

HOUSTON SCHOLARSHIP ELIGIBILITY AND GUIDELINES

Submission Deadline: December 11, 2015

*****IMPORTANT*****

Applications must be completed on a computer and submitted via email to texasbto@childrensdefense.org.
Please do not submit any forms that are handwritten or scanned.

Purpose

The purpose of Children's Defense Fund *Beat the Odds* scholarship program is to recognize extraordinary high school seniors who have overcome tremendous adversity in life, achieved academic excellence, and demonstrated community service. To learn more about the CDF *Beat the Odds* program, visit www.cdf-texas.org/beattheodds.

Eligibility

Applicants for the *Beat the Odds* scholarship must meet **ALL** of the following criteria: ®

- Has experienced and overcome adversity such as (but not limited to) poverty, disability, homelessness, or abuse
- Has demonstrated a commitment to community service, volunteerism, and leadership
- Has achieved a minimum 3.0 GPA on a 4.0 point scale
- Presently a senior enrolled in a Houston area (including Dayton/Liberty county) public, charter, or alternative school
- Will graduate by June of the present school year
- Will attend college, university, or vocational school by the following Fall
- Is a U.S. citizen or a permanent resident

Award

- Each winner will receive a \$5,000 scholarship paid (over 4 years) directly to the college/university upon registration.
- Additional gifts may include a laptop computer, airplane ticket, professional attire, and college dorm living essentials.
- Winners will be offered ongoing mentorship and guidance, with opportunities to take part in leadership development, advocacy training, internships, and networking with national and local civic leaders, during college and beyond.

Publicity

Winners will be interviewed and videotaped subjects of mini-documentaries to raise awareness about the challenges young people face. These mini-documentaries will be aired at the *Beat the Odds* Awards Luncheon in the Spring and posted online as part of CDF's YouTube library. Applicants must feel comfortable with sharing their stories publicly.

Selection

Applicants for the *Beat the Odds* scholarship will be evaluated based upon:

- An application form, which should tell the applicant's story, and include sufficient details about challenges faced, volunteer and leadership experiences, and lessons learned
- An educator recommendation from a teacher who knows the applicant well
- A community member recommendation from a mentor, employer, or counselor who knows the applicant well
- A high school transcript

Application Packet and Submission Instructions

1. Application Form

- Download a copy of the application here: www.cdf-texas.org/programs-campaigns/beat-the-odds/apply.
- Once complete, submit the form via email to texasbto@childrensdefense.org and clearly note the applicant's full name in the email subject line. [Subject: APPLICANT'S FULL NAME – BTO APPLICATION]
- **Applicants should carefully read through the submission instructions and reminders on the first page of the application form prior to completing the application.**
- Responses must be typed and are limited to the spaces provided in the application form. Applicants are encouraged to elaborate on their answers as much as possible.
- Applicants are advised to review the application form with an advisor, counselor or mentor to assure that it sets forth all relevant details in an appropriate manner prior to submitting electronically.

2. One Educator Recommendation

- Download the recommendation form here: www.cdf-texas.org/programs-campaigns/beat-the-odds/apply.
- Once complete, the recommender should submit by email to texasbto@childrensdefense.org with the applicant's full name clearly noted in the subject line. [Subject: APPLICANT'S FULL NAME – BTO EDUCATOR RECOMMENDATION]
- **The educator recommendation form must not be completed by the applicant's family members or peers.**
- Educator recommendation must be from a teacher who knows the student well. This letter should speak to the student's academic performance, the challenges he or she has faced, observations regarding the student's ability to cope with and manage adversity. Educators should make mention of situations where the student has shown significant effort or improvement or has consistently excelled despite challenges to his or her education.

3. One Community Member Recommendation

- Download the recommendation form here: www.cdf-texas.org/programs-campaigns/beat-the-odds/apply.
- Once complete, the recommender should submit by email to texasbto@childrensdefense.org with the applicant's full name clearly noted in the subject line. [Subject: APPLICANT'S FULL NAME – BTO COMMUNITY RECOMMENDATION]
- **The community member recommendation form must not be completed by the applicant's family members or peers.**
- Community member recommendation must be from a mentor, employer, clergy member, guidance counselor, educator, or coach who knows the student well. This letter should address how the student has overcome the challenges in his or her life and describe the student's volunteer activities and leadership experiences. Additional insight into how the student qualifies for the CDF *Beat the Odds* scholarship can be offered, as it assists the review committee in their decision.

4. High School Transcript

- After the electronic application has been submitted, please submit a copy of your academic transcript to texasbto@childrensdefense.org with the applicant's full name clearly noted in the subject line. [Subject: APPLICANT'S FULL NAME – BTO TRANSCRIPT]
- **If an official electronic transcript is not available**, please mail a hard copy of your official transcript in a sealed envelope to the address below:

Children's Defense Fund-Texas
Beat the Odds Scholarship
5410 Bellaire, Suite 203
Bellaire, Texas 77401

NOTE: The physical address above is only for transcripts. All other documents must be emailed.

Application Deadline

Completed applications must be received no later than **December 11, 2015**. Incomplete applications are not considered.

Tips for Applicants

- Start early and pay close attention to deadlines. Applications submitted past the deadline will not be considered.
- **Applications must be submitted electronically. Please do not handwrite or scan applications.**
- Be sure to give your recommenders enough time to complete their forms on your behalf. Professional courtesy is at least 2 weeks.
- We recommend that applicants work with a counselor or adult mentor whom they trust, who is both willing and able to shepherd the student throughout the application, selection and award process. **We strongly recommend that the counselor or mentor review the student's application form for appropriateness and to ensure the application packet is complete and meets all eligibility criteria set forth above.**

Inquiries

- Contact: Children's Defense Fund-Texas
- Phone: 713.664.4080
- Email: texasbto@childrensdefense.org