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A Postsecondary Education Planning Guide *for* Adults Supporting California's Foster Youth



JBAY JOHN BURTON Advocates *for* Youth

CALIFORNIA ★ COLLEGE PATHWAYS

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Purpose of this Guide



While

93% of foster youth express a desire to attend college,

only

53% enroll within one year after completing high school,



and just

10% have received a two- or four-year degree by the age of 23.

Further, roughly

50% of foster youth in California reported that they did not receive enough assistance with college planning.



More must be done to support our youth to achieve their educational goals. This guide is designed to equip adult supporters with the necessary tools and resources to assist California's youth between grades 6-12 with experience in foster care to achieve their postsecondary educational and career goals.

SECTION 1

Benefits of a Postsecondary Education

What Is Postsecondary Education?

The term **"postsecondary education"** includes any education following high school graduation that can lead to certification, licensing, or a postsecondary degree such as an associate or bachelor's degree. This guide uses the terms "postsecondary education" and "college" interchangeably.

Why College Matters

Postsecondary education has been found to have a lasting positive impact in a number of ways:

INCREASED EARNING POTENTIAL

In 2026, a person with a high school diploma earned on average $994 weekly compared to a person with a bachelor's degree, who earned $1,768 per week.
Over a lifetime, this can add up to over $1 million in extra earnings! Jobs in high demand sectors such as health care, advanced manufacturing, and construction trades also offer opportunities for a living wage through shorter-term career education pathways.

GREATER JOB SECURITY

A person with just a high school diploma is 1.7 times more likely to be unemployed than a person with a bachelor's degree.

BETTER HEALTH OUTCOMES

Individuals with more education are less likely to report conditions such as heart disease, high blood pressure, diabetes, anxiety, and depression.

MORE CAREER OPTIONS

Over 70% of all jobs require some form of postsecondary education. Getting a degree or certi icate can help youth land their dream job.

INCREASED RATES OF ONE'S CHILDREN ATTENDING COLLEGE

Helping youth access postsecondary opportunities can stop the cycle of intergenerational poverty.



Student Spotlight: Impact of Postsecondary Education

Scan here to watch

Click jbay.org/resources/student-spotlights/ to watch.

SECTION 2

A Postsecondary Education IS Possible

There are many myths surrounding postsecondary education that can negatively influence a young person's decision to further their education. Let's look at the facts.

College is affordable and financial aid is available:

Foster youth can access a variety of free grant aid to cover not only tuition but also non-tuition costs such as books, rent, food, and transportation. Free grant aid is money they do not have to pay back.

In addition, **most colleges and universities in California offer foster youth support programs that can provide additional financial support.** A postsecondary education **IS POSSIBLE** when youth have access to financial aid and other support services.

To learn more about how foster youth can maximize their access to financial aid see **jbay.org/resources/financial-aid-guide/**.



Student Spotlight: Paying for Postsecondary Education

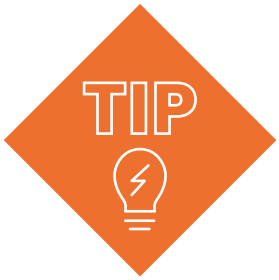
Scan here to watch

Click jbay.org/resources/student-spotlights/ to watch.

Sample 2026-2027 financial aid award packages for a student enrolled full-time

(12 or more units in California's public colleges and universities.)

	California State University (CSU)	University of California (UC)	California Community College (CCC)
Federal Pell Grant	$7,395	$7,395	$7,395
Cal Grant Foster Youth Access Award (non-tuition)	$6,000	$6,000	$6,000
Cal Grant (tuition & fees)	$6838	$15,558	N/A
Student Success Completion Grant (non-tuition)	N/A	N/A	$10,500
CA College Promise Grant	N/A	N/A	Waives enrollment fees ($1,104)
Chafee Grant	$4,500	$4,500	$4,500
Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant	$800	$1,000	$400
TOTAL	**$25,533**	**$34,453**	**$29,899**



Students eligible for Extended Foster Care (AB 12) can receive a living stipend of up to $1,301/month on top of their financial aid! This stipend can be used to cover any additional costs not already covered by financial aid. To learn more about Extended Foster Care visit: **cdss.ca.gov/inforesources/foster-care/extended-foster-care-ab-12**.

College is possible—regardless of academic performance:

A person's high school performance does not define their academic or career potential, especially given the important differences between college and high school.

- Community colleges are open access and do not require a minimum high school grade point average, test scores, essays, or letters of recommendation to attend.
- Community colleges offer a wide range of educational paths, and students can select the path that best suits their skills, interests, and long-term goals.
- Some college pathways, like career and technical education, provide opportunities to "learn by doing" in addition to traditional lecture formats.



Youth are not alone in this journey!

Most colleges in California host foster youth support programs that offer an array of services including academic counseling, tutoring, case management, book grants, and emergency grants.

- Other support programs are also available such as programs for justice-involved youth, undocumented students, and more! See Section 10 for more information.

College is accessible for ALL students:

Students with a diagnosed learning need, physical disability, or mental health need can qualify for ongoing accessibility services and special accommodations as they transition to postsecondary education.

Student Spotlight: Connecting to Campus Support Programs

Click jbay.org/resources/student-spotlights/ to watch.

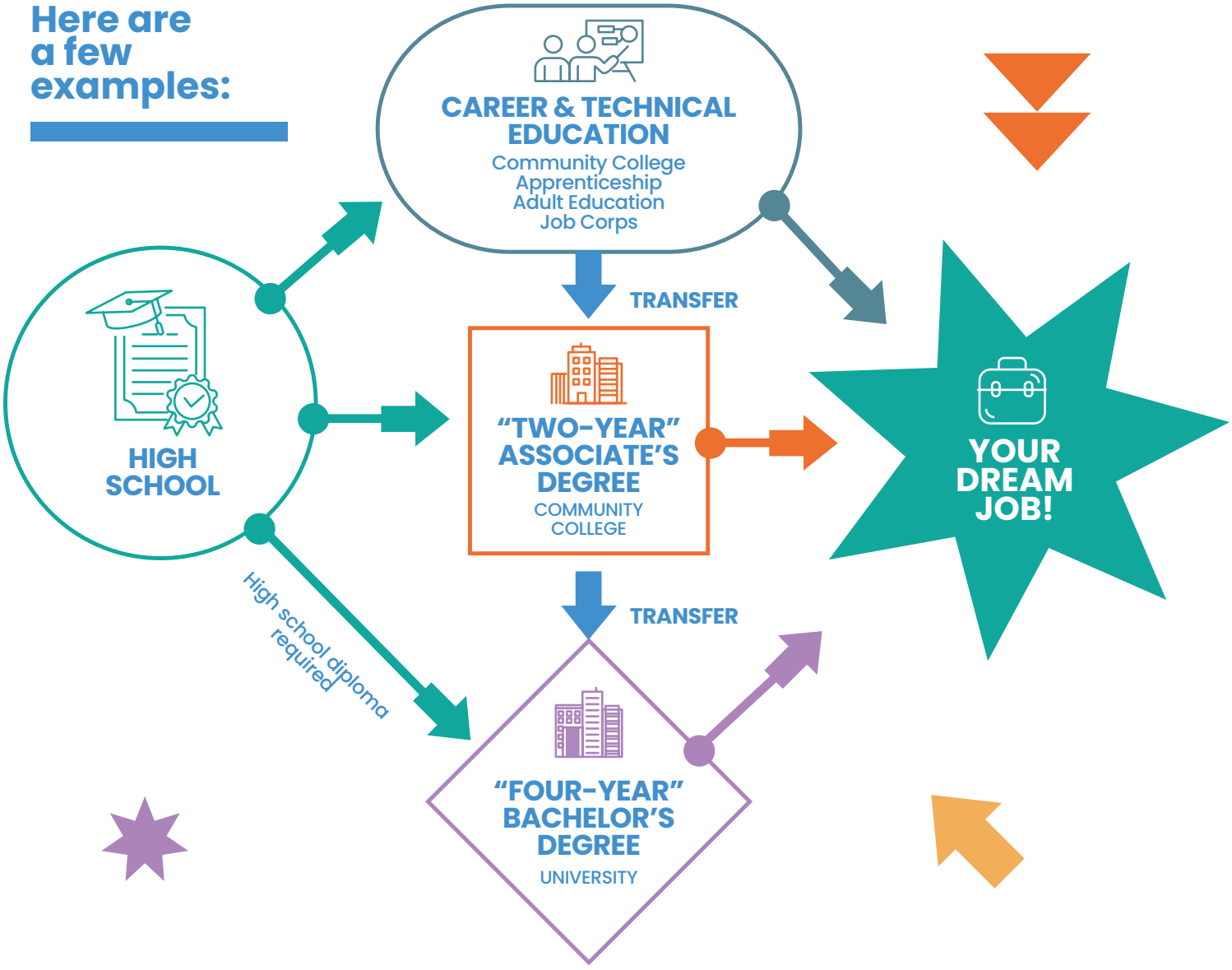
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SECTION 3

