">studentaid.gov</a> site, which lists each school by name.
You know you have taken college courses in the past, but you can’t remember the names of colleges you’ve attended.	If you (or a 3rd party that’s helping you) have your social security number and your birth date, the National Student Clearinghouse Education Tracker can provide a list of any college(s) a person has attended in the last 25 years. For a fee (\$5 - \$25), you can access a list of schools you’ve attended on their website: <a href="https://www.studentclearinghouse.org/verify/">https://www.studentclearinghouse.org/verify/</a> . Note this is not the same thing as purchasing an official transcript.
Your college is refusing to release your transcript because you owe money to that college or you have a “hold” on your account.	This is called a <b>financial transcript hold</b> , which happens when a student owes money to the college and the college won’t release a student’s transcript until the debt is paid. You may be able to set up a payment arrangement, request a waiver, or pay the fee outright. If you are facing this barrier, review the <i>Navigating Forward</i> resource called <b>Financial Transcript Holds</b> for next steps.
Your receiving college is saying that you attended a college that you didn’t actually attend, which means they are expecting a transcript from this college.	If you have applied to a college in the past, accepted the offer, and then withdrawn your acceptance (or some other similar circumstances occurred), that college may show up as part of your academic record even though you never actually enrolled. If this happens, you will need to request a <b>Letter of Non-Enrollment</b> , which will serve in place of the transcript that your receiving college is expecting. Instructions for how to do this can typically be found on a college’s website, or by contacting the Registrar at the school you need the letter from.
You can’t afford to pay the fee for the transcript.	A letter to the registrar requesting a fee waiver could possibly be helpful. See the sample letter in this resource. You may need to include your “face sheet” or correctional facility record with a photo and facility location to show documentation of the circumstances that are preventing you from paying (but there is no need to provide any details about your charges).
You are stuck and don’t know how to proceed.	If you feel stuck, your best path is to start by contacting the registrar at your former college directly (or having a third party contact them directly) and seeing what steps you can take to keep the process moving. If you hit a dead end there, you may try to find someone in the admissions office of your new college that may be willing to go above and beyond to help you problem solve with your old college.







## SECURING PAST TRANSCRIPTS WORKSHEET

Use this document to capture information that will be helpful as you start the process of retrieving past transcripts. This worksheet is just a tool to help you plan -- no need to send it to any school.

### PERSONAL INFORMATION

Full Legal Name:

Date of Birth:

Any aliases, alternate spellings, or past legal names (your maiden name) that you might have used:

Do you know or have access to your social security number? Do not include your social security number below, but do make note of whether you know it or who might help you retrieve it.

☐

Yes, I know it

☐

No, I do not know it

Who might know:

### HIGH SCHOOL, GED, HiSET INFORMATION

State and County	Name of School or Test	Year of Completion

### COLLEGES YOU ATTENDED IN THE PAST

Name of College	Estimated Dates	City and State	Registrar Contact	Parchment or National Student Clearinghouse

Other Notes:





## INFORMATION CHECKLIST FOR THIRD PARTY HELP:

This is information and documentation that you should be prepared to share with someone who is helping you secure past transcripts. Use this checklist to help prepare for this process.

- ☒ Full legal name
- ☐ List of possible aliases, other legal names, and alternate spellings, with estimated dates for your name changes
- ☐ Social Security Number
- ☐ Date of birth
- ☐ High school information - name of school, graduation year, district, city, county, and state  
OR  
GED/HiSet Information - which test you took, state where you took the test, and year
- ☐ List of colleges you have attended and the dates of your enrollment
- ☐ A signed consent form to disclose education records. This may be provided by the school holding your transcripts or you can use the **sample FERPA waiver** in this resource.
- ☐ (if needed) Fee waiver request letter. We have included a **sample fee waiver letter**, but make sure to personalize this request to capture your own circumstances and the reasons that continuing your education is so important to you.
- ☐ (if possible) A copy of your official ID. This may not be required, and different institutions may have different requirements for what they will accept. In some instances, as an alternative to a state ID, you may be able to use a photocopy of your prison ID or a notarized signature.

