High School Counselor Foster Youth FAFSA / CADAA Challenge Toolkit

Helping California's foster youth achieve their dreams!

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This document was created by John Burton Advocates for Youth and the Los Angeles County Office of Education.

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Los Angeles County Office of Education
Serving Students ▪ Supporting Communities ▪ Leading Educators

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Counselors are a vital part of every student's school experience.

Given the inequitable college outcomes that most students in foster care experience, counselors can be particularly instrumental in ensuring that they receive targeted tiered support within the College and Career Domain of the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) National Model to successfully matriculate into postsecondary education. Filling out the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) or California Dream Act Application (CADAA) is a critical step in this process, especially as foster youth often qualify for additional grants that can make their college journey possible.

COLLEGE OUTCOMES FOR FOSTER YOUTH

Nearly all foster youth report that they want to go to college, but only



will actually receive a 2- or 4-year degree by the age of 23.

In 2025-26,



of high school seniors with experience in foster care completed the FAFSA/CADAA.

A survey of 19-year-old youth in California found that roughly



of foster youth reported they did not receive enough assistance with college planning.

Foster youth, by definition and through no fault of their own, have endured abandonment, abuse, or neglect.

These experiences can profoundly impact a young person's emotional, physical, and psycho-social development. In most schools, foster youth only make up a small percentage of the student population. These students often lack adequate support from counselors and also lack family support outside of school. Below are just a few unique challenges foster youth may face that can contribute to their college outcomes and underscore the importance of providing more individual college and career counseling for foster youth:

UNIQUE CHALLENGES FOSTER YOUTH FACE

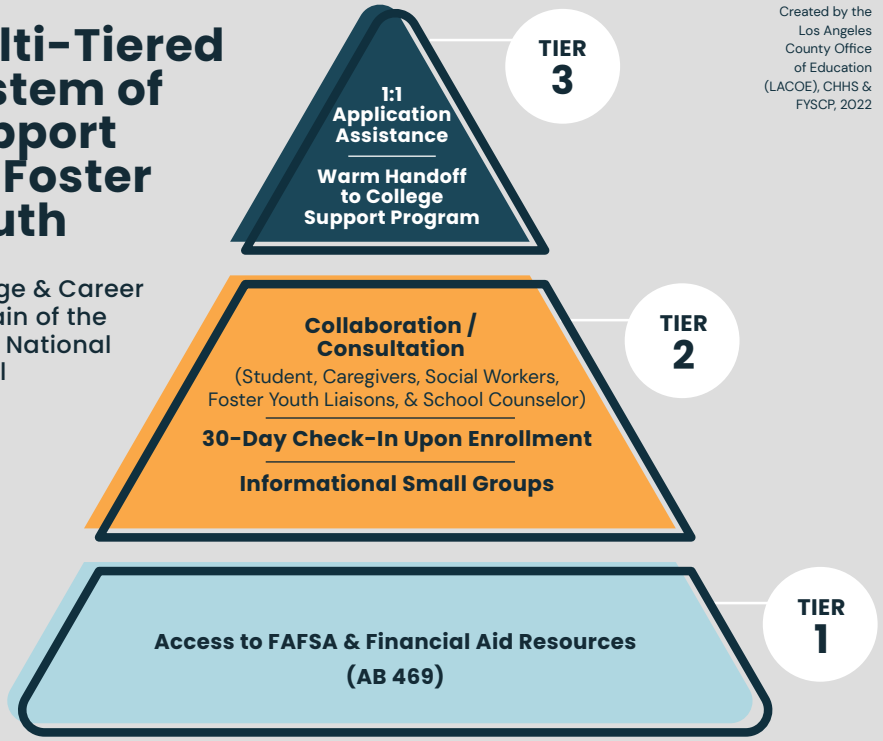
- Foster youth often lack support with filling out the FAFSA/ CADAA and completing the necessary follow-up steps after the FAFSA/CADAA.
- Foster youth are four times more likely to change schools in a given school year.
- Foster youth often miss out on receiving the Cal Grant because the information provided on their school's GPA verification submission does not match the information on their FAFSA/CADAA.
- Youth in care often suffer from complex trauma, which can negatively impact their performance in school.

How can you help using the Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) framework?

