

FOSTER YOUTH BENEFITS FOR COLLEGE

Benefit	Details	Eligibility	What to do
Financial Aid			
Independent Status on the FAFSA/CA Dream Act Application (CADAA)	Qualifying as Independent means that the student does not have to include parent or guardian income on the FAFSA/CADAA. This includes foster parents.	Foster youth who were in care at any time after the age of 13 and students who are or were in a legal guardianship at any point are considered “independent” for the purposes of financial aid	Students should answer yes to the foster youth or guardianship questions as appropriate on the FAFSA/CADAA to get this benefit
Foster Care Payments and Financial Aid	Extended foster care payments, including Supervised Independent Living Placement (SILP) payments made directly to youth are not reported as income on the FAFSA/CADAA. This also includes the infant supplement.	Youth who choose to remain in foster care after the age of 18 and up until the age of 21. (Also called “Extended Foster Care” and “AB 12”)	Students should not include these payments as part of their income when completing financial aid applications
Chafee Grant	Up to \$5,000 per year for foster youth	Foster youth who were in-care between 16-18 years old with financial need; under 26 years old on July 1 of award year and enrolled at least half time.	Complete a FAFSA or CA Dream Act Application and the Chafee application at chafee.csac.ca.gov
Cal Grant	Can help pay for tuition and fees at four- year universities in California, and up to \$1,672 per year for cost of living at both four-year universities and community colleges in California. Students with dependents can qualify for up to an additional \$6,000.	Foster youth who were in care after age 13 are eligible to apply up to age 26 and are exempt from requirement to apply within one year of high school graduation. Eligibility for foster youth is extended to eight years. Must have financial need and at least a 2.0 GPA.	Ensure that FAFSA/CADAA application is complete and that high school GPA has been uploaded to CSAC and matched with the FAFSA/CADAA application. Students enrolling at a four-year university must apply by March 2. Community college students must apply by September 2.
California Community College Promise Grant Fee Waiver	Waives enrollment fees at CA Community Colleges.	To qualify, students must meet certain income standards. While most students lose their eligibility for the Promise Grant fee waiver if they are on academic probation for two consecutive terms, foster youth are exempt from this.	Students must verify their foster youth status with the Financial Aid Department at their campus to qualify to maintain the fee waiver while on academic probation. The foster youth support program or FYSI Liaison can help with this.
JBAY Book Fund	Offers book vouchers for use at the campus bookstore where the student is enrolled.	In foster care after age 13 and enrolled in at least six units. Must complete a FAFSA. Students eligible for or participating in a NextUp program are not eligible.	Students can apply through the college foster youth support program at the college or university where they are enrolled.
Enrollment			
Priority Registration	Foster youth are entitled to priority enrollment at community colleges and CSUs. All UC campuses also provide this benefit. This offers access to classes before they fill so students can get the classes they need and create a schedule that works for them.	In foster care on or after age 16 and under age 26 (some colleges have expanded who is eligible beyond these criteria, e.g. students who exited foster care at a younger age or who are older than age 26 currently) NOTE: Foster youth do not lose eligibility if they are on academic probation.	To qualify at community colleges, all eligible students must first complete orientation, assessment and an educational plan. All students must verify their foster youth status with Admissions and Records. The foster youth support program or FYSI Liaison can help with this.

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Automatic Verification of Foster Youth Status	Child welfare provides direct verification of foster youth status for the purposes of financial aid eligibility to college financial aid departments through the WebGrants system.	Any student who submits a FAFSA/CADAA and is under the age of 26 will be matched to the child welfare database. Students in care after the age of 13 will be verified as foster youth.	Students must list their college school code correctly on their FAFSA/CADAA so that the financial aid office at their college can verify their status. This process is designed to eliminate the need for students to obtain a ward of the court letter from their child welfare department, however if there is any difficulty with the verification process, contact the Foster Youth Ombudsman’s Office, 877-846-1602, fosteryouthhelp@dss.ca.gov
Programs and Direct Support			
NextUp Foster Youth Support Program	45 Community Colleges offer the NextUp program. This program provides academic counseling, books, transportation and childcare vouchers, other direct financial support, referrals to a range of other resources and a supportive community.	In foster care on or after 16th birthday, under the age of 26 when entering the program and enrolled in at least 9 units.	http://www.student.cacollegepathways.org/find-campus-support-programs provides contact information for campus support programs.
Other Foster Youth Support Programs	In addition to NextUp, many campuses— both community college and 4-year universities—have foster youth campus support programs. The names of these programs vary by campus and include Guardian Scholars, Renaissance Scholars, Promise Scholars, and other local campus names. Every community college also has a Foster Youth Success Initiative (FYSI) liaison.	Eligibility varies by program. Some admit students who were in care at age 16, others at age 13, others include students with any time spent in foster care.	http://www.student.cacollegepathways.org/find-campus-support-programs provides contact information for campus support programs.
EOPS (Extended Opportunity Program and Services)	Provides personalized academic and personal counseling, vouchers for books and transportation, access to computers and printers at all community colleges.	For economically and educationally disadvantaged students. Students must qualify for a Promise Grant (fee waiver) and be enrolled full-time (unless exempt from full time requirement due to disability). A limited number of students are able to access the program with enrollment in 9 units.	Students must apply to the EOPS program at their campus. Procedures and deadlines vary but early application is encouraged as programs fill up.
EOP (Educational Opportunity Program)	Provides admission, academic and financial support services to historically underserved students throughout California at all CSU and UC campuses (some programs at UC campuses use alternative names).	Full time low-income students who need additional assistance to be successful.	Application must be submitted with general CSU or UC admission application. Additional essays and two letters of recommendation are required.

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Housing and Food Security			
Priority Access to Campus Housing	CSUs are required and UCs are requested to give foster youth priority for on- campus housing. California community colleges are requested to give priority to foster youth.	Varies by campus.	Identify as foster youth on university/college applications. A separate housing application must be submitted by regular housing application deadline. Contact foster youth program on campus for assistance.
Campus Housing During Breaks	CSUs that have student housing open during school breaks are required to give priority to current and former foster youth. UCs are requested to do so for foster youth who are otherwise eligible for a particular facility. CSUs are required and UCs are requested to allow foster youth and homeless youth to remain in housing that is available during academic breaks at no extra charge. (This does not apply to summer.)	Varies by campus.	Contact foster youth program on campus for assistance.
Extended Foster Care Housing Payments for Minors	In general youth in foster care must be age 18-21 to qualify for placement in a supervised independent living placement (SILP). Minors (under age 18) however, can be placed in a SILP in a college dormitory or other college or university designated housing.	The student agrees to work together with the social worker or probation officer to facilitate implementation of the mutually developed supervised placement agreement and transitional independent living case plan. This benefit is not considered in financial aid awards.	Students must make arrangement with their county social worker and the housing department of the university or college.
CalFresh Benefits	In most cases students must be working 20 hours per week to qualify for CalFresh, however students in extended foster care and/or enrolled in a campus-based foster care program, EOPS, EOP, or other designated program are exempt from work requirement.	Eligibility for CalFresh benefits is made on a case by case basis and considers the individual's earned and unearned income, including any portion of the foster care payment they receive directly; assets; household composition; the amount of rent and utility expenses; student status and other factors.	Applications can be completed online at http://www.benefitscal.org . The applicant will be required to participate in a phone interview and provide proof of income, expenses, and other circumstances. For additional information see http://www.jbaforyouth.org/calfresh-resources-colleges .