How to Apply for TOPS

Option One:
1) Complete FAFSA on-line at www.fafsa.ed.gov and include any Louisiana college/university in Step Six of FAFSA. The applicant must include a Louisiana college/university in Step Six in order for the FAFSA to become the application for TOPS.
2) Send qualifying ACT or SAT score to TOPS from ACT or Collegeboard.
   A. ACT: www.act.org, TOPS’ ACT code is 1595
   B. SAT: www.collegeboard.com, TOPS’ SAT code is 9019
   C. Applicants can send scores to TOPS at the time of registering to take the ACT or SAT or after taking the test at the above Web Sites and with the above codes.

Option Two:
1) Complete TOPS application at LOSFA, Louisiana Office of Student Financial assistance: www.osfa.state.la.us. Applicants must be ineligible for federal grant aid in order to complete this LOSFA application (see Additional below).
2) Send qualifying ACT or SAT score to TOPS, same as above.
3) TOPS states that applicants using LOSFA’s application instead of FAFSA will be first to forfeit TOPS in the event of a budget shortfall.

Deadlines:
1) The deadline to apply for TOPS is July 1st after senior year. Both FAFSA and LOSFA’s TOPS application can be submitted much earlier, which is advisable. The earliest one can submit the FAFSA or LOSFA’s TOPS application is January 1st of senior year.

Additional:
1) The FAFSA has two purposes. One, it is the application for Need-Based Financial Aid for all colleges/universities. The deadline for this purpose of the FAFSA is often Feb. 15th of senior year. Two, as mentioned above, FAFSA is the application for TOPS, under the condition that a Louisiana college/university is included in Step Six of FAFSA. The deadline for this purpose of FAFSA is not until July 1st after senior year. Therefore, students/parents who will apply for Need-Based Financial Aid and TOPS should complete the FAFSA, inclusive of a Louisiana college/university, for Feb. 15th or earlier of senior year to fulfill both purposes of FAFSA. Students/parents who are ineligible for Need-Based Financial Aid (specifically federal grant aid) can still complete the FAFSA for TOPS or complete LOSFA’s TOPS application for the July 1st deadline, though it is advisable to submit either application much earlier to begin processing for TOPS. If the students/parents are unsure whether or not they are eligible for Need-Based Financial Aid, they should complete the FAFSA by Feb. 15th or earlier of senior year in case of financial eligibility, and include a Louisiana college/university if interested in applying for TOPS.