Local education agencies are required to confirm that all 12th graders complete financial aid applications unless they explicitly opt-out or are otherwise exempt (Education Code Section 51225.7). The Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) framework can provide helpful guidance in conceptualizing the individual level of support foster youth need to successfully complete financial aid applications in light of this new requirement.

Multi-Tiered System of Support for Foster Youth

College & Career Domain of the ASCA National Model



Created by the Los Angeles County Office of Education (LACOE), CHHS & FYSCP, 2022

HELPFUL RESOURCES

John Burton Advocates for Youth (JBAY) and your local County Office of Education Foster Youth Coordinating Services Program (FYSCP) are excellent resources for assistance on how to help foster youth apply for financial aid. FYSCPs can provide student-level data on financial aid completion for foster youth as well as technical assistance, training, and resources specific to assisting these students. For additional information, please visit jbay.org/resources/financial-aid-guide/ and cde.ca.gov/ls/pf/fy/contacts.asp.

TIER 1 | ALL

High schools are required to confirm FAFSA or CADAA completion for their high school seniors and direct them to resources and support. (Education Code Section 51225.7). Most students only require general information, workshops, and resources to assist with financial aid, however, given the unique challenges experienced by youth in the foster care system, they are more likely to require a Tier 2 or Tier 3 level of intervention.

TIER 2 | SOME

Despite the many adults involved in the life of a foster youth, which can include a social worker/probation officer, district foster youth liaison, and caregiver, many do not receive adequate guidance around college and career planning. For all foster youth, counselors should collaborate and consult with the youth's team to create an appropriate plan to help the youth reach their college and career goals. This plan should ensure that qualified individuals have been identified to assist the youth in reaching their goals. In addition, foster youth often experience high rates of school mobility, leading many to fall through the cracks and miss out on critical sessions with their counselors. Students' needs should be assessed and triaged within 30 days of enrollment. When developing an appropriate plan, most students will need a Tier 3 intervention that provides one-on-one assistance. However, Tier 2 interventions such as informational small groups can also be a method to provide targeted resources and information to special student populations, such as foster youth, if the student is comfortable with being identified as a foster youth with their peers.

Did you know

Senate Bill (SB) 12 requires social workers and probation officers to identify an individual or individuals to assist youth ages 16 or older on their caseload with their college applications, including career and technical education, and related financial aid? This individual can be the school counselor.

TIER 3 | FEW

Foster youth often need individualized assistance to successfully complete their applications for financial aid. For some, they may not want to self-identify as a foster youth in front of their peers in a workshop setting. For others, they may need personalized assistance to ensure that they qualify for independent status based on their involvement in the child welfare system. Completing the FAFSA or CADAA is also just one step in the process. Foster youth benefit from individualized assistance with other key steps in the college matriculation process such as applying to college and getting connected through a warm hand-off to a campus-based support program to prevent summer melt. Remember that due to the trauma many youth have experienced, there may be underlying fears, doubts, and worries about pursuing postsecondary education. Be persistent and consistent with encouraging and motivating youth about their potential to reach their dreams.

Foster Youth FAFSA/CADAA Tip Sheet for High School Counselors:

You can help foster youth succeed in college!

Timing YOUR SUPPORT:	
FAFSA/CA Dream Act Application	30-60 minutes
Chafee Grant Application	10-15 minutes
Claiming CalKIDS Scholarship	5 minutes
Creating a WebGrants Account	10 minutes
Verifying GPA has been received	5 minutes

(if the GPA has not been successfully matched to their FAFSA/CADAA, additional time may be needed for troubleshooting)

VISIT
www.jbay.org/resources/financial-aid-guide
for a comprehensive list of resources, tools, and trainings to help foster youth navigate college and financial aid!

jbay.org/resources/ed-planning-guide/
for step-by-step guides that provide detailed checklists, resources and strategies to help foster youth prepare for high school graduation and postsecondary education. Available in youth-facing versions for students in 9-11th and 12th grades!

