

# 12th Grade CHECKLIST

## for Students Applying to a Four-Year College or University

This checklist references sections found in the Postsecondary Education Planning Guide for Adults Supporting California's Foster Youth. Visit [jbay.org/resources/ed-planning-guide/](http://jbay.org/resources/ed-planning-guide/) to access the complete guide.

Depending on a youth's goals and when they start preparing for postsecondary education, some of these steps may not apply. The checklist below includes the steps for all different types of postsecondary education: career and technical education programs, community colleges, and four-year universities. Use the links above to download standalone checklists for individual postsecondary pathways.

### EDUCATION PLANNING



- **Continue to work with the student to identify which postsecondary pathways they are interested in based on their interests and career goals.** It's not too late to schedule a visit in-person or virtually to a college campus or attend a college fair to explore options.
- **Students with an IEP and/or 504 Plan:** Make sure your student is provided a copy of their most recent Individualized Education Program (IEP) plan with their diagnosis to help access learning accommodations in college. If they aren't sure if they have had an IEP in the past, reach out to your local Foster

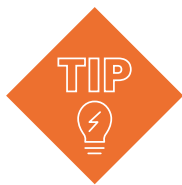
Youth Services Coordinating Program to verify. For youth 16 or older, the IEP should include a statement of needed transition services and appropriate measurable postsecondary goals. Students may be eligible for services through the Department of Rehabilitation. Learn more in Section 10.

- **Add report cards from 12th grade into the student's online or physical documents folder along with any certificates or awards earned for the year.** If the student transfers to a new school, obtain a copy of their school record and keep it with other important documents.
- **Help students develop a system to safely store all login usernames and passwords.** Students will need to create a number of new accounts in the college application process. Accounts may include applications for financial aid, WebGrants 4 Students, and college applications.
- **Help students obtain an email address that is strictly for college and financial aid application information.** Avoid using a high school email address, since those often expire.
- **If the student is interested in applying to four-year college or university, and has taken the courses necessary to apply, help them make a list of three to five colleges they are interested in.** If they have taken the courses necessary to apply to a four-year university this can include "reach school(s)," "target schools" and "safety schools." These are terms to describe the likelihood of being admitted based on factors such as a school's acceptance rate or average GPA. For example, at a "safety school" the student would most likely be accepted and at a "reach school" there is a lower chance of acceptance. **If the student is interested in community college, explore which colleges have the programs the student is interested in.**
  - Schedule tours/informational interviews to help narrow down choices and get a feel for the institution (physical environment, types of courses, resources, etc.). Students should consider housing options available to them as well.
  - Schedule a meeting with campus foster youth support program staff to gather more information on available services. See Section 10 of the guide for more information.

# CAREER EXPLORATION AND PREPARATION



- ❑ **EXPLORE INTERESTS.** Encourage your student to participate in extracurriculars or take or update a career interest and aptitude assessment. See Section 4 for career exploration resources.
- ❑ **GET WORK EXPERIENCE.** Explore paid work experience to develop job skills and explore interests. Youth under the age of 18 will need a work permit if still enrolled in high school. The student's school or social worker/probation officer can assist in getting a work permit. Contact the local workforce development board to identify any youth employment programs. Visit [laoyc.org/guides](http://laoyc.org/guides) to learn more.



## KNOW YOUR RIGHTS!

Additional information about the educational rights of foster youth can be found in the California Foster Youth Education Law Fact Sheets located at [cfyef.org/publications.html](http://cfyef.org/publications.html).

# HIGH SCHOOL COURSEWORK AND GRADUATION



- ❑ **Talk to a school counselor to ensure that your student is continuing to enroll in approved "a-g" coursework if on track to qualify for a four-year college or university.** Learn more about these courses in Section 6 and by visiting [calstate.edu/how-to-get-to-calstate](http://calstate.edu/how-to-get-to-calstate) or [ucop.edu/agguide](http://ucop.edu/agguide).
- ❑ **Regularly check the student's school work online.** Many schools use websites like Canvas or School Loop for parents and caregivers to track a student's grades, homework and important deadlines.

