

BENEFITS SPECIFIC TO CURRENT & FORMER FOSTER YOUTH

This guide outlines benefits and resources available to youth and young adults in California based on their status as current or former foster youth. Areas covered include foster care and legal permanency; benefits for parenting foster youth; housing support after foster care; college housing, access, enrollment, and financial aid benefits; mental and physical health benefits; and tax credits.

This guide does not cover programs available to the general population based on income or other eligibility criteria—such as CalFresh or CalWORKs, financial aid or tax credits that are purely income-based, or assistance available through the homelessness response system. However, it is important to note that current and former foster youth are often eligible for these broader public benefits as well.

Updated April 2026

BENEFIT TYPE	AGE ELIGIBILITY	OTHER ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS	MORE INFO / TO ACCESS
Foster Care & Legal Permanency Benefits			
Extended Foster Care - Continued foster care benefits beyond age 18 up to age 21. Placement options include Supervised Independent Living Placement (SILP), Transitional Housing Placement for Nonminor Dependents (THP-NMD), Resource Family placement, or Short-Term Residential Therapeutic Program (STRTP). <i>With the exception of the SILP, all foster care placements provide fully-covered room and board, and the placement provider or caregiver provides a monthly allowance to the youth. Youth placed in SILPs must identify and secure their own housing and may receive their full monthly foster care payment directly. Youth must pass a readiness assessment to live in a SILP.</i>	18-20 (up until turning 21)	Must have been in foster care / had a court order for out-of-home placement on or after 18 th birthday. Must fulfill at least 1 participation condition: 1. Be enrolled in high school / equiv. prog.; <i>OR</i> 2. Be enrolled in college/vocational school; <i>OR</i> 3. Work at least 80 hours/month; <i>OR</i> 4. Participate in a program/activity that helps them find a job or remove barriers to employment; <i>OR</i> 5. Be unable to do one of the above because of a medical or mental health condition.	www.cdss.ca.gov/inforesources/foster-care/extended-foster-care-ab-12 Find a THP-NMD program: https://jbay.org/resources/thp-nmd-provider-roster/
Extended Kinship Guardianship Assistance Program (Kin-GAP) - Continued Kin-GAP payments to legal guardians to age 21.	18-20 (up until turning 21)	- The youth must have a physical or mental disability that warrants continuation of benefits, <i>OR</i> - The initial Kin-GAP agreement must have been established on or after the youth turned 16 or they entered non-related legal guardianship at any age, <i>AND</i> the youth must meet at least 1 participation condition (see row 1).	www.cdss.ca.gov/inforesources/foster-care/kinship-guardianship-assistance
Extended Adoption Assistance Program (AAP) - Continued AAP payments to adoptive parents to age 21.	18-20 (up until turning 21)	- The youth must have a physical or mental disability that warrants continuation of benefits, <i>OR</i> - The initial AAP agreement must have been established after the youth turned 16 <i>AND</i> the youth must meet at least 1 participation condition (see row 1).	www.cdss.ca.gov/inforesources/adoption-assistance-program
Independent Living Program (ILP) - Training, services, and benefits to assist current and former foster youth in achieving self-sufficiency prior to and after leaving the foster care system. Each county's ILP is different; some provide workshops, some individual counseling.	16-20 (up until turning 21)	Must have been in foster care at any time between 16 th to 19 th birthday, <i>OR</i> be a former dependent who is receiving/received Kin-GAP between 16-18 or entered into a Non-Related Legal Guardianship after turning 8.	www.cdss.ca.gov/inforesources/foster-care/independent-living-program