Individualized assistance is most effective. Keep in mind these considerations:

Before THE FAFSA / CADAA

- Provide **individual assistance** to foster youth students with their FAFSA/CADAA. Many students may not feel comfortable disclosing their foster youth status in front of their peers in a workshop setting. If FAFSA/CADAA workshops are offered, ensure that outreach materials are inclusive of foster youth and that volunteers or staff are trauma-informed and familiar with their unique considerations.
- Ask students if they have access to their social security card. If not, direct them to their social worker or probation officer for help.
- Students may need to show a driver's license, state ID, birth certificate, or Social Security card before receiving aid. Help them gain access to their documents so they're ready.
- Make sure students have a personal email address (not a school-based email).
- Ensure that students who express that they do not want to fill out a FAFSA/CADAA are aware of the benefits of financial aid and postsecondary education pathways and that applying for aid does not commit them to accepting the aid if offered.
- If completing the FAFSA online, apply for an FSA-ID at studentaid.gov/fsa-id/create-account before starting the FAFSA application. Be mindful that the "challenge questions," which are asked in order to verify their FSA ID username and password later if necessary, may relate to family or identity, and therefore might be a trauma trigger for the student.
- Foster youth often lack home stability. Assist students in creating a system to store their passwords and usernames in a safe location.

During THE FAFSA / CADAA

- A foster youth may qualify as an independent student on their FAFSA/CADAA if they indicate within the "Student Personal Circumstances" section that they were in foster care and/or a ward of the court (in out-of-home placement) on or after their 13th birthday. Students who meet these criteria do not need to report information about their biological parents, foster parents, or adoptive parents. Students in a legal guardianship with someone other than their parent or stepparent may also qualify. Make sure eligible students receive independent status.
- Extended Foster Care (AB 12) benefits, such as Supervised Independent Living Placement (SILP) benefits, do not need to be reported as income on the FAFSA or CADAA.
- Students are asked if they received any federal benefits. Responding yes to this question exempts the student from having to report their current cash, savings, or checking accounts. Keep in mind that all youth currently in foster care in out-of-home placement receive Medi-Cal, known federally as Medicaid.

After THE FAFSA / CADAA

- Proactively advise students about financial aid resources available to California foster youth. Many students are not aware of existing financial aid opportunities and eligibility criteria.
- 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.
- Help students check CalKIDS eligibility and claim their scholarship at calkids.org. You'll need the student's date of birth, the county where they attended school when CalKIDS was created, and their statewide student ID (at californiacolleges.edu or from the school). **Tip: Ask which counties they've attended school in since 2021.**
- Create a WebGrants 4 Students account at mygrantinfo.csac.ca.gov. It can take one to two weeks for the FAFSA to process before an account can be created.
- Verify that their high school GPA has been received and matched to their account to receive the Cal Grant.
- Remind students to update their accounts if their address/phone number changes (e.g., WebGrants, FAFSA, college portal, CADAA, etc.). Many students experience frequent placement changes.
- Provide a warm hand-off to link students to campus-based foster youth support programs such as NextUp, Guardian Scholars, etc. Learn more at: cacollegepathways.org.
- If verification of foster youth status is requested for financial aid or other resources, such as campus-based foster youth support programs, students should contact their social worker, probation officer, or Independent Living Program (ILP) Coordinator. Youth no longer in foster care can call the office of the California Foster Care Ombudsperson at 877-846-1602.

Foster Youth Benefits Chart

Foster youth are eligible for a number of benefits that can support their postsecondary success, yet many youth are unaware of the supports available to them. Becoming familiar with these benefits and discussing them with students can ensure students have the most resources to succeed in their educational goals.

