Foster Care-Specific Financial Aid Programs

There are financial resources to help you turn your dreams into degrees. If you have been in foster care anytime after turning 13, your classes will likely be paid for at most Washington State colleges.

College Bound Scholarship

The College Bound Scholarship is a state-funded program managed by the Washington Student Achievement Council. It is an early promise of state financial aid to help pay for college after high school. The scholarship combines with other state financial aid to cover college tuition at similar public college rates, some fees, and some money for books. If you have been in foster care anytime from grade 7 to age 21, you are automatically enrolled into the College Bound Scholarship program.

For more information about the program, scholarship requirements, and about other financial aid options in Washington, visit www.collegebound-wa.gov, email: collegebound@wsac.wa.gov, or call 888-535-0747, option 1.

Passport to College Promise Scholarship Program

This scholarship encourages Washington’s youth in foster care to prepare for and succeed in college. You can receive scholarships and other forms of financial aid that will help pay tuition and living expenses for up to five years of college at approved schools in Washington. You will receive guidance from college academic and financial aid counselors, assistance with finding housing during school breaks and over the summer, special consideration for the State Need Grant and State Work Study financial aid programs, and help finding student employment from Passport staff. You may also opt-in for personalized help and support services from the College Success Foundation. For more information, visit the Washington Student Achievement Council at passportcollege@wsac.wa.gov or call 1-888-535-0747, option 3.

Independent Living Program (ILP)

This program can provide you with basic life skills and support. It is designed to enhance your ability to move into adulthood by increasing your skills, knowledge, and ability in the following areas:

- Educational stability
- Past high school education preparation
- Employment/vocational readiness
- Income maintenance
- Self-sufficiency
- Independent skills
- Self-advocacy
- Bridging of healthy/supportive relationships
- Advocacy and achievement

For more information about Independent Living, email: ILIKIDS@dshs.wa.gov, contact your local DCFS office, or visit http://independence.wa.gov/programs/independent-living-program.

Medicaid to 26

You may be eligible for continued foster care benefits even if you are no longer in foster care or other eligible out-of-home placement. To find out if you are eligible, call 1-800-562-3022 extension 15480.

TRIO Student Support Services Program (TRIO SSS)

This program is offered at many community colleges and four-year schools. If you are low-income, first-generation, foster youth, and/or have disabilities, this program can be a great support. In TRIO, you can get tutoring, academic counseling, and learn study skills. This program can help you navigate the college system. It also offers social and cultural events to help you build a supportive social network.

Financial Aid

Federal aid is money to help you pay for college. It comes from the federal and state governments, colleges and universities, banks, and organizations. In order to receive financial aid, you must apply.

Applying for financial aid is a separate process from applying for admission to a college. You must do both. To receive financial aid, you must apply for it using the Free Application for Federal Student Aid, or FAFSA (www.fafsa.gov) or the Washington Application for State Financial Aid or WASFA (http://readysetgrad.org/wasfa). Colleges use the results of the FAFSA or WASFA to create a financial aid package.

For a list of approved schools in Washington State and to view eligibility requirements visit: http://wacolleges.org/colleges-and-institutions-washington

Washington State Governors’ Scholarship for Foster Youth

This scholarship helps youth in foster care continue their education and earn a college degree. Scholarship amounts vary depending on the college you attend, and are available for up to five years. You must be enrolled full time and maintain satisfactory grades in order to renew the scholarship each year.

For more information, visit http://www.collegesuccessfoundation.org/wa/scholarships/governors.

Facebook: facebook.com/gearupwa
Twitter: twitter.com/gearupwa
Website: www.gearup.wa.gov
Ready Set Grad: www.readysetgrad.org
CollegeBound: www.collegebound.wa.gov
Gear Up: www.gearup.wa.gov
Tutoring: www.mytutoringwa.org
College Success Foundation: http://wsac.wa.gov/colleges-and-institutions-wagevolunteer
ETV Program: http://www.collegesuccessfoundation.org/wa/scholarships/etv-program
Governors’ Scholarship Program: http://www.collegesuccessfoundation.org/wa/scholarships/governors

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The most important things you can do to help yourself prepare for life after high school are attend school regularly, take challenging courses to meet the Minimum College Admission Standards, and talk to your school counselor and other adults about your plans.

