

Postsecondary Support for Students Who Have Been in Foster Care

Graduating from college or trade school is an important goal for many young people, including youth and young adults who have experienced foster care.¹ A college degree can help people secure well-paying, stable employment and attain self-sufficiency and financial security in life. However, students who have been in foster care may find it difficult to manage their education, finances, housing, and other responsibilities without support.

Colleges and universities across the country are now recognizing the need for programs to support students who have experienced foster care. These programs provide financial assistance, tutoring, counseling, and academic advisement to increase students' success and sense of belonging on campus.

¹ For the remainder of this publication, the term "college" is used to refer to any type of postsecondary institution, including colleges, universities, trade schools, and other programs.

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This bulletin outlines ways that campus-based support programs can assist students as they enroll in, attend, and graduate from college. It also includes examples of these programs from across the country. Child welfare agency leaders, college administrators, high school guidance counselors, and others can read this bulletin to learn about barriers to postsecondary school success, explore supports and services that can help students, and find examples of campus-based programs designed to increase educational attainment and opportunities for youth and young adults who have experienced foster care.

More About Foster Care

Children thrive when they can live safely with their families in their communities. However, when parents or guardians require support and assistance to overcome challenges, children may temporarily enter out-of-home care. There are different types of out-of-home care, such as foster care, which refers to care from a nonrelative; kinship care, which refers to care from a relative or close family friend; and congregate care, which is a less-preferred option that refers to care in a group home or residential facility. In this publication, we use “foster care” to indicate any type of out-of-home care, as is often done conversationally.

Although the goal of child welfare intervention is family reunification, some young people may remain in out-of-home care until age 18. Some States offer programs, including extended foster care for those over age 18, to help these young people transition to adulthood. Learn more about the experiences of young people with backgrounds in foster care through the following resources:

- [Foster Care](#)
- [Kinship Care](#)
- [Extension of Foster Care Beyond Age 18](#)
- Videos from young adults formerly in foster care:
 - [“Having the Right People Ask the Right Questions”](#)
 - [“Your Past Doesn’t Dictate Your Future”](#)

STUDENTS WITH FOSTER CARE EXPERIENCE NEED SUPPORT

Youth and young people who have experienced foster care often face challenges accessing and succeeding in college. For example, they have experienced trauma, including the trauma of being removed from their family of origin (Lietz & Cheung, 2022). Trauma also may come from the uncertainty caused by living in multiple foster homes, attending multiple schools, and experiencing the complex emotions associated with every transition. This trauma can impact a young person's

emotional well-being and academic achievement. Many youth and young adults have the support of parents or other family members to help them make the challenging transition into adulthood. However, those who have experienced foster care may have limited social, emotional, and financial support during this transition (Cheung et al., 2021).

Higher education can equip young adults with the skills, resources, and experiences necessary to succeed in the workforce and achieve long-term financial security. But youth who have experienced foster care may have had multiple foster care placements requiring them to change homes and schools repeatedly, which can impact academic success, and as a result, they may feel academically unprepared. The unique and complex challenges they face create a constellation of risk factors that can hinder their success in college and beyond. Youth who have been in foster care are less likely to graduate from high school than youth in the general population, with an average graduation rate of 56 percent compared with 87 percent in 2019–2020 (U.S. Department of Education, 2021). They are also less likely to enroll in and graduate from college with only 8 to 12 percent of youth earning a 2- or 4-year degree by their mid to late 20s compared to 49 percent of adults in the general population (Okpych, 2022; Day et al., 2021).

Fostering the Future: Federal Support for Youth

The Executive order, [Fostering the Future for American Children and Families](#), aims to promote long-term self-sufficiency for youth who have been in foster care. The initiative prioritizes the development of educational, vocational, and financial supports, and is designed to equip youth in or transitioning out of the foster care system with resources and opportunities for long-term success. Key elements include developing an online platform that connects young people with housing, career, financial, training, and personalized supports; increasing flexibility in the [Education and Training Voucher Program](#); facilitating tax-credit scholarships; and reallocating Federal funds to improve outcomes for youth.

HOW CAMPUS SUPPORT PROGRAMS CAN HELP

Students with foster care experience who attend college may benefit from financial aid and support services such as academic advisement, mental health services, housing assistance, employment assistance, access to affordable child care, and other supports. In response to greater awareness about the unique needs of and potential challenges faced by students who have experienced foster care, a growing number of colleges across the country are developing campus-based support programs to assist these students with navigating the college experience and to improve their sense of belonging. These programs offer wraparound services and supports tailored to the unique needs of young adults who have experienced foster care. They are designed to help address the

achievement gaps impacting this population and to increase the recruitment and retention of young people with a background in foster care in postsecondary education. Providing academic, social, emotional, financial, residential, and other types of supports is an important step in addressing barriers to postsecondary success for these students. The students can benefit from campus support programs, as well as supportive campus liaisons and other school professionals, which can address academic and nonacademic barriers that impede educational attainment.

