
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 to as proof of continued residency in South Carolina, the recertification period for each academic year begins in February. The recertification period 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.

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.

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After I begin attending optometry school, 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.

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.

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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.