BENEFIT TYPE	ELIGIBILITY BASED ON AGE IN FOSTER CARE THROUGH OUT-OF-HOME PLACEMENT, UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED	STUDENT'S CURRENT AGE
CHILD WELFARE BENEFITS		
Extended foster care: Continued foster care payments beyond age 18 up to age 21. Can be made to caregiver or directly to youth. Includes infant supplement payments for parenting youth and Expectant Parent Payment for pregnant youth during the final three months of pregnancy. These payments are not counted as income on the FAFSA/CADAA.	18 and up	Under 21
Independent Living Program: Support for postsecondary planning and financial assistance for independent living costs, including education.	16-18**	Under 21
FINANCIAL AID		
FAFSA/CADAA Independent Status: Qualifying as independent means that the student does not have to include parent's or guardian's income on the FAFSA/CADAA, which may increase the amount of financial aid available.	13 and up (or legal guardianship)	All students are independent at age 24
Chafee Grant: Up to $4,500 per year for foster youth enrolled in college at least half-time.	16-18	Under 26
Cal Grant: Pays for tuition costs at a CSU or UC (and partial tuition at private colleges) and up to $1,648 for non-tuition costs like rent and books. Foster youth attending a CSU, UC, CA community college or qualified private college can receive up to $6,000 per year for non-tuition costs. Must have minimum 2.0 high school GPA unless enrolled in a qualified Career & Technical (CTE) program. Qualified foster youth are not subject to the requirement that they apply within one year of high school graduation if enrolling in a 4-year university and can receive the grant for up to eight years.	13 and up for foster youth-specific benefits	Under 26
Student Success Completion Grant: Up to $5,250 per semester if attending full-time (12+ units) at a California Community College and also receiving Cal Grant B or C.	13 and up, for foster youth expanded benefit	No age requirement
Middle Class Scholarship: Foster youth pursuing a bachelor degree program (or teaching credential) at a CSU, UC or California Community College that have a remaining unmet need that is over $8,154 will be offered the award to cover the gap towards cost of attendance. Award amounts will vary by student and by school.	13 and up for foster youth expanded benefit	No age requirement
California College Promise Grant: Waives enrollment fees for classes at California community colleges. Eligible low-income students must maintain at least a 2.0 GPA to continue to receive the waiver, however foster youth can maintain this waiver regardless of academic performance.	13 and up for waiver of GPA requirement	Under 25 for waiver of GPA requirement
CalKIDS: A Scholarship program that funds up to $1,500 for eligible public school students who are low-income or who have experienced foster care or homelessness. Funds are deposited into an account while the student is enrolled in public school and becomes available once enrolled in a college, university or career and technical program.	In foster care in first grade or later	Under 26
ON-CAMPUS BENEFITS		
Foster Youth Support Programs: All California community colleges have NextUp, a support program specifically for foster youth that includes additional cash aid. Some community colleges also have additional foster youth support programs that serve foster youth who are not eligible for NextUp. These program names, services and eligibility vary by campus. All UCs and CSUs have a foster youth support program. The services and names of these programs vary by campus (i.e. Guardian Scholars, Renaissance Scholars). Services can include assistance with admissions, financial aid, housing, orientation, academic counseling, life skills, and tutoring. In Los Angeles County, adult supporters can help foster youth connect with campus support programs by encouraging them to complete and sign a **Release of Information form** before they graduate from high school.	NextUp (community college): 13 and up (including those with an open family maintenance case) UCs and CSUs: Must have been in foster care at least one day.	NextUp: Must first enroll in NextUp before age 26. UCs and CSUs: No age cap
Priority registration: Allows foster youth to register for classes before the general student population at community colleges, CSUs and UCs.	13 and up	Under 26
Priority housing: Priority access to on-campus housing at CSUs, UCs, and Community Colleges and access to housing over school breaks (not including summer).	Varies by campus	Varies by campus

** Foster youth who were/are in kin-gap, non-related legal guardianship, or were adopted are eligible for a Chafee Grant only if the youth was a dependent or ward of the court living in out-of-home foster care placement at least one day between the ages of 16-18 OR placed in out-of-home care by a tribe or tribal organization between the ages of 16-18.