Understanding the Different Postsecondary Education Pathways

There are various postsecondary education and career pathways a student can take upon graduating from high school. **There is no "right" way to access postsecondary education.** It's about finding the best fit for each youth based on their interests, strengths, and long-term career goals. There are many options from a bachelor's degree at a four-year university to a short-term certificate training program at a community college.

Here are a few examples:



The "four-year" bachelor's degree pathway:

Students can enroll at a private or public "four-year" college or university, either in-state or out-of-state, to receive a bachelor's degree (B.A. or B.S.). Students must apply for consideration, and not all applicants are admitted. This pathway typically takes four years, but only if a student attends full-time with 15 units per semester. Learn more about "full-time" in Section 9.



The "two-year" associate degree pathway:

Students can enroll at a public "two-year" college, also known as community college, to receive an associate degree (A.A. or A.S.). Students can also complete required coursework to transfer to a four-year college or university to continue their education and receive a bachelor's degree. Students can start at any age. These programs are "open access" for all students but do have deadlines to register for classes. This pathway typically takes two years, but only if the student attends full-time with 15 units per semester and all courses taken count towards the student's degree. Learn more about "full-time" in Section 9.

Overview and eligibility requirements of two-year and four-year degree options

	California Community College (CCC) System	California State University (CSU) System	University of California (UC) System	Non-Profit Private Colleges and Universities	Out-of-State Colleges and Universities
Type of Institution	Public two-year college	Public four-year university	Public four-year university	Private four-year and/or two-year institutions	Public and private four-year and/or two-year institutions
Eligibility Requirements	• Open access with no minimum GPA, essays, or testing required • High school diploma or equivalent recommended* To learn more, visit **cccapply.org**	• 2.0+ GPA • "a-g" courses** • High school diploma • No essay required • No SAT/ACT required To learn more, visit: **calstate.edu/apply**	• 3.0+ GPA • "a-g" courses** • High school diploma • Essays required • No SAT/ACT required To learn more, visit: **universityofcalifornia.edu/**	• Vary by institution • Essays and minimum GPA typically required • SAT/ACT may be required	• Vary by institution • Essays and minimum GPA typically required • SAT/ACT may be required
Application Timeline	Open application, early spring of senior year is encouraged.	Priority application filing period is October 1st - November 30th of senior year	August 1st - November 30th of senior year	Application timelines vary, but typically begin in October	Application timelines vary, but typically begin in October

* A high school diploma or equivalent (i.e., GED/HiSET) is required to access most federal and state financial aid.
** Learn more about "a-g" in Section 6.

The career and technical education (CTE) pathway:



Students can enroll in a career and technical education (CTE) program, also known as a vocational school, trade school, or career education, to receive a certificate in a range of fields such as auto repair, carpentry, medical assistant, cosmetology, culinary arts, veterinary technician, computer systems, and more! Career education programs are offered at community colleges as well as through other programs in the community. They are typically short-term, provide more hands-on learning opportunities, and are either "open access" or have minimal eligibility requirements to enroll. Many CTE programs at community colleges offer "stackable" credentials, which means a student can go back later and continue their education to get an associate degree and beyond.

Overview of colleges and programs that offer career and technical education pathways

	California Community College (CCC) Career Education	Adult Education Career Technical Programs	Apprenticeship Programs	Job Corps (i.e., career residential program)
Program Description	Offers a wide variety of accredited career education programs. Most foster youth who apply for financial aid will qualify for free tuition and up to $20,000 in free state and federal grants.	Offers a wide variety of accredited career education programs. Students who apply for financial aid are only eligible for federal financial aid (e.g., Pell Grant).	Offers 800 recognized occupations in construction trades, healthcare, and more. Students earn income working full-time to learn skills on the job while completing courses.	Administered by the U.S. Department of Labor, offers FREE career education and FREE dorm-style housing, food, school supplies and more.
Eligibility Requirements	• Open access with no minimum GPA • High school diploma or equivalent recommended*	• No minimum GPA • High school diploma or equivalent required	• No minimum GPA • High school diploma or equivalent required for most programs • Entrance exams and driver's license may be required • Minimum age requirement may vary	• No minimum GPA • No high school diploma or equivalent required • Must be between the ages of 16-24 • Must be eligible to work in the United States
Additional Information	Visit **CCCMyPath.org** or **icangotocollege.com/career-ed-certificate** for more information, and apply at **CCCapply.org**.	Visit **caladulted.org/FindASchool**	Visit **dir.ca.gov/das/**	Visit **jobcorps.gov/i-am-a/student**

* A high school diploma or equivalent (i.e., GED/HiSET)is generally required to access most federal and state financial aid.

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.

College Is Different From High School

Students who had a negative experience in high school may be reluctant to consider additional education. Informing these students about some of the differences between college and high school can be helpful.

	HIGH SCHOOL	COLLEGE
1. Flexible Schedules	High schools have fixed schedules and class times. Students go directly from one class to the next.	College allows for flexible schedules, and students can plan their schedules to fit their needs. Some classes may be offered online, on Saturdays, or in the evening. Students can schedule breaks between classes and don't have to schedule classes five days a week.
2. Range of Classes	High school has a limited number of classes from which to choose. Most classes are typically lecture style, and students are told what to learn.	In college, students can pick their own major, and there is more flexibility in course selection to find a pathway of interest. Depending on the area of study, class formats can range from lectures and discussions to hands-on learning.
3. Extracurricular Opportunities	Students need permission to participate in extracurricular activities.	In college, students can select from a wide variety of extracurricular activities, including clubs, Greek life, and sports teams. College can be fun!
4. New Relationships	In high school, all students are required to attend school. It can be hard to form new relationships when a student changes schools frequently.	In college, students choose to attend and have the opportunity to connect with other like-minded peers. College can provide a fresh start for new friendships. Everyone starts off as a new student.

SECTION 4

College and Career Exploration

When youth have the opportunity to explore what types of jobs they are interested in and learn about what it takes to get the skills to do their dream job, it can help inspire them to consider their educational goals as well. It's never too early or too late to help youth explore their career interests and determine which postsecondary pathway best fits their interests, personality, and long-term goals.

Student Spotlight: Strategies for Caregivers to Help Youth Explore Careers



Click jbay.org/resources/student-spotlights/ to watch.

Scan here to watch

The sites listed below offer online activities that can help youth determine their desired college and career path.

California Career Zone | cacareerzone.org

Helps youth explore, plan, and prepare for a career. It includes a number of web-based activities such as the *Interest Profiler* that suggests potential careers and postsecondary pathways based on a youth's interest or personality. The *Make Money Choices* activity helps youth determine how much money they will need to maintain the lifestyle they want.