You have nearly reached the end of this resource. What questions or concerns do you still have that you can write down to talk through with someone? Use the space below to jot those down.

---

---

---

---

---

---

### IMPORTANT NOTE

The information you will need to share with a third party is pretty sensitive in terms of the security of your identity. The person who is helping you should be someone you trust.





## SAMPLE FERPA WAIVER FORM

You must give colleges your consent to share your educational records. This is sometimes referred to as a **FERPA** waiver. Most colleges will have a FERPA waiver available on their website. If you don't have access to the college's official waiver process, a document like this might work.

### FERPA Form for Consent to Disclose Educational Records

**To:** \_\_\_\_\_  
*Insert name of school to be releasing your records*

**From:** \_\_\_\_\_  
*First Name Middle Name Last Name*

**Date of Birth:** \_\_\_\_\_  
*Student's DOB*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Student's full address*

I, \_\_\_\_\_, hereby waive my privacy rights (pursuant to the Family  
*Student Name*

Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974), and authorize \_\_\_\_\_  
*Name of college that has the records*

to release and/or discuss my academic, enrollment, and financial aid records with the authorized parties listed below. This authorization is valid for one calendar year from the signing date.

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_  
*Name of individual person, company, or college the student wants to release records to*

**Relationship:** \_\_\_\_\_  
*Relationship to student or purpose for authorization*

I certify under penalty of law that I am the individual identified in this written consent form, I am 18 years or older, and I am authorized to make this request.

**Student Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_  
*Sign to authorize your consent*

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_  
*Date of signature*

**Printed Name:** \_\_\_\_\_  
*Print student's name*

**Student ID or SSN:** \_\_\_\_\_  
*Provide your college ID number or Social Security Number*







## SAMPLE TRANSCRIPT PROCESSING FEE WAIVER REQUEST LETTER

[Your Name]

[Your facility address]

[Your social security number or student ID number, if you have it]

Registrar's Office, attn: Registrar

[University Address]

[Date]

Dear Registrar [include their name, if possible],

I hope this email finds you well. I am writing to respectfully request a waiver of the \$5.00 [or whatever the transcript processing fee is] transcript fee. I am an incarcerated learner currently applying to participate in the [college name] higher education in prison program, and my official transcript from your school is required.

As an incarcerated individual, I face significant financial constraints that make it challenging to cover the cost of this fee, and it is also logistically challenging to be able to process a payment. This college program is designed to provide educational opportunities to individuals who are working towards rehabilitation and personal growth while serving their sentences. Waiving the transcript fee for me would greatly support my educational pursuits and remove a financial barrier that may hinder my progress.

I kindly ask that you consider waiving the fee, given my unique circumstances as an incarcerated learner. Your assistance in this matter would be greatly appreciated.

Thank you for your time and consideration. If you require any additional information or have any questions, please contact me at the mailing address listed above.

Sincerely,

[Your name]

[Your signature]





# NAVIGATING FORWARD

Copyright © 2025 by  
Tennessee Higher Education Initiative, Inc.

If you attended a college that has multiple branches (for example, the University of Arkansas has 15 separate campuses), you may need to be very specific about which location you attended because the academic records are sometimes held at each branch rather than one central office.

- Electronic Transcripts - Must be retrieved using a desktop or laptop computer due to security features applied to the document. Mobile device and tablet access to the Download Center is blocked.

### **DID YOU KNOW?**

The registrar's office is a key office for you to know because they keep and process student records that you will need on your college journey. However, the registrar - even if they serve the same function - might be called something different at your college. Here are some other common names for the person who handles transcripts at a college: Records Associate, Enrollment Services Coordinator, Transcripts Coordinator, and Academic Records Specialist.