Child Welfare Terms & Definitions

TERM	ACRONYM COMMONLY USED	DEFINITION
Absent Without Leave	**AWOL**	When a youth leaves their placement, or is a "runaway," for at least 24 hours.
Case		An open court case in dependency court or juvenile court. It may also refer to a case that has no court involvement but only voluntary supervision by the child welfare agency (e.g., Voluntary Family Maintenance (VRM) or Voluntary Family Reunification (VFR)).
Child and Family Team Meetings	**CFT**	Meetings that the child welfare or probation agency convenes with families with an open dependency case. The purpose of a CFT is to identify the family's strengths, needs, and collaborative case planning. School representatives may be invited to attend, and some meetings may occur at school sites.
Child Welfare Agency		The child protection agency, or child welfare agency, in the county. Each county may use a different name for their department.
Court Appointed Special Advocates	**CASA**	A non-profit organization that pairs children and youth in the dependency system with trained volunteer advocates. Not every youth in the dependency system has a CASA.
Dependency Court		The court system that handles child abuse and neglect cases.
Dependent or Ward of the Court		For the purposes of the FAFSA/CADAA, these terms are synonyms to mean a youth who has an open case in dependency court. This does not include students who are involved in the child welfare system but remain in the legal custody of their parents. For example, youth who are involved with the child welfare system but do not have an open court case, such as Voluntary Family Maintenance or Voluntary Family Reunification, are not considered a Dependent or Ward of the Court. Youth who have an open probation case and are incarcerated are not considered a dependent or ward of the court on the FAFSA/CADAA unless they also have an open child welfare case.
Dual Supervision/ Crossover Youth		A student who is under the supervision of child welfare (as a child victim of abuse or neglect) and probation (for committing an offense). These students may have both a social worker and probation officer.
Education Rights Holder	**ERH**	Every foster youth under the age of 18 must have an ERH, who is required to make education decisions in the youth's best interest. Foster youth who are 18 or older have the right to make their own education decisions. The ERH may be their parent or legal guardian, caregiver, CASA, or another person chosen by the court. It cannot be their social worker, probation officer, attorney, group home staff, or school staff members. Youth may have more than one ERH at times.
Emergency Response Children's Social Worker	**ER CSW or ER Worker**	A children's social worker who is tasked with investigating any allegations of child abuse or neglect.
Extended Foster Care	**EFC or AB 12**	A program that allows eligible youth in the child welfare and/or probation systems to voluntarily remain in the foster care system between the ages of 18-21. The court also retains jurisdiction over the case. AB 12 (2010) is the legislation that extended foster care to age 21 in California.
Family Maintenance	**FM**	A court case that has the goal of maintaining the child(ren) at home with at least one parent. These cases are meant to only last six months while at home but have been extended at times. These youth may be considered a Dependent or Ward of the Court for the purposes of Independent Status on the FAFSA/CADAA depending on the nature of their court case. Contact your County Office of Education FYSCP for further information.
Family Preservation	**FP**	A case where the child stays in the home while a contracted community-based agency delivers wraparound services.
Family Reunification	**FR**	A court case that has the goal of returning the child back home after family compliance has been achieved. These cases can last up to 18 months (only six months for children under 3). These youth are considered a Dependent or Ward of the Court for the purposes of Independent Status on the FAFSA/CADAA.

TERM	ACRONYM COMMONLY USED	DEFINITION
Foster Family Agency	**FFA**	Contracted foster homes that the county child welfare agency refers children to for placement with certified and trained Resource Parents.
Foster Youth Services Coordinating Program	**FYSCP**	FYSCPs are located within the county offices of education. They have the ability and authority to ensure that health and school records are obtained to establish appropriate placements and coordinate instruction, counseling, tutoring, mentoring, vocational training, emancipation services, training for independent living, and other related services. Support services can vary county to county.
Independent Living Program	**ILP**	A program within the child welfare agency and probation department that offers financial assistance and services for eligible foster youth 16-20 years of age.
Juvenile Justice Court		The court system that handles youth probation cases.
Legal Guardian		Not to be confused with "Foster Parent" or "Resource Parent" the term "Legal Guardian" is a legal assignment by a court order naming a person other than the biological parents the legal party over medical and educational decisions and other decisions related to a child's wellbeing.
Permanent Placement or Another Planned Permanent Living Arrangement	**PP/APPLA**	A court case in which neither parent successfully reunified with their child(ren) and a more permanent plan is being sought, such as legal guardianship or adoption. These youth are considered a Dependent or Ward of the Court for the purposes of Independent Status on the FAFSA/CADAA.
Resource Parent		Trained and certified caregivers, which can include foster parents, foster-to-adopt families, and kinship/relative caregivers.
Special Immigrant Juvenile Status	**SIJS**	Undocumented children who are dependents of the juvenile court, which finds that they cannot be reunified with one or both of their parents due to abuse, abandonment, or neglect, and it is not in their best interest to return to their country of nationality. These children may be able to obtain SIJS and apply to become a lawful permanent resident (LPR), also known as obtaining a Green Card.
Senate Bill 12	**SB 12**	SB 12(2017) requires social workers and probation officers to identify a postsecondary education support person(s) in the case plan for foster youth age 16 or older interested in pursuing postsecondary education to assist them with their college applications, including career and technical education, and related financial aid.
Short-Term Residential Treatment Program	**STRTP**	Residential congregate care facilities that are therapeutic in nature and time limited. STRTPs replaced group homes in California.
Social Worker		The representative who works with the family receiving services from the child welfare agency. Each county may have a different term to describe this role, such as Children's Social Worker or Protective Services Worker.
Supervised Independent Living Placement	**SILP**	Youth who participate in Extended Foster Care must live in an approved placement. That can include a SILP, which is housing such as a room for rent, apartment, or college dorm, that the youth finds and is approved by the social worker or probation officer. If a student has a SILP they are also eligible for a set monthly payment for living expenses.
Transitional Independent Living Plan & Agreement	**TILP**	A youth-driven planning document to be completed every six months by a social worker or probation officer for all foster youth ages 16 and older and in out-of-home care. TILP includes the youth's goals around transitioning into adulthood and a field to identify the postsecondary education support person(s).
Tribal Indian Foster Youth		Per AB 1962, the definition of foster youth, for the purposes of the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF), now includes youth who are dependents under the jurisdiction of tribal courts that meet specified requirements. Local Education Agencies (LEAs) must collect this information on a local level since these youth are not under the jurisdiction of the California juvenile court system.
Unaccompanied Refugee Minor Program	**URM**	Children covered under the URM program (e.g., students in the U.S. who are refugees, asylees, etc.) are entitled to services equivalent to mainstream foster care and emancipation services. They are not included in California's definition of children in foster care under WIC or Ed Code; therefore, this student population is not included in LCFF, LCAP, or other entitlements afforded to children in California's foster care system.
Voluntary Family Maintenance	**VRM**	A non-court case that is opened by the county child welfare agency only when there is not enough legal standing to refer a family to court supervision, but enough safety concerns assign a social worker to the case. These cases last a maximum of six months. These youth are not considered a Dependent or Ward of the Court for the purposes of Independent Status on the FAFSA/CADAA.
Voluntary Family Reunification	**VFR**	A non-court case that is opened by the county child welfare agency only when there is not enough legal standing to refer a family to court supervision, but enough safety concerns to assign a social worker to the case and get the parents' permission to remove a child from their home. These cases last a maximum of six months. These youth are not considered a Dependent or Ward of the Court for the purposes of Independent Status on the FAFSA/CADAA.