- ❑ **Request tutoring as needed.** The high school counselor, Foster Youth District Liaison, or County Office of Education Foster Youth Services Coordinating Program (FYSCP) can be great resources. Learn more in Section 10.
- ❑ **Speak with the school counselor to determine if your student is a good candidate for dual enrollment.** Dual enrollment courses, which may be offered at a local community college or on the high school campus, allow students to earn college credit while also satisfying a requirement for high school graduation.
- ❑ **Work with the student to maintain and update the student's High School Education Planner at [californiacolleges.edu](http://californiacolleges.edu).** This should be updated every semester to reflect the grades earned each semester. If the student decides to apply to a CSU, course information will automatically transfer to their college application.
- ❑ **For students who change schools during the school year,** the old school must provide the new school with all records regardless of any outstanding fees. The records must include a list of full or partial credits earned, current classes and grades, immunization and other records, and, if applicable, a copy of the 504 plan or IEP.
  - Connect with the foster youth district liaison or your local County Office of Education Foster Youth Services Coordinating Program (FYSCP) to review the student's transcript for partial credit options.
- ❑ **Review the student's academic record(s) throughout the year and, if a student is behind in credits, identify opportunities for credit recovery** such as summer school, adult school, continuation school, or remaining in high school for a fifth year. Help youth determine which option is in their best interest. For students not on track to graduate high school, explore options such as Graduation Exemptions for Foster Youth or getting a high school equivalency certificate (i.e., GED or HiSET). Learn more about these options in Section 6.



**Student Spotlight:**  
Credit Recovery



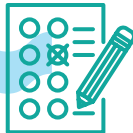
Click [jbay.org/resources/student-spotlights/](http://jbay.org/resources/student-spotlights/) to watch.



Scan here to watch



## TESTING



- ❑ **OPTIONAL (fall semester only): Sign up to take or retake the SAT and/or ACT. Encourage students to register for earlier test dates so they have a chance to retake the exam later in the fall semester if desired.**

Students can access a fee waiver for the exam from their high school counselor. To learn more about when to register for the SAT go to [satsuite.collegeboard.org](http://satsuite.collegeboard.org). For the ACT go to [act.org](http://act.org). The SAT and ACT are no longer required for admission to the CSUs or UCs, however some private universities and out-of-state colleges still require the exam(s) as part of their admissions process. If accepted to a CSU campus, ACT or SAT test scores can be used as one of the measures to place students in the appropriate mathematics or English (written communication) courses.

- Check with the school counselor or foster youth district liaison about any test prep courses available through the school.
- Check with the social worker/probation officer about any funding available to help pay for these courses.

- ❑ **If applicable, register to take the Advanced Placement (AP) or International Baccalaureate (IB) exams for 12th grade courses in the spring (March).** Ask an academic counselor about AP/IB exam fee waivers. Students will need to list the institutions where they want their scores sent.

## CHILD WELFARE AND PROBATION RESOURCES



- ❑ **TRANSITIONAL INDEPENDENT LIVING PLAN & AGREEMENT (TILP).** Ensure that youth are engaged in developing their Transitional Independent Living Plan & Agreement (TILP). The TILP must be completed every six months for youth in out-of-home foster care age 16 and above. It should integrate the youth's college and career goals, including who will support the student in completing the steps necessary to meet their goals.
- ❑ **POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION SUPPORT PERSON.** Social workers/probation officers must identify a postsecondary education support person(s) to assist all youth ages 16 and older who express an interest in college with completing their college applications, including career and technical education, as well as their financial aid applications. This must be documented in the TILP as well as the case plan ([ACL 18-104](#)).
- ❑ **CHILD & FAMILY TEAM (CFT) MEETING.** Use the Child and Family Team (CFT) meeting to identify the postsecondary education support person(s) for all youth ages 16 and older, as well as a plan for supporting the youth's overall postsecondary education and career goals. Education partners should be invited and encouraged to attend these meetings ([ACIN 1-71-18](#)).

- ❑ **INDEPENDENT LIVING PROGRAM (ILP).** Ensure that eligible youth are referred to the Independent Living Program (ILP or ILSP). Each county’s program varies. Talk to the social worker/probation officer or local ILP for more information about the resources and activities they provide, like financial aid workshops or college tours. Find a statewide ILP roster at: [jbay.org/resources/ilp-roster](http://jbay.org/resources/ilp-roster).
- ❑ **VITAL DOCUMENTS.** Social workers/probation officers can assist youth in gathering original vital documents, and should provide copies to all youth age 16 and older. Students should upload them into a secure electronic storage system such as [ifoster.org](http://ifoster.org) or [Google.com/drive](http://Google.com/drive).



