

College Decision Day: What School Professionals Need to Know to Support Youth in Foster Care

While the majority of youth in foster care want to attend college or postsecondary training, they face many challenges to make this a reality. Yet, there are a lot of financial resources and supports for youth in foster care that can impact the decision to attend college. **Below are facts and tips for school-based professionals to help support young people in foster care make the best decisions about going to college and which college or postsecondary program to attend.**

Fast Facts

- **Some youth in foster care will not have a parent or strong support network to help them make the college decision and will greatly benefit from your support and expertise.** Your help could be to connect them with supports like **the college bound and support programs unit**, an agency **education specialist**, or a caseworker.
- **The Administration for Children’s Services (ACS) has a College Bound & Support Programs Unit.** They can help you understand what financial and other supports are available for youth who want to attend higher education and training. These supports can have a big impact on the decision to go to college. **Contacts:**
Sonia Gonzalez, Executive Director, (212) 676-9519, sonia.gonzalez@acs.nyc.gov
Shirley Fonseca, Program Coordinator, (212) 676-6526, Shirley.Fonseca@acs.nyc.gov
- **Each community based agency serving youth in foster care has an education specialist.** This person can help you support students and will benefit from your expertise in navigating the higher education world.
- **Youth in foster care are eligible for an array of financial assistance and other support, but may need your help to access them.** Here are some examples of financial assistance and benefits:
 - **Youth who were in foster care or wards of the court at age 13 or older are “independent” for the purposes of the FAFSA. (Question 53 on the FAFSA).** They do not need to report any parental income even if they were adopted or reunified. Foster parents, kinship caregivers or guardians do **not** have to report their income on the FAFSA of a youth in foster care.
 - **The Chafee Education and Training Voucher (ETV) provides up to \$5000 per year** for youth who are or were in foster care when they were age 16 or older. Eligible youth include: youth who are system involved as PINs and youth receiving services at the Evening Reporting Centers. Youth who were adopted or placed in a guardianship when they were age 16 or older are also eligible. **Contact:** Foster Care to Success for more information: <https://www.fc2success.org/>
 - **The Foster Youth College Success Initiative (FYCSI) provides tuition and fees, meals and housing, books, school supplies, transportation, tutoring, academic supports, and personal expenses at many schools in NY. In most cases, the program is provided through the school’s EOP program, but students may still be eligible even if they are not in EOP.** For info on how to apply see the Tips section below.
- **ACS provides additional services and supports to help youth meet their housing and other financial needs during college.** Here are a few:
 - Youth can **stay in foster care until age 21**—and in some cases until age 23-- and can stay living in a foster home or other placement.
 - **Fostering College Success Initiative (FCSI) Dorm Project at CUNY** provides year-round dorm housing and an array of supports to full-time students attending any CUNY school. **Applications for the dorm project open around November of each year (and close in February of the following year)** and can be found at: www.dormproject.org.
 - **ACS Fostering College Success (“FCS”) stipend program** provides a monthly stipend to any student in foster care in New York City who lives on campus, in approved off-campus, or non-foster home housing. **Contact:** Sonia Gonzalez, Sonia.Gonzalez@acs.nyc.gov & Shirley Fonesca, Shirley.Fonseca@acs.nyc.gov

Tips

- **Let youth know they can talk to you about their foster care status.** You can do this by hanging up posters and materials about the benefits and supports listed above and celebrating foster care month.
- **Connect with the youth’s education specialist at their foster care agency so you can work together to support the youth in making the decision about the right college to attend.** Child welfare education specialists will know about the financial and non-financial supports available for youth in foster care and will benefit from your expertise about college access and decision-making. **Contact:** Shirley Fonseca, Shirley.Fonseca@acs.nyc.gov for contact info for agency education specialists.
- **Help youth build and identify a support network at the college or training program they decide to attend.** Some youth in foster care may not be going to college with a support network in place and this can be the source of a lot of fear and anxiety for youth. Helping a youth build this network and identify supports at schools they are considering is vital. The youth’s casework team should be doing this, but you will add great value to this team given your great knowledge of the postsecondary world.
- **Help youth get documentation of their foster care status.** Youth need documentation of their time in foster care for financial aid and other student support programs. **Contact:** Shirley.Fonseca@acs.nyc.gov at the College Bound & Support Programs Unit if you are having problems getting verification.
- **Help youth sign up to be an iFoster member.** The free membership to iFoster includes access to a portal that provides information about many things, including making decisions about college, getting support, and financial aid. Help youth become a member by going here: <https://portal.ifoster.org/Registration.aspx>. Guidance and college counselors and teachers can also join as “agencies” to learn more about resources for youth in foster care. **Contact:** Jill Bloch, jill@ifoster.org.
- **Help youth understand the potential costs of attending for-profit schools.** Youth in foster care are at high risk for being [targeted by for-profit schools](#). Educate youth about the risks and costs and support them in exploring other schools that may provide the same credentials at less cost and provide more support services.
- **Help youth apply for the Foster Youth College Success Initiative Program at schools in New York.**
 - Students should apply for the FYCSI program by applying to the EOP program on their application for admissions or by completing the supplemental application. There is no separate application for FYCSI.
General FYCSI Contact: FYSA@childrensaidnyc.org
CUNY Contact: Shirley DePena, Director of Youth Matter, Shirley.depena@cuny.edu
SUNY Contact: Osei Agyeman, FYCSI Coordinator, Osei.Agyeman@suny.edu
Private College/University Contact: Contact the HEOP office at each private school
 - **If youth are not eligible for EOP, they still may be eligible for FYCSI financial support.** Help youth contact the school’s financial aid office and ask to apply for FYCSI. **Also help them to email the department of education at KIAP@nysed.gov** and ask to apply.
- **Assist youth in foster care who may have experienced barriers to applying to college apply to colleges and universities with late or rolling application deadlines:**
 - The CUNY fall 2018 application is still available, with applications being reviewed on a rolling basis. Click [here](#) for more information.
 - For additional schools still accepting applications, click [here](#).
- Meet with student to make sure their college and financial aid applications are **complete and help them follow up** with colleges to check on the status of applications.

Thank You for Being an Advocate for Higher Education Success for Youth in Foster Care!

For More Information, Please Contact: The Administration for Children’s Services College Bound & Support Programs Unit, Sonia Gonzalez, Executive Director, sonia.gonzalez@acs.nyc.gov & Shirley Fonseca, Program Coordinator, Shirley.Fonseca@acs.nyc.gov