Frequently Asked Questions:

HIGH SCHOOL COUNSELOR EDITION

1.	In the "Student Personal Circumstances" section, which of these statements should a foster youth choose? **At any time since the student turned 13, they were a ward of the court** or **At any time since the student turned 13, they were in foster care.**	According to the FAFSA/CADAA, there is no difference between these two statements for a youth who is in foster care. It is recommended a youth select both statements. Depending on the youth's circumstances, they may also select "The student is or was in a legal guardianship with someone other than their parent or stepparent, as determined by a court in their state od residence" to qualify as an independent student.
2.	**What if a student's case closed?**	As long as the student's case closed on or after their 13th birthday, they are eligible for Independent status on their FAFSA/CADAA. Youth who were a dependent or ward of the court, but remained under the legal custody of their parent, do not qualify for Independent Status. Youth may have a foster care placement order through the child welfare system or through probation.
3.	**How do counselors identify foster youth on their caseload?**	There are three possible ways to identify foster youth on your case load: 1. Contact your district's Foster Youth Liaison (aka AB 490 Liaison). 2. Contact your County Office of Education Foster Youth Services Coordinating Program (FYSCP). 3. View your Student Information System (SIS), if applicable.
4.	**If a new student arrives or leaves my school, what do I need to know to ensure that they qualify for financial aid?**	Utilize WebGrants to verify that the student's GPA was submitted and matched to their FAFSA/CADAA. Contact your county's FYSCP or the California Student Aid Commission (CSAC) for assistance, if needed. If the student is awarded a Cal Grant, the high school that first submitted the GPA will be required to verify the student's high school graduation date. If the school that submitted the GPA is different from the school from which the student graduated, CSAC should be informed to ensure that the student's information is updated, including their high school graduation information and address.
5.	**What if a student says they are a foster youth, but it's not showing up in our Student Information System (SIS)?**	Contact your county Foster Youth Services Coordinating Program (FYSCP) office.
6.	**Do foster youth need to report the income of their biological parents or caregivers on the FAFSA/ CADAA?**	As long as the youth was a dependent or ward of the court at least one day after their 13th birthday, they are eligible for Independent Status on the FAFSA/CADAA and do not need to report the income of their biological parents or caregivers (i.e., Resource Parents, foster parents, Short-Term Residential Treatment Program staff, etc.). Youth who were dependents or wards of the court, but remained under the legal custody of their parent, do not qualify for Independent Status. Youth may have a foster care placement order through the child welfare system or through probation. Probation-supervised foster youth are foster youth and have the same rights and eligibility for supportive programming as child-welfare-supervised foster youth.
7.	**Is the student's household size still "1" if the youth is placed with a relative or in a group home?**	Yes. The FAFSA automatically populates household size based on if the student indicates in a prior screen if they are married or have children. Students should enter "1" for number in college unless they have a spouse attending college at least half time.
8.	**Senate Bill (SB)12 requires a social worker or probation officer to identify a postsecondary education support person to assist youth age 16 or older with their college and financial aid applications. Who is allowed to be this person?**	Any adult can be the postsecondary education support person. It can also be more that one person. This person may include their high school counselor, CASA, caregiver, or other appropriate adult. If a high school counselor plans to assist youth with their college and/ or financial aid applications, it is recommended that they communicate with the social worker/probation officer to ensure collaborative teaming.
9.	**What income unique to foster youth IS NOT included on the FAFSA/CADAA?**	Extended Foster Care (AB 12) benefits—including Supervised Independent Living Placement (SILP) payments, the infant supplement or payment from a Transitional Housing Placement for Non-Minor Dependent (THP-NMD) program, do not need to be reported on the FAFSA/CADAA. Even if the SILP payment is sent directly to the youth, they DO NOT need to report this as income.

