

# Transition Services to Support College and Career



## California Foster Youth Education Task Force

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### INTRODUCTION

As youth in foster care transition into adulthood, there are a variety of supports in place to ensure that they can complete their high school education and successfully transition to college and career.

Under the federal Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008 and California's Assembly Bill 12, foster youth may remain eligible for Aid to Families with Dependent Children-Foster Care (AFDC-FC) payments and other benefits until age 21 under certain conditions. *WIC 11403.*

Youth who do not qualify for extended foster care benefits under AB 12 but are attending high school, a vocational program or a GED program full-time, and are reasonably expected to complete the program or receive a high school equivalency certificate before their 19th birthday, may retain their AFDC-FC, Kin-GAP, or CalWORKs foster care payments until they graduate or reach their 19th birthday. *WIC 11253, 11403.01, 11405.*

For more information, see <https://www.cdss.ca.gov/inforesources/foster-care/extended-foster-care-ab-12>

### Enrollment in High School (Until Age 18)

Youth are subject to compulsory full-time education until age 18 unless they are exempt. *EC 48200.* Youth over age 18 may enroll for additional years in alternative education programs until a diploma is awarded.

### Enrollment in Adult Education Programs

A student may be able to enroll in an adult education program, subject to the district's availability. Adult education programs offer free to low-cost classes for adults 18 and older. Students can get a high school diploma or general education diploma (GED), take career technical education classes, learn English and learn about U.S. citizenship. *EC 52500.1.*

### Students with Special Needs

Youth are entitled to special education services under California law until age 22. *EC 56041.* See *Special Education Fact Sheet.* Additionally, college campuses have disabled student support programs that can offer a range of

accommodations. Information about programs for disabled students at California Community Colleges can be found at <https://www.cccco.edu/About-Us/Chancellors-Office/Divisions/Educational-Services-and-Support/Student-Service/What-we-do/Disabled-Student-Programs-and-Services>

### HIGHER EDUCATION

#### Campus Support Programs

There are a wide range of academic support programs for former foster youth attending college in California. Programs such as Guardian Scholars and NextUp are comprehensive programs that support former foster youth in their efforts to gain a university, community college, or vocational education. Campus support programs vary, and students may receive: financial aid, housing support, academic and personal counseling, and employment services. All community colleges have a designated Foster Youth Success Initiative Liaison. The best way to find out about a specific campus support program is to contact the program coordinator. See <https://cacollegepathways.org/search-foster-youth-programs/>

#### California College Promise Grant

The California College Promise Grant is funded by the State of California for California residents to waive the full amount of enrollment fees for eligible students at community colleges, including foster youth. While most students are subject to loss of the fee waiver if they do not make Satisfactory Academic Progress, foster youth are exempt from this provision. *5 CCR 58621.*

#### Chafee Grant (Education and Training Voucher-ETV)

Current or former foster youth who have not reached their 26th birthday and have financial needs may qualify for up to \$5,000 a year for career and technical training or college. Funds may be used to pay costs associated with being in school, including tuition and fees and non-tuition expenses such as books, housing, food, childcare, and transportation. The student must have had an open dependency/foster care case between ages 16 and 18, and the California Department of Social Services will verify eligibility status. Information is available at <https://chafee.csac.ca.gov/>

The requirements related to academic progress are more flexible for the Chafee ETV grant than other forms of financial aid. If a student fails to demonstrate Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP), as defined by the institution where the student is enrolled, for two consecutive semesters (or equivalent enrollment), the student may continue to receive a Chafee ETV grant but must meet with an appropriate college staff member to develop a plan for improving academic progress. If a student subsequently fails to meet SAP standards for a third consecutive semester (or equivalent), the student must meet with an appropriate college staff member to update their plan. A student who fails to update their plan or who fails to meet SAP for a fourth semester (or equivalent) loses eligibility for subsequent awards but may appeal to retain eligibility. *EC 69519.*

#### Financial Aid

Foster Youth Services Coordinating Programs are required to coordinate efforts to ensure, to the extent possible, that foster youth are supported to complete a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) or California Dream Act Application (CADAA). *EC 42921(e)(3)(B).*

When filling out the FAFSA/CADAA, students currently or formerly in foster care should indicate they are/were a dependent/ward of the court or were in foster care after age 13 or were in a legal guardianship in order to qualify as an independent student. Independent students are not required to report parental income on the FAFSA/CADAA. Payments received as part of extended foster care do not need to be reported as income on the FAFSA. *US Department of Education, Dear Colleague Letter GEN-13-18, available at <https://ifap.ed.gov/dear-colleague-letters/07-03-2013-gen-13-18-subject-extended-foster-care-payments>*

While the FAFSA can be completed at any time, early application is encouraged and some aid, such as the Cal Grant, has specific deadlines (see Cal Grant section).