Gladeo | gladeo.org

Helps youth explore careers and take the Gladeo quiz to uncover their personal interests and how they match up with different careers. For youth in Los Angeles, they can also check out career opportunities at **losangeles.gladeo.org**.

My Path | CCCMyPath.org

Youth can complete a career assessment and learn more about career pathways and potential wages available to students through the California Community Colleges.

Salary Surfer | salarysurfer.cccco.edu

Provides information about certificate and degree programs offered through the California Community Colleges and an estimate of the potential earnings across various programs of study.

Living Wage Calculator | Livingwage.mit.edu

Helps youth learn what the average cost of living is in their community and gain a sense of the income needed to maintain the lifestyle they want.

Check out **Fostering Careers - A Guide for Supportive Adults Helping Youth** to learn more about how to engage youth in using these career exploration websites to think about work and their future. Visit laoyc.org/library/#guides.

College and Career Exploration Conversation Starters

Discussions with youth to help them explore their college and career interests should be focused on exploring career options in a way that is fun and non-threatening. Here are some questions to help start a conversation:

- If you could have ANY job or career and not have to worry about money, what would you want to do?
- What would you change about school or the school experience?
- What is your favorite subject in school? Your least favorite?
- What is one thing that makes you excited about your future? Makes you worry about your future?
- When you think about your future, what words come to mind?
- What comes to mind when you hear the word "college"?
- Do you find it easy or difficult to think about yourself in the future? What might make it easier?
- What types of things/experiences motivate you? Make you happy?
- What are some of your talents/skills/strengths? (Try to think of three to five.)
- What careers or jobs have you heard about? Which ones would you like to know more about?
- What words would you use to describe yourself? OR How would your best friend describe you?
- What are some activities you enjoy doing in your down time?







Student Spotlight: Strategies for Caregivers to Motivate Youth

Click jbay.org/resources/student-spotlights/ to watch.

Scan here to watch

Combat low self-esteem and self-doubt:

Due to the trauma many foster youth have experienced, youth may hold internal beliefs such as "I don't belong," "I'm not smart enough" or "I'm a fraud." Adopting a growth mindset allows youth to maintain a positive outlook throughout the learning process and acknowledge that there is room for learning from one's mistakes. With a growth mindset, failure does not mean it is time to give up, but rather it's an opportunity to reflect on lessons learned and opportunities for future growth.



If you are hearing this from a youth...	Try one of the following responses to help the youth develop and maintain a growth mindset.
I am not smart enough to do this.	*Being smart does not mean learning comes easily or you can do things by yourself all the time. Being smart means you use the tools and resources available to you for learning. That may mean asking for help sometimes.*
This is too hard. I can't do it.	*When something feels hard, it means we are challenging ourselves and our thought process to grow in new ways. Remember to be patient with yourself. I know with time and practice you will be successful. How can I help?*
Maybe I am not cut out for school/college.	*Just because you did not succeed in this project/test/class does not mean you cannot succeed in school. Learning from our mistakes can lead to future success. It can also take time to adapt to new ways of learning. Are you interested in learning more about resources available to support your learning?*
Everyone else is smarter than me.	*Learning is not a race, and it does not look the same for each person. Each person learns at their own pace. I have seen you be successful, and I know you will be successful again. Let's work on this together.*

SECTION 5

Middle School CHECKLIST

Click jbay.org/resources/ed-planning-guide/ or scan the QR code to download the Middle School Checklist handout!

Middle school can be an exciting and scary time as students enter a new educational environment and explore new friendships while navigating peer pressure and physical changes. While youth may be hungry for more space and freedom, it is important to remain present and engaged in ways that create interactive opportunities with youth. This is a perfect time to empower youth to learn more about themselves and their interests through exploration, and prepare for coursework in high school and college.

EXPLORATION

Expose youth to opportunities that help them discover their interests, talents, and passions and develop new skills. Activities such as these can also help youth cultivate curiosity about potential career paths and higher education. Encourage and support youth to:

- ❑ **Attend events at local college campuses** such as cultural celebrations, performances, speaker series, sports, and more.
- ❑ **Attend visual and performing arts events** by visiting galleries, plays, dance performances, craft fairs, and city-sponsored cultural events.
- ❑ **Identify camps available during school breaks** that focus on nature; Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM); robotics; coding; dance; theater; cooking; sports; or other hands-on experiences.
- ❑ **Participate in extracurricular activities** like school clubs, sports, student government, and volunteering.
- ❑ **Attend college tours** to expose them to life after high school and start building their college-knowledge.
- ❑ **Explore mentorship opportunities available in your community.** Mentorships can provide a safe and nurturing relationship through which youth can connect with individuals to learn about a wide range of topics including career options. Big Brothers Big Sisters is one option. Learn more at bbbs.org.

TIP

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 **cfyetf.org/resources-publications**.



ACADEMIC PREPARATION

Understanding learning styles and developing skills in time management, organization, and self-advocacy creates a strong foundation to successfully complete education and career goals.

- ❑ **Practice time management skills.** Work with students to keep a calendar with important dates and deadlines. Set up a To-Do list for the week to identify activities that need to get done (homework, projects, chores, etc.) and those that the student wants to do (spend time with friends, play video games, watch a movie, etc.).

- ❑ **Work with students to complete learning style assessments** to determine approaches to studying. Understanding learning styles is an important part of helping students understand the types of study skills that will best benefit them. To learn more and complete assessments, visit **educationplanner.org/students/self-assessments.**

- ❑ **Encourage self-advocacy.** Students may not always feel comfortable advocating for their needs or asking for help. Self-advocacy is an important skill for all students, in particular students with learning needs. One helpful resource is **imdetermined.org/youth/**

- ❑ **Learn about high school options in the area.** Connect with the school counselor. See Section 6 for more information.

- ❑ **Find academic enrichment programs** to help your student succeed in high school and encourage college attendance. See Section 10 for more information.

COURSEWORK

- ❑ **Review the student's academic plan to ensure they are on track to be able to enroll in "a-g" courses once in high school.** Not sure what "a-g" courses are? Learn more in Section 6.

  - Taking Algebra 1 in middle school will place a student in an advanced math class upon entering high school and allow them to be better prepared for college.

  - Taking a foreign language as an elective in 8th grade may help the student advance one year of a foreign language for college eligibility requirements.

- ❑ **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 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.

- ❑ **If applicable, discuss special education services.** Explore if services, such as an Individualized Education Program (IEP) or 504 Plan, should be requested or if services need to be updated because the current services no longer meet the youth's needs. 504 Plans and IEPs provide accommodations for students with physical or mental health disabilities to succeed in school, however only certain classifications of disabilities are eligible for an IEP.

Scan here to watch

Student Spotlight: Helping Youth Set and Reach Goals

Click jbay.org/resources/student-spotlights/ to watch.

SECTION 6

Planning for the Transition to High School

As youth transition from middle school into high school, decisions will be made that can impact a youth's entire education trajectory moving forward. This is a crucial time, and there are a number of considerations that adult supporters should be aware of.

Understanding High School Options

In some communities, students may have many high school options, while in other communities there may only be one local public school. In addition to traditional public schools, there may be *magnet schools* with a particular focus such as science or the performing arts, *charter schools* that are publicly funded and tuition-free but managed privately, and *private schools*. Admissions requirements will vary, and so it is important to be aware of what high school options are available in your area. ***Foster youth also have the right to transition to the same high school as their classmates.*** **Visit the following sites to learn more.**

- **MAGNET SCHOOLS**
  cde.ca.gov/sp/eo/mt/
- **CHARTER SCHOOLS**
  cde.ca.gov/sp/ch/cefcharterschools.asp
- **PRIVATE SCHOOLS**
  cde.ca.gov/ds/si/ps/
- **HOME SCHOOLING**
  cde.ca.gov/sp/ps/homeschool.asp

Understanding "a-g" Requirements

"a-g" courses refer to the college preparatory classes required for admission at the California State University (CSU) and the University of California (UC) systems. Students who are unsure of their long-term plans should be encouraged to take "a-g" courses so that they have the option of attending a four-year university. Foster youth have the right to take or retake these courses.