10.	**Where can I direct the student to get verification of their foster youth status?**	Financial aid offices have the ability to automatically verify a student's foster youth status via a match with California Department of Social Services (CDSS) data through the WebGrants system. However, although this process exists, not all financial aid offices use this feature and some students will still be asked to provide verification of their foster youth status for the purposes of Independent Status on the FAFSA or CADAA. Students may also be asked to provide verification to access other benefits for foster youth such as priority registration or the NextUp program. Should a youth need verification of their foster care status, you can direct the youth to their ILP worker, social worker, or probation officer or contact the Office of the California Foster Care Ombudsperson if their case is closed.
11.	**Are there programs and resources to support foster youth in college?**	Yes. Most colleges in California have a support program for foster youth; however, programs, services, and resources can vary from campus to campus. Many, but not all, go by the name of NextUp or Guardian Scholars. Visit **cacollegepathways.org** to find campus-specific support programs and contacts.
12.	**How does a student indicate their housing plan on the FAFSA?**	Students are no longer asked their housing plans on the FAFSA/CADAA, however the housing plan (off campus, on campus or with parents) impacts the calculation for the cost of attendance and therefore how much aid a student is eligible for. Colleges must determine housing status from their own records, such as who paid a housing deposit, or from responses to an application question or post-admissions questionnaire. It's important that students identify as a foster youth on college applications so they can have access to foster youth-specific housing supports and benefits on campus.
13.	**What if the student's name or address changes after they submit a FAFSA/CADAA and create a WebGrants account or they discover that their name or address is incorrect in the system?**	The student's name on WebGrants and the FAFSA/CADAA must match the student's Social Security Card and the school's official student record. Below is guidance, depending on the circumstance: **Mismatched Names** Errors on FAFSA/CADAA – Assist student to correct their name and resubmit the FAFSA/CADAA application. Errors on WebGrants – If the correction is minor (such as a dash or space removed/added), a counselor can call California Student Aid Commission (CSAC) directly at (888) 294-0153. If the correction is more significant, the student must complete the CSAC form G-10 (located under "student forms" at **csac.ca.gov**). The student is required to provide two forms of ID. NOTE: CSAC will need to verify the student's name on a school record. If the student's name does not match the official student record, the student must correct the school record name first and then submit the G-10 form. **Mismatched Address** If the youth has recently moved, assist them to update their address in their WebGrants for Students account or call CSAC directly at (888) 224-7268. Additionally, assist the youth to update their address in their FAFSA or CADAA. If the youth's address does not match the GPA submitted by the school and the address on file in WebGrants, this will result in a non-match and they will not be awarded a Cal Grant until the information is corrected. **Need assistance or have questions?** Contact CSAC Institutional Support at (888) 294-0153/ schoolsupport@csac.ca.gov
14.	**Are all youth served by Probation considered a dependent or ward of the court for the purposes of the FAFSA?**	No. In the juvenile justice system "ward of the court" means something different than it does on the FAFSA/CADAA. However, some youth who were in a foster care placement before entering the juvenile justice system may qualify as a dependent or ward of the court as long as they were in foster care, even only for a day, after turning 13. In addition, any youth under the jurisdiction of the probation system who is placed outside of their parent's or guardian's home in an out-of-home placement other than a juvenile detention setting—such as in a group home (STRTP), with a foster parent (Resource Parent), or other relative's home— is a dependent or ward of the court for the FAFSA/CADAA.