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Benefits for Parenting Foster Youth			
Infant Supplement - Monthly payment for foster youth who are custodial parents. The payment goes to the caregiver or placement provider with the exception of nonminor dependents placed in Supervised Independent Living Placements, who may receive the infant supplement directly. The monthly amount increases each year according to the California Necessities Index, just like foster care rates.	Up until turning 21 (no longer available once a youth exits foster care)	Must be in foster care and have custody of their child(ren). A payment will be provided on behalf of each child the foster youth has. Available to custodial mothers and fathers.	www.cdss.ca.gov/lettersnotices/EntRes/getinfo/acl/2016/16-57.pdf See All County Letter on CNI increases for current year to learn monthly benefit amount
Expectant Parent Payment - Monthly payment for pregnant foster youth starting three months prior to their due date. The payment goes directly to the pregnant foster youth. The payment concludes after three months, aligned with the birth of the child. The monthly amount increases each year according to the California Necessities Index, just like foster care rates.	Up until turning 21 (no longer available once a youth exits foster care)	Must be in foster care and be pregnant. Verification of pregnancy may be requested by county caseworker. Not available to expectant fathers.	https://cdss.ca.gov/Portals/9/Additional-Resources/Letters-and-Notices/ACLS/2021/21-123.pdf?ver=2021-10-08-140950-570 See All County Letter on CNI increases for current year to learn monthly benefit amount
Parenting Support Plan & Payment - Monthly \$200 payment provided to non-minor dependents living in a Supervised Independent Living Placement if they create a Parenting Support Plan with a responsible adult mentor.	18-20 (no longer available once a youth turns 21 and exits foster care)	Must be in foster care and have custody of their child(ren), be living in a Supervised Independent Living Placement, and have executed a Parenting Support Plan with a responsible adult mentor approved by county caseworker.	https://www.cdss.ca.gov/lettersnotices/EntRes/getinfo/acl/2015/15-67.pdf
Emergency Child Care Bridge Program for Foster Youth - Provides a childcare voucher or payment and assistance with finding a subsidized childcare placement.	Up until turning 21 (no longer available once a youth exits foster care)	Emergency Child Care Bridge Program focuses on childcare for foster parents, however it is also available to foster youth who are custodial parents.	https://www.cdss.ca.gov/inforesources/calworks-child-care/ecc-bridge-program
Housing Support After Foster Care			
Transitional Housing Program-Plus (THP-Plus) - Free or affordable housing paired with comprehensive supportive services for up to 36 months.	18-24 (up until turning 25)	Must have been in foster care on or after 18 th birthday and be working toward the goals in their Transitional Independent Living Plan (TILP).	Find a THP-Plus program: https://jbay.org/resources/thp-plus-provider-roster/
FYI/FUP Housing Voucher - Provides a 36-month rental subsidy paired with supportive services provided or secured through the county child welfare agency. Can be extended an additional 24 months through participation in Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS) Program or if FSS is unavailable, by fulfilling education or employment participation conditions or qualifying for an exemption.	18-24 (must sign Housing Assistance Payment contract before turning 25, but can keep voucher for full 3-5 year duration)	Must be no more than 180 days from leaving foster care or have left foster care. Must have been at risk of or experienced homelessness on or after age 16.	www.hud.gov/hud-partners/public-indian-housing-fyi Find out if your county has FYI/FUP vouchers: https://jbay.org/resources/fyi-roster/