High school graduation requirements vary by school district and may differ from "a-g" requirements, so it is important to understand the difference. For additional information, visit calstate.edu/how-to-get-to-calstate or bit.ly/UCOP-AG.

High School Subject Area	UC and CSU Requirements for Freshman Admissions (15 Courses)
A History and Social Science	2 Years
B English	4 Years
C Math	3 years required, 4 recommended
D Science	2 years required, 3 recommended
E Foreign Language	2 years in the same language required, 3 years recommended
F Visual and Performing Arts	1 year
G Electives	1 year

Preparing Youth for the Differences Between Middle School and High School

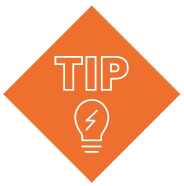
Educate your student about how high school is different from middle school and what to expect.

- **Grade Point Average (GPA) matters:** Each grade a student receives in high school will go onto their academic transcript and be calculated into an Overall Academic GPA, the average of ***all*** the grades that a student has secured throughout their high school coursework. Most four-year colleges and universities have minimum GPA requirements.

- **Extracurricular activities matter:** Participating in extracurricular activities outside of the classroom can help a student develop valuable skills and make them a more competitive candidate for college. This can include activities such as sports, clubs, leadership activities, academic enrichment programs, part-time jobs, and volunteering.

- **Students can begin earning college credit while in high school.** Work with the school counselor to learn more about dual enrollment course options. Courses can take place at the high school or local community college.

- **Students have options if they need to repeat courses or recover credits.** There are many programs to help students retake classes and stay on track for high school graduation. These options include summer school, adult school, continuation school, or remaining in high school for a fifth year. Students who choose to do a fifth year now have the option of either completing their district graduation requirement or the minimum state graduation requirements. Speak with a school counselor to see which option is best for the student.



Foster youth cannot be forced to attend a continuation school, adult school, or independent study program even if they are not on track for high school graduation, have failing grades, or have behavior problems, except under limited circumstances.

Understanding High School Completion Options

It is important to understand the differences between the various pathways for completing high school as the path a student takes can impact their future opportunities.

- **High School Diploma**: A student who has met all the requirements for high school graduation and passed their classes receives a high school diploma. It is accepted for federal and state financial aid, admission into college*, employment, and the military.

- **High School Certificate of Completion:** A student who has completed high school but did not meet all the requirements for graduation receives a high school certificate of completion. It is often provided to students with disabilities who are unable to complete the requirements for a high school diploma. It is not accepted for most federal and state financial aid, admission into college, or the military. It may be accepted by employers, but this can vary.

- **High School Equivalency (HSE) Certificate:** In California, a student who has passed the GED or HiSET test receives a High School Equivalency Certificate. Students must be 18 years old to take the exam, however some exceptions apply. It is accepted for federal and state financial aid, the military, and most employers. It is not accepted for admission into the CSUs, UCs, or most selective four-year private or out-of-state colleges.

- **Graduation Exemptions for Foster Youth:** Foster youth who change schools after their second year of high school and are behind in credits may be eligible to receive their high school diploma by completing the minimum state graduation requirements instead of any additional local graduation requirements set by their district. This option is sometimes referred to as an "AB 167/216 graduation." These students must remain in high school for four years. If a youth is eligible, the decision as to whether to graduate under this option is made by their Educational Rights Holder. Youth who graduate under this option will receive a high school diploma but will not fulfill the "a-g" courses required for admission at the UCs and CSUs. More information is available within Section 6 of the **California Foster Youth Education Law Fact Sheets**, which can be found at **cfyetf.org/resources-publications**.

**Note: California Community Colleges do not require students to have a high school diploma or equivalent (GED/HiSET), however a diploma or equivalent is required in order to access most state and federal financial aid.*

SECTION 7

9th-11th Grade CHECKLIST

Click jbay.org/resources/ed-planning-guide/ or scan the QR code to download the 9th-11th Grade Checklist Handout!

Depending on a youth's goals and when they start preparing for postsecondary education, some of these grade-specific steps may not apply. That's ok! Meet the student where they are in their academic journey. Even if they are not interested or on track to meet the requirements for a four-year college, there are many great options such as degree and certificate programs at community colleges.

EDUCATION PLANNING



- ❑ **Attend an orientation session** at your student's new school to meet the student's counselor, learn about school clubs and activities, and pick up the student's class schedule.
- ❑ **Work with the student to identify postsecondary pathways they are interested in based on their interests and career goals.** See Section 3 for more information on the different pathways.
- ❑ **If applicable, request or attend Individualized Education Program (IEP) or 504 Plan meetings to advocate for any needed accommodations for a disability or request a meeting if the current services are no longer meeting the youth's needs.** 504 Plans and IEPs provide accommodations for students with physical or mental health disabilities to succeed in school, however only certain classifications of disabilities are eligible for an IEP. For youth age 16 or older, the IEP should include their postsecondary goals and the services needed to transition successfully after high school. Students with disabilities may also be eligible for services through the Department of Rehabilitation. Learn more in Section 10.
- ❑ **Add report cards from 9th-11th 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.

IN 11TH GRADE ONLY:

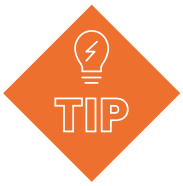
- ❑ **For students interested in pursuing a four-year college or university, begin working on the personal statement the spring or summer before senior year** to have adequate time to review and revise as needed. Students planning on applying to a UC can start their application as early as August 1st. Learn more in the 12th grade checklist in Section 8.
- ❑ **If the student is interested in applying to a four-year college or university, make a list of three to five colleges that include "reach", "target" 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 offer the programs the student is interested in.**
- ❑ **Schedule tours/informational interviews with colleges to help narrow down choices and get a feel for the institution** (physical environment, types of courses, resources, etc.). Students can inquire about housing options available to them as well.

  Schedule a meeting with campus foster youth support program staff to gather more information on available services. Learn more about these programs in Section 10.
- ❑ **Encourage your student to create an email address, such as Gmail, that is strictly for college and financial aid application information.** High school emails will often expire.

COURSEWORK



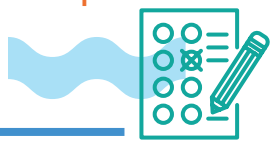
- ❑ **Talk to a school counselor to ensure that your student is enrolled in approved "a-g" coursework if the student may be interested in a four-year college or university.** Learn more about these courses in Section 6 and by visiting calstate.edu/how-to-get-to-calstate or bit.ly/UCOP-AG.
  - *Native speakers of a foreign language may be able to test out of introductory language courses.*
  - *Meet with your student's high school counselor each semester to assess the student's overall grade point average (GPA) to make sure your student is satisfying high school graduation and college entrance requirements.*
- ❑ **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.
- ❑ **If applicable, look into AP (Advanced Placement), International Baccalaureate (IB), and honors courses.** Students may need to be recommended by their teachers for advanced courses. If the student is interested, have them speak with their teacher to learn more and to request a recommendation.
- ❑ **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.
- ❑ **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, or continuation school and determine which option is in the student's best interest.
- ❑ **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 a high school campus, allow students to earn college credit while also satisfying a requirement for high school graduation.
- ❑ **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.
  - *If the student changed schools mid-semester, 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.*
- ❑ **Work with the student to maintain and update their High School Education Planner at californiacolleges.edu**. This should be updated every semester to reflect the grades earned each semester. If a student applies to a Cal State University (CSU), course information will automatically transfer to their college application. This platform will also be used in the future to offer automatic admission to CSUs for qualified high school seniors.



