

# Education Services for Transition Age Youth



## CALIFORNIA FOSTER YOUTH EDUCATION TASK FORCE

### INTRODUCTION

Many youth in foster care turn eighteen before graduating from high school. Several safeguards exist to help them complete their education and transition successfully into adulthood.

### TRANSITIONAL SERVICES AND SUPPORTS

State law specifies that before terminating dependency jurisdiction, the state must assist youth in foster care with applying for admission to college, a vocational training program, or other educational institution and obtaining financial aid, where appropriate. If the youth has not received this assistance along with other important documents, and is not prepared to exit the system, the court may retain jurisdiction so long as it takes the department to comply with assisting the youth. *WIC § 391.*

A student in foster care, who is receiving aid and is expected to graduate from a high school, vocational program, or GED program by age 19, may retain their AFDC-FC payments until they graduate or reach their 19<sup>th</sup> birthday. Kin-GAP payments and Cal-WORKS, in addition to AFDC-FC, can be extended based on the same criteria. *WIC § 11403.*

### Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act

In 2008, the federal government enacted the Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act (Public Law 110-351). This new law allows states to receive federal funds for their relative guardianship programs for the first time. The law also makes federal funds available for foster care, guardianship, and adoption assistance benefits to youth who meet certain conditions (e.g., employment and education related requirements) until age 22.

Governor Schwarzenegger signed AB 12, the California Fostering Connections to Success Act, on September 30, 2010. With the passage of AB 12, some youth in foster care may remain eligible for foster care benefits through their 21<sup>st</sup> birthday. *WIC §§ 11401, 11405.* AB 12 is being phased in between January 2012 and January 2014. See <http://www.cafosteringconnections.org> for more information.

### EDUCATION

#### Enrollment in High School

Until age eighteen, youth are entitled to compulsory full time education unless they are exempt. *EC § 48200.* There is no obligation for local education agencies (LEAs) to serve youth over age 18 unless they are receiving special education services. However, youth over age 18 may enroll for additional years in a public high school or alternative education programs until a diploma is awarded. See CDE website at <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/tg/hs/studentoptions.asp>.

#### Enrollment in Adult Education Programs

A student may be able to enroll in an adult education program, subject to the district's availability. *EC § 52501.*

#### Students with Special Needs

(See *Special Education Factsheet.*)

Youth are entitled to special education services under California law until age 22. *EC § 56041.*

Students must be allowed to take the California High School Exit Examination (CAHSEE) with any accommodations and modifications that are specified in their Individualized Education Program (IEP) or Section 504 plan. The approved testing variations, accommodations, and modifications are found on the CDE website at <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/tg/hs/accmod.asp>.

### HIGHER EDUCATION

#### CA College Pathways Programs

There is a wide range of academic support programs for former foster youth attending college in California. The range of services provided by these programs varies considerably, and the most accurate information about each program can be gained by directly contacting the program coordinator at each program.

<http://www.cacollegepathways.org/programs.php>.

#### Foster Youth Services (FYS)

FYS is a program of the California Department of Education. The program helps to improve children's educational performance and personal achievement. FYS programs have the flexibility to design services to meet a wide range of needs of foster youth. Transitional services provided include: referrals for counseling, tutoring,

mentoring, emancipation services, vocational training, and independent living services. See <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/pf/fy/> for a list of counties with FYS programs.

#### Campus Support Programs

Campus Support Programs, such as Guardian Scholars, are comprehensive programs that support former foster youth in their efforts to gain a university, community college or trade school education. Campus Support Programs vary and students may receive: financial aid, housing, academic and personal advisement, and employment services. <http://www.cacollegepathways.org>.



#### Board of Governors Fee Waiver

The Board of Governors Fee Waiver (BOG) is funded by the State of California for California residents to waive in full the amount of enrollment fees to eligible students at community colleges. Students in foster care should apply for the waiver to determine their eligibility.

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## **Chafee Grant (Education and Training Voucher ETV)**

Current or former foster youth who have not have reached their 22<sup>nd</sup> birthday and have financial need, may qualify for up to \$5,000 a year for career and technical training or college. The funds may also help to pay for childcare, transportation, and rent while in school. The court must have established dependency between ages 16 and 19. The California Department of Social Services will verify eligibility status.

When filling out the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), former and current students in foster care should indicate they were a dependent/ward of the court, were in foster care, or were in a legal guardianship in order to qualify for the maximum amount of aid. <https://www.chafee.csac.ca.gov/default.asp>

## **INDEPENDENT LIVING SERVICES**

Youth may be eligible for Independent Living Program (ILP) services through various county agencies depending on their status. These ILP services may include: Life Skills, Transitional Housing, and Scholarship assistance. If they are ILP eligible, they should have a Transitional Independent Living Plan by age 16.

If the youth qualifies for special education services, they should have an Individual Transition Plan. In addition, if they are transition age youth (16-25 years) they may be eligible for services through the Department of Mental Health under the full service partnership, funded by the Mental Health Services Act. Public Counsel has prepared a comprehensive manual, ABC's of Transition and the Independent Living Program, available at <http://www.publiccounsel.org/publications?id=0042>

*The California Foster Youth Education Task Force is a coalition of organizations dedicated to improving educational outcomes for foster youth. For more information, please visit our website at [www.cfyef.org](http://www.cfyef.org) or contact Mia Stizzo at [mia.stizzo@cfpic.org](mailto:mia.stizzo@cfpic.org).*

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