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College Housing, Access, Enrollment & Financial Aid Benefits			
NextUp (at CCC's) - A statewide campus support program for students impacted by the foster care system at California Community Colleges that includes additional cash aid.	Must first enroll before age 26	Must have been in foster care on or after 13 th bday. Includes those with an open court case in Family Maintenance.	icangotocollege.com/financial-aid/foster-youth-support
Foster Youth Support Programs (at CSU/UC's) - Statewide campus support programs for students impacted by the foster care system. Most go by <i>Guardian Scholars</i> or <i>Hope Scholars</i> at the UC's. Program names vary by campus at the CSU's.	No age requirement	Must have been in foster care at least one day at any age.	UC Programs: LINK CSU Programs: LINK
Priority Student Housing - Priority access to on-campus housing at CSUs and UCs and access to housing over school breaks (not including summer).	No age cap at CSUs; varies at UCs	Must be a current or former foster youth at any age at CSUs; varies at UCs	Inquire with the college's Housing Office or Foster Youth Support Program
Priority Registration - Allows current and former foster youth to register for classes before the general student population at CA Community Colleges, CSUs and UCs.	Under 26	Must have been in foster care on or after 13 th bday.	Inquire with a Foster Youth Support Program Specialist
Chafee Grant - Up to \$4,500 per year for foster youth enrolled in college at least half-time.	Under 26	Must have been in foster care between ages 16-18.	chafee.csac.ca.gov/
Cal Grant - Pays for tuition costs at a CSU or UC (and partial tuition at private colleges). Pays up to \$1,648 for non-tuition costs like rent and books. Foster youth attending a CSU, UC, CA Community College or qualified private college can receive up to \$6,000 per year for non-tuition costs. Must have minimum 2.0 high school GPA unless enrolled in a qualified Career & Technical (CTE) program.	Under 26	Must have been in foster care on or after 13 th bday for foster youth specific benefits.	www.csac.ca.gov/cal-grant/access
Student Success Completion Grant - Up to \$5,250 per semester if full-time (12+ units) at a CA Community College and also receiving Cal Grant B or C.	No age requirement	Must have been in foster care on or after 13 th bday.	icangotocollege.com/financial-aid/student-success-completion-grant
Middle Class Scholarship - Foster youth pursuing a bachelor's degree program (or teaching credential) at a CSU, UC or California Community College that have a remaining unmet need that is over \$8,412 will be offered the award to cover the gap towards cost of attendance. Award amounts will vary by student and by school.	No age requirement	Must have been in foster care on or after 13 th bday.	www.csac.ca.gov/middle-class-scholarship
FAFSA/CADAA Independent Status - Qualifying as independent means that the student does not have to include parent's or guardian's income on the FAFSA/CADAA, which may increase the amount of financial aid available. Foster parent's income and SILP payments or THP-NMD stipends provided directly to youth are never included.	No age requirement (Note: all students are independent on FAFSA/CADAA at 24)	Must have been in foster care on or after 13 th bday, or in legal guardianship	studentaid.gov/apply-for-aid/afsa/filling-out/dependency
CalKIDS Scholarship - CalKIDS provides eligible youth with college scholarship accounts, ranging from \$500-\$1500, to help pay for future qualified higher education expenses.	17-25	Must have been in foster care between 1 st - 12 th grade on specified dates.	calkids.org

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Mental & Physical Health Benefits			
Medi-Cal - Free healthcare including medical care, vision exams, substance abuse treatment, mental health services and counseling, and dental care.	Foster care status qualifies young adults until age 26	Youth who were in foster care on or after their 18th bday qualify for Medi-Cal until age 26. Young adults may continue to qualify for Medi-Cal based on their income level after turning 26.	www.dhcs.ca.gov/services/medi-cal/eligibility/Pages/FFY_Bene.aspx https://coveredtil26.org/
Additional Benefits Under Medi-Cal Managed Care Plans* - California is currently under a federal waiver (California Advancing and Innovating Medi-Cal - "CalAIM"), which expands the allowable services that Medi-Cal funds to include: • Enhanced Care Management (ECM): Comprehensive care management from a single lead care manager who coordinates the young person's health and health-related care, including physical, mental and dental care, and social services. • Community Supports (CS): Housing navigation, housing tenancy and sustaining services, and housing deposits.	These add'l benefits are available to this population as long as they remain on Medi-Cal Managed Care Plans, regardless of age. (Former foster youth are automatically qualified for Medi-Cal up to age 26).	Must be enrolled in a Medi-Cal Managed Care Plan. Current and former foster youth are automatically eligible for ECM. (CS are available to all Managed Care Medi-Cal members).	https://www.dhcs.ca.gov/CalAIM/Pages/CalAIM.aspx <i>*As add'l related benefits expand and roll out over 2026/27 (including "Transitional Rent"), this chart will be updated to include them.</i>
Tax Credits			
California Foster Youth Tax Credit - Provides up to \$1,189 as a cash back refund to eligible young adults who file their state taxes and claim the credit.	18-25 years old on last day of tax year (up until turning 26)	Must have been in foster care on or after 13 th bday and be eligible for the CA Earned Income Tax Credit (earned \$1-\$32,900 in the tax year, lived in CA for more than half the tax year, and have a Social Security Number or Individual Tax ID Number).	www.ftb.ca.gov/file/personal/credits/foster-youth-tax-credit.html https://jbay.org/resources/tax-filing-tax-credits-informational-resources/ Find a Volunteer Income Tax Assistance Site for free tax return preparation: https://jbay.org/resources/fy-vita-sites/