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 **cfyetf.org/resources-publications.**

TESTING



- ❑ **If applicable, the student should register to take the Advanced Placement (AP) or International Baccalaureate (IB) exams in the spring.** Students can work with the academic counselor to access a fee waiver. Most schools don't offer AP courses in the 9th grade.
- ❑ **11th Grade: Students complete the Smarter Balanced Summative Assessments for English language arts/literacy (ELA) and mathematics.** Upon completion, students are encouraged to release their results to the Cal State University System to help determine what level of math and English the student should be enrolled in after they have been admitted.

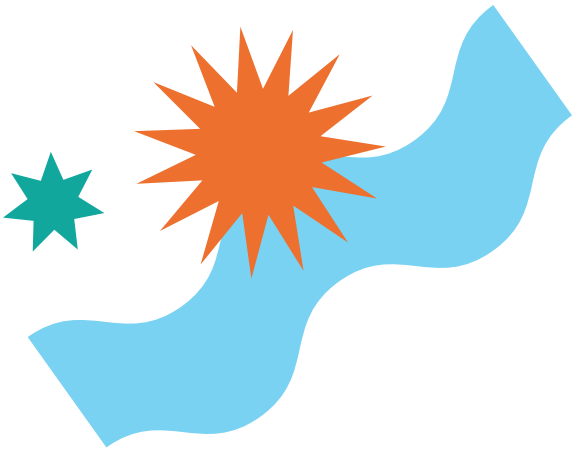
SAT & ACT

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 admission process.

- **10th Grade (optional):** Work with your student to register for the PSAT, a practice exam for the SAT, or the ACT Aspire Test, a practice exam for the ACT, in the fall semester. Ask the school counselor about a fee waiver.
- **11th Grade (optional):** Sign up for the SAT and/or ACT at least two months in advance of the test date. Students can access a fee waiver for the exam from their school counselor. To learn more about when to register for the SAT go to **satsuite.collegeboard.org**. For the ACT go to **act.org**. Students can retake the exam if they aren't satisfied with their score up until fall of senior year.
- Check with the school counselor or foster youth district liaison about any SAT or ACT test prep courses available through the school. Check with the social worker/probation officer about any funding available to help pay for these courses.

COLLEGE AND CAREER EXPLORATION

- ❑ **EXPLORE INTERESTS.** Encourage your student to take or update a career interest and aptitude assessment. See Section 4 for more information on career exploration resources.
- ❑ **DO COLLEGE TOURS.** Schedule a visit to a college campus or attend a college fair. These can be done in person or virtually. Eleventh graders should focus on schools that they may be interested in applying to. Your local Independent Living Program (ILP or ILSP), Foster Youth District Liaison, or high school counselor can be good resources for how to best set up a college visit.
- ❑ **GET INVOLVED.** Explore interests by helping your student discover and participate in extracurricular activities such as clubs, sports, or community service projects.
- ❑ **ENROLL IN ACADEMIC ENRICHMENT PROGRAMS.** Speak to a school counselor or foster youth district liaison to learn about academic enrichment programs offered at your student's school or in your local community. See Section 10 for more information.
- ❑ **GET WORK EXPERIENCE.** Explore paid work experience to begin developing job skills and interests. Connect with local workforce development boards to identify youth employment programs. Youth can have a job starting at age 14 if they get a work permit. The student's school or social worker/probation officer can assist in getting a work permit. Visit laoyc.org/library/#guides to learn more.





Student Spotlight: Tips for Doing Well in High School

Click jbay.org/resources/student-spotlights/ to watch.

Scan here to watch

CHILD WELFARE AND PROBATION RESOURCES

- **CHILD & FAMILY TEAM (CFT) MEETING.** Use the Child and Family Team (CFT) meeting to make a plan to support the student's postsecondary education and career goals. Education partners should be invited and encouraged to attend these meetings (ACIN 1-71-18).

- **"RIGHT TO WORK" DOCUMENTS.** If youth are pursuing employment, social workers/probation officers can assist them in gathering original "Right to Work" Documents, and should provide copies to all youth age 16 or older. Students should upload them into a secure electronic storage system such as **ifoster.org** or **google.com/drive**. A Social Security Card will also be needed for U.S. Citizens to apply for financial aid in the 12th grade.

"Right to Work" Documents Needed for Employment:

- One photo ID, such as a School ID, 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

For youth age 16 or above:

- **TRANSITIONAL INDEPENDENT LIVING PLAN & AGREEMENT (TILP).** Ensure that youth are engaged in developing their TILP. The TILP must be completed every six months for youth in out-of-home foster care. It should integrate the youth's college and career goals, including who will support them 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 youth 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 and case plan (ACL 18-104).

- **INDEPENDENT LIVING PROGRAM (ILP).** Refer youth to the Independent Living Program (ILSP or ILP). Each county's program varies. Talk to the social worker/probation officer or local ILP for more information about eligibility. Find a statewide ILP roster at: **jbay.org/resources/ilp-roster.**



SECTION 8

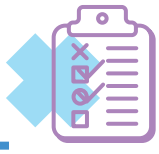
12th Grade CHECKLIST

Click jbay.org/resources/ed-planning-guide/ or scan the QR code to download a standalone version of the:

- 12th Grade Checklist for Students Applying to a Community College, Including Career and Technical Education (CTE)
- 12th Grade Checklist for Students Applying to a Four-Year College or University

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 in 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/library/#guides to learn more.

TIP

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 cfyetf.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 or 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.** 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. This platform also used to offer automatic admission to CSUs for qualified high school seniors.

- **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

Scan here to watch

Click jbay.org/resources/student-spotlights/ 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**. For the ACT go to **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.**

- **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** or **Google.com/drive**.

- **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.

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.

APPLYING FOR FINANCIAL AID



Get the comprehensive Financial Aid Guide for California Foster and Unaccompanied Homeless Youth and companion Step-by-Step Visual Guide at 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 or CA Dream Act Application (CADAA) at dream.csac.ca.gov** to apply for financial aid.

- **Gather documents and information necessary to complete the FAFSA or CADAA:**
  - Name and social security number, exactly as it appears on the student's Social Security Card, or Alien Registration Number [FAFSA applicants only].
  - Statewide Student Identifier number (SSID) OR Individual Taxpayer Identification Number (ITIN) [CADAA only].
  - Email address that a student checks often (avoid high school emails that often expire).
  - List of up to 20 colleges that the student plans to apply to. At least one must be listed.
  - Information about the student's current assets, such as the total of checking and savings accounts. Students who receive certain federal benefits, such as CalFresh or Medi-Cal, are exempt from having to provide information on current assets. All students completing the FAFSA must provide consent to allow the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) to share federal tax information, even if no tax return was filed. In some limited cases, certain tax information may need to be input manually.

Students must first create an FSA-ID if completing the FAFSA online. A student will need to provide their name (exactly as it appears on their social security card), date of birth, social security number and an email address. An FSA ID can be created at studentaid.gov/fsa-id/create-account/launch. The FSA ID will be available immediately.

- **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.** Eligible foster youth (in out-of-home foster care placement at least one day between ages 16 to 18) can receive up to $4,500 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 once the FAFSA or CADAA is processed** in order to manage state aid like the Cal Grant, Chafee Grant, and Middle Class Scholarship online. This includes checking for errors, 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, see the Financial Aid Guide for California Foster and Unaccompanied Homeless Youth: **jbay.org/resources/financial-aid-guide/**.

- **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**.

- **Encourage students to check their email weekly and respond promptly to any requests for additional verification in order to receive financial aid.**

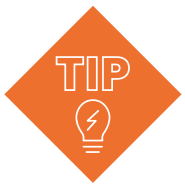
- **Claim the CalKIDS College Scholarship.** CalKIDS funds up to $1,500 in Scholarship money for eligible public school students. To verify eligibility and claim a CalKIDS Scholarship, visit calkids.org. Students will need their name, birth date, Statewide Student Identifier (SSID) number and the California county where they attended school.