### Important vital documents for adulthood

- One photo ID, such as a CA State ID, CA REAL ID, or driver’s license
- U.S. Social Security Card or Permanent Resident Card (aka Green Card) if a non-US Citizen
- Original birth certificate
- Verification letter (dependent/ward of the court letter) to access foster youth benefits in college. See the “Applying for Financial Aid” section for more information.

- ❑ **HOUSING OPTIONS.** Collaborate with the social worker/probation officer to explore housing options that align with the youth’s postsecondary educational plans. Securing housing can often take time—so start early. Don’t wait until the youth’s 90-day transition plan meeting, as it often doesn’t align with college timelines and start dates. Eligible youth who opt into Extended Foster Care (EFC) may have multiple options.

## APPLYING FOR FINANCIAL AID



Get the comprehensive **Financial Aid Guide for California Foster Youth** and companion **Step-by-Step Visual Guide at [jbay.org/resources/financial-aid-guide/](http://jbay.org/resources/financial-aid-guide/)** for in-depth instructions and information on financial aid. The checklist below provides a brief overview:

- ❑ **Determine whether your student should complete either the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) at [fafsa.gov](http://fafsa.gov) or CA Dream Act Application (CADAA) at [dream.csac.ca.gov](http://dream.csac.ca.gov)** to apply for financial aid.
- ❑ **Gather documents and information necessary to complete the FAFSA or CADAA:**
  - Social Security Card or Alien Registration Number [FAFSA only].
  - Statewide Student Identifier number (SSID) [CADAA only].
  - Email address that a student checks often (avoid high school emails that often expire).
  - List of colleges that the student plans to apply to. At least one must be listed.
  - Tax information, if a student filed a tax return, or information about the income they earned or received for the requested “prior-prior” year (i.e., students applying for the 2023–24 school year must provide income and tax information from 2021). Students completing the FAFSA may be able to use the IRS Data Retrieval Tool (DRT) to transfer income and tax information from their federal income tax return.

- ❑ **Ensure students are connected to individual support to complete the FAFSA or CADAA by the March 2nd priority deadline.** Students can start applying as early as October 1st for the following fall term. Students attending four-year institutions must complete their applications before March 2nd to receive institution-based aid and Cal Grant awards. Students attending a California Community College can submit a FAFSA or CADAA until September 2nd to be considered for the Cal Grant program. Students can apply after these deadlines but will receive less aid.
- ❑ **Make sure eligible students receive “Independent Status” on the FAFSA or CADAA.** Youth in legal guardianship or foster youth who were in out-of-home foster care placement at least one day after the age of 13 can complete the FAFSA or CADAA as an “Independent student.” This means they do not need to report any financial information about their biological parents, foster parents, or adoptive parents on the FAFSA or CADAA, and may qualify for more money.
- ❑ **Complete the Chafee Grant application at [chafee.csac.ca.gov](http://chafee.csac.ca.gov).** Eligible foster youth (in out-of-home foster care placement at least one day between ages 16 to 18) can receive up to \$5,000 per academic year for up to five years (whether or not consecutive) up until age 26.
- ❑ **Create a Webgrants 4 Students account at [mygrantinfo.csac.ca.gov](http://mygrantinfo.csac.ca.gov) once the FAFSA or CADAA is processed** in order to manage the Cal Grant and Chafee Grant online. This includes indicating their planned school of attendance and self-certifying their high school graduation. It can take one to two weeks for the FAFSA to process before an account can be created.
- ❑ **Verify that the student’s high school GPA has been received and matched to their account to receive the Cal Grant.** Students can get this information by logging into their WebGrants account or reaching out to their local FYSCP.

- ❑ **Help your student research and apply for additional private scholarships for which they may be eligible.** For information about scholarships, visit [jbay.org/resources/scholarships/](http://jbay.org/resources/scholarships/).
- ❑ **Obtain a dependency or ward of the court letter to verify that your student was in foster care.** This letter may be requested to access certain benefits only available to foster youth, including financial aid. Help students securely upload a digital copy for easy access in the future.
  - Current foster youth can obtain this letter from their social worker/probation officer or Independent Living Program (ILP or ILSP) Coordinator.
  - Former foster youth can obtain this by calling the California Foster Care Ombudsperson’s office at 877-846-1602 or by visiting [fosteryouthhelp.ca.gov](http://fosteryouthhelp.ca.gov).
- ❑ **Encourage students to check their email weekly and respond promptly to any requests for additional verification in order to receive financial aid.**