## College Preparation

### High School is an Important Time

If you want to attend college, you need to start preparing by working hard in high school, taking challenging courses, and getting good grades.

### Make It Happen!

Make It Happen! is a FREE three-day, two-night college campus experience for youth who are or ever have been in the Washington state foster care system. The camp is in June on a college campus in Washington.

At Make It Happen! you will spend time attending workshops about applying to college, and learn what it’s like to be a college student. Many of the counselors, staff, volunteers and inspiring speakers are foster care alumni. They will work with you to help you achieve your higher education goals.

For more information, contact College Success Foundation at mihi@collegesuccessfoundation.org, by phone at 425-213-5888 or visit http://collegesuccessfoundation.org/make-it-happen

### Supplemental Education Transition Planning Program (SETuP)

SETuP can provide information to you and your foster family about post-high school education and training opportunities. SETuP provides in your region may be able to help you prepare for college by offering:

- Financial aid assistance application.
- College application coaching and assistance.
- Pre-college testing guidance based on educational goals.
- Connecting you to other support services.

For more information and to find your regional SETuP contact, visit http://independence.wa.gov/programs/setup/

### Support Services in College

When choosing a college, investigate if the college has Equal Opportunity Programs (EOPs), often labeled as First-Year Experience Programs, Summer Bridge Programs, Freshman Seminars, etc. These programs support youth in making a successful transition to college.

### Housing

Some colleges have priority housing and year round options. The Independent Youth Housing Program is available in certain parts of the state. It provides rental assistance and case management services to eligible youth who have aged out of the foster care system.

This program may be able to help you find a safe, affordable place to live and help you become independent. Learn more about eligibility and its services at http://independence.wa.gov/programs/independent-youth-housing-program/

### Social
- How can I find a mentor or a college mentor?
- Are there any foster peer groups that meet on campus?

### Finances
- Where can I go to get help with financial aid?
- Where do I go if I need a fee waived?
- How can I get an emergency loan/financial support if needed?

### Healthcare
- Do you offer workshops or support on the skill training wellness self-care?
- What mental health services are available?

### Academic
- Do you offer an orientation? Is there help with the cost of transportation?
- Do you offer a summer transition program? Is there help with transportation?

### Transportation
- Is there free or cheap transportation available?

### On-Campus Support Services
- How do I access tutoring and academic support services?
- Is there a Passport Navigator here?
- Where do I go to get help for disability services?
- What documentation is required?
- How can I apply to be a part of a TRIO SSP program? Is it available?
- Are there food or clothing banks on campus or nearby?

### Extended Foster Care Program

This program provides an opportunity for you at age 18 to voluntarily agree to continue receiving foster care services, including placement services, while you complete high school or a post-high school academic or vocational program, or participate in a program or activity designed to promote employment. For more information, visit www.independence.wa.gov.

### First-Year Supportive Programming

When choosing a college, investigate if the college has Equal Opportunity Programs (EOPs), often labeled as First-Year Experience Programs, Summer Bridge Programs, Freshman Seminars, etc. These programs support youth in making a successful transition to college.

### Foster Care Alumni Services

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This program may be able to help you find a safe, affordable place to live and help you become independent. Learn more about eligibility and its services at http://independence.wa.gov/programs/independent-youth-housing-program/

### The Important Things You Can Do

- Help yourself prepare for life after high school by attending school regularly, taking challenging courses, and getting good grades.
- Talk to your school counselor and other adults about your plans.
- Keep track of important dates, such as college application deadlines, and make sure to check them regularly.
- Keep a file of all important documents, including transcripts, test scores, and letters of recommendation, in your binder.
- Use online resources to find information about scholarships and financial aid.
- Stay organized and keep track of your progress.

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