COMMUNITY COLLEGE, INCLUDING CAREER & TECHNICAL EDUCATION (CTE): APPLICATION AND ENROLLMENT



- **SELECT A PATHWAY AND THEN A COLLEGE.** First, help students determine which degree or certificate program is the best fit for their career goals and interests. Next, find out which programs are offered at the community colleges by going to **cccmypath.org**. Students can attend community college without a high school diploma or GED, however it is generally required to receive most financial aid, like the Pell Grant.



CTE & APPRENTICESHIP OPTIONS!

Remember that while the community colleges offer a wide range of CTE programs and supports, there are also options through Adult Education Career Technical Programs, Job Corps, or the state's Apprenticeship Program. Learn more and how to apply in Section 3.

- **REQUEST TRANSCRIPTS.** Request two copies of your student's official high school transcript once fall grades have been posted and once they graduate. They will need one to meet with their college academic counselor to create their education plan at community college. Make sure your student keeps the extra copy handy for scholarship applications or other needs.

- **APPLY.** Complete the free application at **cccapply.org** and make sure the student identifies as a foster youth on the application to access all the benefits for which they may be eligible. Application deadlines vary. Students should apply by spring, however many colleges now open their application period as early as the fall term during the student's senior year. All first-time students who apply are eligible to attend a community college.

  NOTE: Students who submit an application to take classes during the summer after graduation will also need to submit a separate application for fall term.

- **CONNECT TO SUPPORT.** Help connect your student to on-campus support programs (i.e., NextUp, Disabled Students Programs & Services, etc.), ideally before they graduate high school. Many programs can assist students before they start classes. To learn more about the various programs, see Section 10 and visit **cacollegepathways.org**.

  - Assist students who may benefit from Disabled Students' Programs & Services (also known as Student Accessibility Services) in contacting the office. Students can submit their latest Individualized Education Program (IEP) plan with their diagnosis or ask their program office about the assessment process. Start the process as soon as possible to get accommodations in place before they start their fall semester. This process takes time.

- **ATTEND ORIENTATION.** Once students apply and receive their college student ID number in their admissions email, schedule an appointment to complete the online or in-person new student orientation. The orientation will provide the student with information about the campus, next steps for enrolling in classes, and resources available.

- **COMPLETE COURSE PLACEMENT ASSESSMENT.** Students will need to report the grades they received in the last English and math course completed in high school to determine which math and English courses they will need for their degree or certificate goal. If a student completes the admissions application in the fall term of their senior year, they will report grades from spring/summer semester of their junior year.

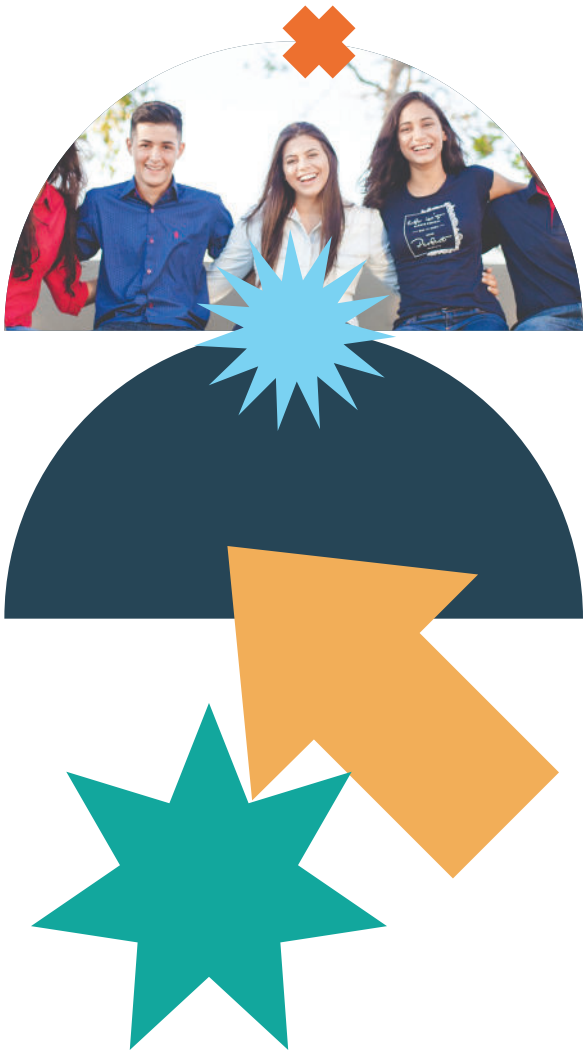
  NOTE: Placement assessments no longer require an exam.

- **CREATE AN EDUCATION PLAN.** After the student completes the orientation and placement assessment, help them schedule an appointment with an academic counselor to create an education plan based on their educational goal. If the student is enrolled in EOPS or NextUp, they should meet with a counselor from that program rather than a general counselor.
  - If the student is interested in transferring to a four-year college from community college, they can visit the transfer center on their campus. Visit **calstate.edu/transfer/** or **admission.universityofcalifornia.edu** for information on the CSUs or UCs.

- **EXPLORE HOUSING OPTIONS.** With the social worker/probation officer and ILP Coordinator, explore housing options that are near the student's top three college choices and align with the start of their college's fall term. Start early. Most community colleges do not offer on-campus housing.

- **REGISTER FOR CLASSES.** Foster youth who were in care at least one day after age 13 should take advantage of priority registration to register for classes before their peers. Classes fill up quickly, and getting into the classes they want is important to stay on track for their education plan as well as financial aid. Registration deadlines vary by campus but are typically in spring of the student's senior year. Students must first complete orientation, assessment, and an education plan to qualify to register. 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 for Registering and Succeeding in College Classes*.

- **PAY FEES**. Once a student registers for courses, they will see enrollment fees appear in their student portal. In most cases, enrollment fees do not need to be paid until after their financial aid has been processed. If this is a point of concern, reach out to the foster youth liaison and/or campus support program to determine how best to pay for enrollment fees and any health and/or student activity fees.
  - Most foster youth will qualify for the California College Promise Grant (CCPG) to waive course tuition fees when they complete the FAFSA or CADAA.
  - Some fees, such as health and student activity fees, may not be covered by the CCPG.



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**): 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**. 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**): 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**. 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.

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 Foster and Unaccompanied Homeless Youth: **jbay.org/resources/financial-aid-guide.**

- **CONNECT TO SUPPORT.** All CSUs and UCs have campus-based foster youth support programs that serve students who were in foster care at least one day. Help connect your student to these programs and other relevant resources as soon as they know where they plan to attend. Program names and services vary by campus; to learn more about the various programs, see Section 10 and visit **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. CSUs are required to waive or defer this deposit for foster youth until they receive financial aid and many UCs do the same. 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. waive or

  - **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** 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.

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**.

- **APPLY.** Applications and deadlines vary, however many colleges use the Common Application (**commonapp.org**), and applications are typically due by January 1st. **Foster youth are typically eligible for an application fee waiver for applications submitted through the Common Application.** 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 and Unaccompanied Homeless Youth: **jbay.org/resources/financial-aid-guide.**



SECTION 9

Tips for Registering and Succeeding in College Classes

Click jbay.org/resources/ed-planning-guide/ or scan the QR code to download the Tips for Registering and Succeeding in College Classes handout!

Considerations Before Enrolling in Classes:

As a student prepares to register for classes, they may want to consider the following questions when selecting their classes:

- What additional demands/responsibilities will I need to consider when planning my schedule (e.g., sports, work, children, personal well-being)?

  Do I plan to work part-time or full-time?

  How much transportation time will I need to get to and from school?

- What do I know about myself and my learning style?

  When am I most alert and able to focus? Am I a morning person or evening person?

  Do I like learning by listening/reading or by doing?

  Will I want to plan blocks of time between classes to complete homework/group projects/meetings and have time to study?

- What do I need/want to know about the professor before enrolling in a class? Students can check **ratemyprofessors.com** to see what other students have said about professors to help find the one that is right for them.