15.	**How much financial aid can a foster youth receive?**	It depends on factors such as their time in foster care, age, high school GPA, unit load and planned school of attendance. Depending on factors such as these, foster youth may be eligible for thousands of dollars in financial aid through programs such as the Chafee Grant, Cal Grant Access Award for Foster Youth, Student Success Completion Grant for Foster Youth, and Middle Class Scholarship for foster youth. For example, an eligible foster youth who has at least a 2.0 GPA in high school and attends community college full time (12 or more units) may qualify for over $30,000 in financial aid. The Financial Aid Guide for California Foster and Unaccompanied Homeless Youth can help you and your student understand the eligibility for grant aid and find additional scholarship opportunities. **www.jbay.org/resources/financial-aid-guide**
16.	**Who can sign the "Opt-Out Form" on behalf of foster youth as detailed in AB 469 and AB 2165?**	AB 469 requires LEAs to document 12th graders who elect not to submit, or are determined exempt from submitting, a FAFSA or CADAA. AB 2165 requires that LEAs, before exempting a student from completing the FAFSA or CADAA, facilitate a meeting between the school counselor and the student or the student's parent or guardian to discuss the purpose and benefits of submitting a FAFSA or CADAA and the consequences of not completing these financial aid applications. If an LEA determines a student is exempt, they shall complete and submit an opt-out form and notify the student's parent or guardian. Finally, AB 2165 requires LEAS to report on the number of opt-out forms submitted, including those submitted on behalf of a student and those submitted by the student's parent or guardian.
17.	**What financial aid applications should an undocumented foster youth complete?**	Undocumented children who are dependents of the juvenile court, which finds that they cannot be reunified with one or both of their parents due to abuse, abandonment, or neglect, and it is not in their best interest to return to their country of nationality, may be able to obtain Special Immigrant Juvenile Status (SIJS) and apply to become a lawful permanent resident (LPR), also known as obtaining a Green Card. However, students with a pending application for SIJS are not eligible for federal financial aid and should submit the CADAA until they have received permanent resident status (i.e., a Green Card). Additionally, students who received Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) status and were issued a social security number must still fill out the CADAA. DACA status is not required to apply for the CADAA. The California Student Aid Commission (CSAC) keeps CADAA applicant data confidential. The CADAA does not link applicant information to federal government databases. CADAA data will not be shared with, or disclosed to, any federal agencies, including immigration enforcement. If an undocumented student does not have an application for SIJS pending, the child welfare or probation agency should be contacted for eligibility screening and to determine if SIJS is the right option for the youth since it is recommended that an application be initiated before they turn 18. For the Chafee Grant, students may complete either the FAFSA or CADAA in addition to the Chafee Grant application.
18.	**What if a student doesn't want to complete the FAFSA/CADAA?**	Some students may not understand the benefits of completing the FAFSA/CADAA, or may be confused or worried about what the process entails. They may also be unaware of how much money they could be eligible for. Actively listen to understand a student's reasons for not wanting to complete the FAFSA/CADAA and take the time to share the benefits of financial aid and postsecondary education and to dispel any myths or inaccurate information.
19.	**Can students apply for financial aid if their parents are not citizens?**	If the student is a citizen or an eligible non-citizen, they can submit a FAFSA regardless of the citizenship status of their parent or spouse. Students without legal status may submit a CADAA instead to apply for state and institutional financial aid. If students in mixed-status families have concerns about submitting a FAFSA, they may choose to submit a CADAA instead, even if they would otherwise be eligible for the FAFSA. Students who submit a CADAA instead of the FAFSA are only eligible for state and institutional financial aid and are not eligible for federal aid such as the Pell Grant, federal student loans, or federal work study.