# FOUR-YEAR COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES: APPLICATION AND ENROLLMENT



## Applying to a California State University (CSU) or University of California (UC)

- ❑ **BEGIN PERSONAL ESSAY.** Students should begin working on a personal essay as early as the summer before senior year. This can be used for the CSU Educational Opportunity Program (EOP) application, UC applications, and private scholarships. Learn more about EOP in Section 10. It is important that a counselor or other adult supporter review their drafts. They can include information about their foster care experience in their essay if they are comfortable doing so.
- ❑ **SELECT CAMPUSES AND MAJOR(S).** Determine which CSU and/or UC campuses the student wants to attend, and which major (or program of study) they would like to pursue. Keep in mind that some campuses and majors are impacted, making them more competitive. While there are minimum GPA requirements to attend a CSU (2.0 GPA) and UC (3.0 GPA), impacted programs will have higher minimum requirements. Students should do their research when making selections.
- ❑ **APPLY.** Start early to assist students to apply to the CSUs and/or UCs. Make sure that a counselor or adult supporter reviews their application before it is submitted. Foster youth, based on their income and household size, are typically eligible to receive fee waivers to waive application fees for up to four CSU and four UC applications. Encourage students to self-identify as a foster youth on their applications to access maximum benefits.
  - **CSUs ([calstate.edu/apply](https://calstate.edu/apply)):** Apply between Oct. 1st – Nov. 30th. Some CSUs may accept applications after this deadline. High school transcripts (academic records)

will automatically transfer for students who have regularly used the High School Planner at [californicolleges.edu](https://californicolleges.edu). Students should still review this information before submitting to ensure accuracy. Students who did not use the Planner will need to manually enter high school coursework and grades by referring to their high school transcripts. Students should not do this based on memory.

- **UCs ([universityofcalifornia.edu/admissions](https://universityofcalifornia.edu/admissions)):** Applications open Aug. 1st and can be submitted Oct. 1st – Nov. 30th. Students must manually enter their high school coursework and grades. Students should refer to their high school transcripts (or academic records) and not do this based on memory.
- **ON-CAMPUS HOUSING.** Students should indicate their interest for on-campus housing (i.e., “dorms” or “residence halls”) in their application to be notified of options, even if they aren’t sure. Most CSUs and UCs offer on-campus housing, which can be a great experience for many students. Most foster youth qualify for priority access to on-campus housing, and if the student is eligible for Extended Foster Care, their SILP stipend can help cover the cost of room and board.
- ❑ **APPLY FOR EOP (OPTIONAL BUT RECOMMENDED).** The Educational Opportunity Program (EOP) application is embedded within the CSU application, but only available at some of the UCs. While not required for admissions, EOP can provide students with book grants, scholarships and other resources, and can in some cases enable a student to be admitted to the university who does not meet the regular admission criteria. Students can apply to the CSUs and come back later to complete their EOP application by January 15th. Learn more here: [calstate.edu/attend/student-services/eop/apply-to-eop](https://calstate.edu/attend/student-services/eop/apply-to-eop). Students should:
  - Identify the names and emails of two people to write letters of recommendation before they start their CSU application.
  - Inform the recommenders that they will receive a request by email, which may go to spam.
  - Ask the recommenders to confirm when they have submitted the recommendation to ensure that the EOP application is complete. Students will not be automatically notified.
  - Proofread the student’s autobiographical short essays in the EOP application.

- ❑ **REQUEST TRANSCRIPTS.** Assist students to request and send transcripts both in January and before July 15th to confirm completion of required courses. Students should request an extra copy of their transcript to save for future reference.

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## Acceptance, Course Enrollment, and Fees at a CSU or UC

- ❑ **MAKE A DECISION.** The student must submit a Statement of Intent to Register (SIR) by May 1st. When making a decision, students should consider factors such as campus culture, available supports, on-campus housing, and the cost to attend based on how much financial aid they were offered. Learn more about comparing financial aid award letters in the Financial Aid Guide for CA Foster Youth: [jbay.org/resources/financial-aid-guide/](http://jbay.org/resources/financial-aid-guide/)
- ❑ **CONNECT TO SUPPORT.** Help connect your student to on-campus foster youth support programs and other relevant resources as soon as they know where they plan to attend. Program names and eligibility criteria vary by campus. To learn more about the various programs see Section 10 and visit [cacollegepathways.org](http://cacollegepathways.org).
  - **Assist students who may benefit from Services for Students with Disabilities in contacting the office.** Students can submit their latest IEP with their diagnosis or get assessed. Start early so students may be able to receive special accommodations by the start of their fall term. This process takes time.
- ❑ **PAY A DEPOSIT.** The student will be asked to pay a nonrefundable deposit for freshman tuition to the college they have selected to hold their spot, often before the student has received their financial aid. Contact the foster youth campus support program for assistance. Many campuses will make special arrangements for foster youth to postpone payment until financial aid is awarded.