Understanding Unit Load

When students are determining how many classes to take, it is important to know what the time commitment will be. The chart below breaks down how much time a student will typically spend in class and how much time they are expected to commit to their schoolwork based on their unit load.

Unit (Course) Load	Lecture / Class Time *(instructional time spent in class)*	Study Time *(e.g., reading, reviewing notes, writing essays, studying for exams, etc.)*	Total Academic Time Per Week
1 unit	**1 hour**	**2-3 hours**	**3-4 hours**
3 units = about **1 class** (part time)	**3 hours**	**6-9 hours**	**9-12 hours**
6 units = about **2 classes** (half-time)	**6 hours**	**12-18 hours**	**18-24 hours**
12 units = about **4 classes** (full-time)	**12 hours**	**24-36 hours**	**36-48 hours**
15 units = about **5 classes** (full-time)	**15 hours**	**30-45 hours**	**45-60 hours**

Unit Load Impacts Financial Aid - Most financial aid is awarded based on how many units the student is enrolled in. For example, to receive the Chafee Grant or the Cal Grant a student must be enrolled "half time" in at least six units. The Pell Grant and Cal Grant are prorated based on the number of units a student takes. If they are enrolled in at least 12 units they will receive the maximum award amount.

More Than One Way to Be a Full-Time Student at Community College

- Community college students can consider a number of ways to set up a full-time schedule with their academic counselor to best meet their needs. Full time is considered taking at least 12 units. For students pursuing an associate's degree, students must take at least 15 units per semester with all coursework counting towards their degree to graduate "on-time" within two years. In a **"traditional"** schedule a student may take four to five classes beginning and ending at the same time. In comparison, **"staggered"** courses have different start and end dates throughout the semester, and **"stacked"** courses have two classes starting at the beginning of the term and two at the middle of the term.

- Students who participate in services for students with disabilities may qualify for a reduced course load, which allows eligible students to take fewer classes while still being considered full-time for programs like EOPS or College Promise Programs that require full-time enrollment.

Maintaining Satisfactory Academic Progress

Educate students about the importance of maintaining Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP), which is required to maintain their financial aid. SAP comes down to not dropping too many classes and maintaining a good GPA. Three factors are considered when determining SAP:

- **Academic Progress:** Is the student receiving passing grades in the classes they are attempting and earning a minimum grade point average (GPA), typically a 2.0 GPA?

- **Unit Completion:** Is the student completing a minimum percentage of units that they attempt each semester? Each college and university has a set "passing rate," often 67% completion.

> *If a student is not doing well in a course, they may decide to withdraw or drop the course rather than get a low grade. While withdrawing can help maintain the student's GPA, it will also result in the student earning a W on their transcript which can impact the student's unit completion rate.*

> *Students who are considering withdrawing from a course should check with their academic counselor and the financial aid office to understand how this will impact their SAP and financial aid.*

- **Completion Time:** Students must complete their program within 150% of the published time frame. For example, if a student is attending a community college that requires 60 units for an AA (associate of arts degree), they cannot take more than 90 units to complete the degree.

See the Financial Aid Guide for CA Foster and Unaccompanied Homeless Youth for more tips on maintaining financial aid at jbay.org/resources/financial-aid-guide.

Student Academic Portals, Course Syllabi, and Attendance Policies

- **Encourage students to check their academic portal often to view their course syllabi and other relevant course information** (e.g., Canvas, Blackboard). A student should begin checking their academic portal two to five days before the start of a class to ensure they are prepared for the first day of class.

- **Work with the student to review their course syllabi.** Students are expected to read the course syllabi carefully and take responsibility for attendance and assignment deadlines. A student who says "I did not know" will often be referred back to the course syllabus.

- **Sit with your student to review attendance policies.** Attendance policies are generally standard across most college courses and only allow between three to five absences. Failure to attend class can result in being dropped from the class, which can also impact financial aid and academic standing. Encourage students to talk to their professors if they are experiencing personal hardship that is preventing them from meeting class policies.



SECTION 10

Resources

Click jbay.org/resources/ed-planning-guide/ or scan the QR code to download the Resources handout!

K-12 Academic Enrichment Programs

Academic enrichment programs are experiences that extend beyond the student's traditional school curriculum and encourage academic performance and college attendance. Adult supporters can help students find programs that fit their interests and goals. In some counties, programs exist specifically for foster youth. Talk to a school counselor, County Foster Youth Services Coordinating Program, or foster youth district liaison to learn about which programs are available in your community. Below are some examples.

- **GEAR UP:** Serves a cohort of students beginning no later than the 7th grade and follows the cohort through high school. GEAR UP funds are also used to provide college scholarships to low-income students. www2.ed.gov/programs/gearup/index.html

- **Federal TRIO Programs:** Programs such as Talent Search and Upward Bound provide services to increase high school graduation and postsecondary educational attainment. ope.ed.gov/programs/trio/.

- **Early Academic Outreach Program (EAOP):** Each UC campus has an EAOP office to work directly with students at underserved schools to increase the number of students who achieve a college education. eaop.universityofcalifornia.edu

- **Puente:** Supports educationally disadvantaged students to complete college degrees and serve as mentors and leaders to the future generation. This interdisciplinary approach includes writing, counseling, and mentoring components. thepuenteproject.org

- **Mathematics, Engineering, Science Achievement (MESA):** Provides individualized academic plans, academic workshops in math and science, study skills training, PSAT and SAT preparation, hands-on math and science competition, career and college exploration, and more. mesa.ucop.edu.

- **Boys & Girls Clubs:** Many Boys & Girls Clubs offer academic success programs across a range of topics to help youth graduate from high school and prepare for postsecondary education and the workforce. bgca.org.

K-12 Academic Resources

- **CaliforniaColleges.edu:** Provides information for California students in 6th-12th grade and their caregivers regarding college applications, financial aid, and career pathways and allows students to monitor their progress. californiacolleges.edu.

- **Foster Youth District Liaison (AB 490 Liaison):** The Foster Youth Liaison can be found at each district in California and can help collect transcripts from different schools, help obtain partial credits to stay on track for graduation, identify tutoring resources, and assist with graduation requirements for the student.

- **County Office of Education (COE) Foster Youth Services Coordinating Program (FYSCP):** FYSCPs can ensure that health and school records are obtained to establish appropriate placements and can coordinate counseling, tutoring, mentoring, professional development training, college and career transition services, and more. Contact information for each county can be found at cde.ca.gov/ls/pf/fy.

- **Learn to Be Tutoring:** Provides free one-on-one online tutoring to underserved youth around the United States. Learntobe.org.

- **UPchieve Tutoring:** Provides free online tutoring and college counseling. upchieve.org/students.

Students With Learning Needs

- **California Department of Education Special Needs Section:** Provides information and resources to serve the unique needs of persons with disabilities. cde.ca.gov/sp/se/.

- **Department of Rehabilitation (DoR):** Offers student support services for individuals ages 16 to 21 who are enrolled in school. Students must have an active 504 Plan, IEP, have a disability (or believe they have a disability even if it has not been formally diagnosed) to receive services. Go to dor.ca.gov and search for Student Services.

Child Welfare and Probation Resources

- **Independent Living Program (ILSP or ILP):** A voluntary program offered through the child welfare and probation departments that provides services and benefits to assist current and former foster youth in achieving self-sufficiency. Youth who were placed in foster care or Kin-Gap at any time between ages 16 to 18 can receive support from an ILP Transition Coordinator until they are 21. Contact the youth's social worker or probation officer for more information or view this ILP roster: jbay.org/resources/ilp-roster/. The ILP Coordinator can also assist in determining the youth's eligibility.