College financial aid offices have the ability to verify foster youth status automatically. In some circumstances, however, students may be asked to provide evidence of foster care status.

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Students who report on their FAFSA that they did not file a tax return are typically required to submit an IRS Verification of Non-Filing; however, if an individual is unable to obtain a verification of non-filing from the IRS and the institution has no reason to question the student's good-faith effort to obtain the required documentation, the institution may accept a signed statement certifying that the individual attempted to obtain the verification and was unable to obtain the required documentation.

See <https://jbay.org/resources/irs-vnf/> for additional information.

## Cal Grant Eligibility

Foster youth who were in foster care at any point after age 13 qualify for extended eligibility for the Cal Grant program.

1. Instead of having to apply within one year after high school graduation, foster youth attending a 4-year university are able to apply for an entitlement Cal Grant if they meet other eligibility criteria and have not reached their 26th birthday as of July 1 of the award year. As of 2021, there are no

age restrictions or time out of high school requirements for all community college students.

2. Foster youth can receive a Cal Grant for up to 8 years. *EC 69433.6, 69435.3.*

To qualify for a Cal Grant, students attending a 4-year university must submit a FAFSA by March 2, and community college students must submit a FAFSA by September 2. *EC 69435.5.*

If students miss these deadlines, however, they should still apply for aid, as other sources such as the Pell grant and Chafee grant can be applied for later.

Foster youth who were in foster care at any point after age 13 can receive a Cal Grant access award for non-tuition costs (such as rent, food, books, transportation, etc.) of up to \$6,000. *EC 69470(b).*

For resources to support foster youth to apply for financial aid, visit <https://jbay.org/resources/financial-aid-guide/>

## Priority Registration

Foster youth attending a public college or university who were in foster care after the age of 13 and are under age 26 are entitled to priority registration for classes. In order to access priority registration at community colleges, students must first complete an orientation, assessment, and educational plan. Students should contact the admissions and records office or foster youth contact to ensure access. *EC 66025.9.*

## Priority Housing

Foster youth can receive priority access to on-campus housing at most public colleges and universities in California. In addition, universities that have student housing open during school breaks are required to give first priority to current and former foster youth and are required to allow foster youth to remain in housing that is available during academic breaks at no extra charge. *EC 76010; 90001.5; 92660.*

## FOSTER YOUTH VERIFICATION

Current and former foster youth may be required to provide written verification of foster care status in order to qualify for certain benefits. Youth who are unable to obtain verification from their county can request verification from the Foster Care Ombudsperson's office by calling 1-877-846-1602.

## TRANSITIONAL SERVICES AND SUPPORTS

State law specifies that before terminating dependency jurisdiction, the state must assist youth in foster care with applying for admission to college, a vocational training program, or other educational institution and obtaining financial aid, where appropriate. If the youth has not received this assistance along with other important documents, and is not prepared to exit the system, the court may retain jurisdiction so long as it takes the department to comply with assisting the youth. *WIC 391.*

Effective 2018, foster care social workers are required to document in the case plan of any youth aged 16 or older who will support the youth with applications for financial aid and college. *WIC 16501.1.*

## INDEPENDENT LIVING SERVICES

Youth may be eligible for Independent Living Program (ILP) services through various county agencies depending on their status. These ILP services may include: life skills training, transitional housing, assistance with transportation, and scholarships. Youth who are in foster care age 16 and older are required to have a Transitional Independent Living Plan that is updated every six months. *WIC 16501.1.*

If the youth qualifies for special education services, they should have an Individualized Transition Plan starting at age 16. *20 USC 1414; EC 56341.5.* If they are transition age youth (16-25 years), they may also be eligible for services through the Department of Mental Health under the full-service partnership, funded by the Mental Health Services Act. Public Counsel has prepared a comprehensive manual, ABCs of Transition and the Independent Living Program, available at <https://www.publiccounsel.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/ABCs-Manual-Ninth-Edition-2021-4817-8632-3711.pdf>

In addition, California Department of Social Services (CDSS) has a website at <https://cdss.ca.gov/inforesources/foster-care/independent-living-program>