- ❑ **APPLY FOR ON-CAMPUS HOUSING.** Apply for on-campus housing (“dorms” or “residence halls”) for the campus the student plans to attend. Eligible foster youth may be entitled to priority access to on-campus housing if they self-identify. Many applications will require a non-refundable deposit. Work directly with the foster youth campus support program to ask if the housing department will waive housing fees until financial aid is processed in the fall. If not, reach out to the ILP coordinator for possible assistance.

- **Students planning to live on campus will also be asked to provide updated vaccination records** for childhood vaccinations (MMR, Tetanus, etc.). Other vaccinations may be recommended or required by the campus housing department (e.g., Covid-19, meningitis).
- **Help students during the summer to gather the items they will need for their dorm or other housing** they will be residing in, which are typically furnished with a bed, mattress, desk, and chair. Students will need other key items such as sheets, bedding, laundry basket and detergent, hangers, toiletries, school supplies, and more! Connect with the campus foster youth support program or with county ILP services to determine what support is available. See Section 10 for Resources.

- ❑ **REGISTER FOR CLASSES.** Eligible foster youth should take advantage of priority registration to enroll in classes before their peers. Classes fill up quickly, and getting into the classes they want is important to stay on track for their degree goal as well as financial aid. Work with the EOP or foster youth campus support program to determine eligibility. Students may be requested to provide a dependent or ward of the court letter as proof of foster care status. See Section 9 for Tips on Registering for and Succeeding in Classes.
  - If your student plans to attend a CSU, the EAP test they took in 11th grade will determine whether they need to attend a summer Early Start Program. Visit [csustudentsuccess.org](http://csustudentsuccess.org) for more information.

## Applying to a Private College or University

- ❑ **DO YOUR RESEARCH.** Admission criteria, applications, and deadlines vary at each private college or university. Students should do their research early, starting the summer before senior year, to plan accordingly.

### WARNING

Students should avoid “for-profit” or “proprietary” vocational colleges like those advertised on television.

These colleges typically offer career and technical education (CTE) programs at a much higher cost than similar programs offered at community colleges. Units earned at these colleges rarely transfer, and many students end up in debt owing tens of thousands of dollars. Exercise extreme caution, and discuss the pros and cons with the student before choosing a private program.

- ❑ **BEGIN PERSONAL ESSAY.** Many, but not all, four-year private colleges and universities require personal essays. It is important that a counselor or other adult supporter review the student’s drafts. They can include information about their foster care experience in their essay if they are comfortable doing so. This may help them qualify for more institutional financial aid.
- ❑ **REQUEST RECOMMENDATION LETTERS.** Private institutions may request recommendation letters from counselors, teachers, employers, or other individuals who can speak to a student’s skills, talents, and strengths. It is recommended that students provide recommenders a resume or a “Brag Sheet” that lists skills, education, and achievements throughout high school. Resources are available through the Common App Ready Toolkit: [commonapp.org/counselors-and-recommenders/common-app-ready](https://commonapp.org/counselors-and-recommenders/common-app-ready).

- ❑ **APPLY.** Applications and deadlines vary, however many colleges use the Common Application ([commonapp.org](https://commonapp.org)), and applications are typically due by January 1st. Foster youth are typically eligible for an application fee waiver to up to four campuses. Students should request a copy of their high school transcripts (academic records) before applying to be able to enter their coursework and grades.
- ❑ **MAKE A DECISION.** Deadlines vary, however, when making a decision students should consider factors such as campus culture, available supports, on-campus housing, and the cost for the student to attend based on how much financial aid they were offered. Learn more about comparing financial aid award letters in the Financial Aid Guide for CA Foster Youth: [jbay.org/resources/financial-aid-guide/](https://jbay.org/resources/financial-aid-guide/).