- **Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA):** CASA volunteers work one-on-one with a foster youth, advocating for their best interest. Access is dependent on local availability of volunteers. californiacasa.org

- **California Foster Youth Ombudsperson Office:** A neutral office that provides information about the rights of foster youth and helps solve complaints about the care that they receive. They can also provide former foster youth with a verification letter which is often required to access benefits in college such as financial aid, priority registration, or campus support programs. Go to fosteryouthhelp.ca.gov or call **877-846-1602**.

- **California Family Urgent Response System (FURS):** A free 24/7 hotline for current and former foster youth and their caregivers to call and get immediate help for any issue big or small. It also provides local mobile response teams that can come in-person to create a plan to help stabilize the situation. Cal-FURS.org

Other Resources

- **CalFresh:** California's food stamps (SNAP) program, provides free money for food for eligible individuals that are low-income. getcalfresh.org

- **iFoster:** Provides free resources to transitional age foster youth, such as cell phones, tutoring services, and a digital locker to safely store important documents. Become a free member at: ifoster.org

- **Medi-Cal Health Insurance:** Youth who leave foster care on or after their 18th birthday can continue to receive Medi-Cal until they turn 26. This includes coverage for mental health services, like therapy, counseling or medication support. www.childrennow.org/child-welfare/coveredtil26/

Financial Aid Resources

- **California Student Aid Commission (CSAC):** Provides information on state financial aid resources, like the Cal Grant, Chafee Grant, and the California Dream Act Application. It also includes a list of Cal Grant eligible institutions. **csac.ca.gov** or **csac.ca.gov/foster-youth.**

- **Federal Student Aid:** Provides information about different types of federal financial aid, how to submit your Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), how aid is calculated, and how to manage loans. **studentaid.gov**

- **John Burton Advocates for Youth:** Provides comprehensive information on financial aid resources for California foster youth, including the Financial Aid Guide for California Foster and Unaccompanied Homeless Youth with embedded scholarship resources, FAFSA and CADAA step-by-step visual guides, and a "how-to" training for adult supporters. **jbay.org/resources/financial-aid-guide/**.

California Community College Programs and Benefits

- **Basic Needs Centers:** Provide direct services, and referrals to address students' needs for food, housing, safety, and well-being.

- **California College Promise Grant:** Allows low-income students at California community colleges to have enrollment fees (i.e. cost of classes) waived. Foster youth can maintain this benefit regardless of academic performance once in college. Students can access this benefit by completing a FAFSA (**fafsa.gov**) or CADAA (**dream.csac.ca.gov**).

- **California College Promise Program:** Some colleges offer this program. Students must be full-time (12+ units) and CA residents or meet AB 540 criteria. Many colleges that offer this program waive tuition fees and offer additional supportive services for eligible students. Students enrolled in Disabled Student Programs and Services can enroll with less than 12 units.

- **Extended Opportunity Programs and Services (EOPS):** All community colleges offer EOPS to enable low-income, educationally disadvantaged students to complete their educational goals. EOPS offers academic counseling, book grants, and more. These programs have limited space so it's important to apply as early as possible.

- **Campus Support Programs (CSP) for Foster Youth:** All California community colleges have NextUp, a support program specifically for foster youth. Services can include assistance with admissions, financial aid, housing, orientation, academic counseling, and tutoring. Many community colleges also have additional foster youth support programs that serve foster youth who are not eligible for NextUp and these program names, services, and eligibility vary by campus. **cacollegepathways.org/search-foster-youth-programs/**

  > ***NextUp Eligibility**: Students under age 26 at the time of program enrollment and who were in foster care on or after their 13th birthday, can qualify for special assistance including one-on-one support, book vouchers, and additional financial resources. **icangotocollege.com/financial-aid/foster-youth-support***

- **Cooperative Agencies Resources for Education (CARE) and CalWORKs:** CARE programs offer additional assistance to EOPS students who are single head-of-household parents who receive public assistance (cash aid) from CalWORKS/ TANF. Students may be eligible to receive grants, child care assistance, job placement assistance, and more.

- **Disabled Student Programs and Services (DSPS)/Student Accessibility Services (SAS):** These programs provide assistance and accommodations that help students with physical, mental, and/or learning disabilities in achieving their educational goals. They can provide note-taking assistance, special test-taking conditions, and more.

- **Dream Resource Centers:** Located at many community colleges, these centers and programs provide a safe space, supportive network, and access to resources to support students who are undocumented.

- **LGBTQ+ Services:** Some colleges have resource centers, programs, and/or services for LGBTQ+ students: **ccclgbt.org**.

- **Physical and Mental Health Services:** May include physical exams, family planning, pregnancy testing, prescription refills, and mental health counseling. Counseling services are often short-term, but foster youth with Medi-Cal can access long-term counseling through Medi-Cal providers.

- **Priority Registration for Foster Youth:** Allows foster youth who were in care at least one day after the age of 13 and under the age of 26 to register for classes before the general population. Application deadlines vary by campus.

- **Rising Scholars:** Serves students who have been impacted by the criminal justice system. Learn which colleges offer this program by visiting: **risingscholarsnetwork.org**.

- **Student Success Completion Grant:** A community college financial aid program that provides a grant of $5,250 per semester to students who were in foster care on or after the age of 13, receive the Cal Grant B or C and enroll in 12 or more units.

- **Umoja Community:** Located at some community colleges, Umoja is a community and resource dedicated to enhancing the cultural and educational experiences of African American and other students. **umojacommunity.org**

CSU and UC Programs and Benefits

- **Application Fee Waiver:** Foster youth are likely to qualify for an application fee waiver for up to four CSUs and four UCs. No additional application is required.

- **Basic Needs Centers:** Provide direct services, information, and referrals to address students' needs for food, housing, and safety in an effort to promote well-being and ensure students' academic retention and success.

- **Campus Support Programs (CSP) for Foster Youth:** All CSU and UC campuses have programs specifically for foster youth that can include assistance with admissions, financial aid, housing, academic counseling, tutoring, mentoring, life skills, and employment and career planning. To qualify, students must be in foster care at least one day. Program names and services vary by campus. Visit: **cacollegepathways.org/search-foster-youth-programs/**

- **Educational Opportunity Program (EOP):** Provides admission, academic, and financial support services to historically underserved students. EOP accepts students who do not meet regular admission criteria as well as those who qualify for regular admission. Students should apply for EOP when completing their undergraduate application for admission. EOP is available at all CSUs and some UCs.

- **Priority Housing:** Foster youth can receive priority for on-campus college housing, and some students can stay on campus year-round including holiday breaks. Contact the college to learn more.

- **Priority Registration for Foster Youth:** Current and former foster youth receive priority course registration at all CSUs and most UCs. This benefit makes it much easier to enroll in competitive classes. At the CSUs, this benefit is for youth under age 26 who were in foster care at least one day after the age of 13. Eligibility varies across the UCs. Students should visit the website of the college they plan to attend for more information.

- **Resources for Undocumented Students:** Many campuses across the CSUs and UCs provide Dream Centers or other support services and resources for undocumented students. Contact your college to learn more.

- **Justice System Involved Students:** Many campuses have programs, such as the UC's Underground Scholars, for students with prior involvement with juvenile and adult criminal justice systems.

- **Services for Students With Disabilities:** Each UC and CSU has a program for students with disabilities. These programs provide assistance and accommodations that facilitate students with physical, mental, and/or learning disabilities in achieving their educational goals. They can provide note-taking assistance, special test-taking conditions, and more.

- **TRIO Student Support Services (SSS):** Serve first-generation and low-income students as well as individuals with disabilities in their academic, personal, and professional growth. TRIO programs can be found at some CSU and UC campuses. Contact the campus of interest to inquire.

- **California College Pathways:** Provides general information about postsecondary education for foster youth including resources for understanding and getting help with financial aid, finding scholarships, and accessing foster youth support programs on college and university campuses. **cacollegepathways.org**



A Postsecondary Education Planning Guide for Adults Supporting California's Foster Youth

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CALIFORNIA COLLEGE PATHWAYS

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