Campus support programs seek to increase equitable access to postsecondary education for youth and young people with lived experience in foster care. They provide information about navigating college and help students cultivate critical life skills for self-sufficiency, such as problem-solving and goal setting. The programs also satisfy students' desire to be part of a community with their peers who share similar life experiences. Although the programs are unique to each institution and provide varied supports and services, they all intend to promote positive experiences in college for young people who have been in foster care and to help equip them to graduate and succeed after higher education. For more on the outcomes of campus support programs, read the "Examples of Campus Support Programs" section of this bulletin.

Precollege Programs

Precollege programs at postsecondary institutions nationwide seek to give high school students real-life exposure to the campus experience through a summer college program. The programs are important for youth who have experienced foster care as they can help students prepare for their upcoming transition to college and can prevent "summer melt," which happens when students who were accepted into college do not attend college in the fall. Summer melt is more likely to happen to low-income students who may not obtain financial aid or who do not have support from family and friends encouraging higher education and helping with the application process (Strategic Data Project, n.d.).

Precollege programs are often offered to rising high school juniors or seniors or to recent graduates. Students generally do not need to have applied to or been accepted to the host college to participate in its program. Participants can live on campus in residence halls, attend classes, receive academic tutoring and counseling services, and become more comfortable and familiar with college life. This exposure helps students realize that attaining a college degree is a realistic possibility. Students also participate in social and academic activities in which they learn skills to help them become more self-sufficient and prepared for postsecondary education.

CONSIDERATIONS WHEN IMPLEMENTING A CAMPUS SUPPORT PROGRAM

Campus support programs should be designed to address the unique needs of students with foster care experience. They should engage young people in tailored, individualized services to help them overcome systemic barriers and build support networks to achieve postsecondary success (Piel et al., 2019). This section describes some [steps and strategies](#) for developing or sustaining a campus support program.

SUPPORT MENTAL HEALTH

Because [challenges associated with mental health](#) and trauma are often a barrier to postsecondary educational success, strengths-based mental health supports should be an important component of campus-based programs for students who have experienced foster care. Without access to trauma-informed counseling, some students may not succeed in college despite benefitting from other services provided by campus-based support programs (Lietz & Cheung, 2022). Taking a trauma-informed approach means that program staff and counselors recognize that student behaviors, feelings, and emotions can be a result of past trauma. As a result, trauma is validated, and a safe space is created for students to share their experiences without judgment. Programs can be more trauma responsive by ensuring the physical, social, and emotional safety of young people; promoting transparency and building trust between students and program staff; listening to and engaging with all participants; and teaching and modeling healthy relationship behaviors (Center on Child Wellbeing and Trauma, n.d.). Programs can also serve students by connecting them with available and affordable mental health supports both on and off campus. Explore additional tips to help [promote youth and young adult mental health and wellness](#).

CONNECT YOUNG PEOPLE TO SUPPORTIVE ADULTS AND PEERS

Encouragement and support from trusted adults and peers at a campus-based program can help eliminate barriers to education. These trusted relationships may be with mentors, coaches, counselors, professors, or others. Young people need ongoing support from caring adults, and students can especially benefit if that adult understands foster care and higher education. To build relationships, program staff and counselors should consider each student's background to better understand them and their behaviors (Lee et al., 2021). Caring adults in the young person's support network should learn how to [support them](#) through relationships. Youth and young adults can learn more about healthy relationship skills, such as communication, conflict resolution, and the importance of maintaining healthy family, peer, and network relationships. Connections with positive adult or peer mentors can help young people learn the social and emotional skills needed to navigate the complexities of college life (Opportunity Now, 2020). [Mentoring](#) may be particularly crucial for youth and young adults who have experienced homelessness, been involved with the justice system, or been victims of child abuse and neglect, violence, or discrimination. The residual effects of trauma affect how young people process setbacks, and young people need programs that can help build relationships that offer encouragement and support.

OFFER FINANCIAL SUPPORT

Tuition assistance can make a substantial difference for young people with limited financial resources. Campus support program developers can consider offering a scholarship as part of their program to attract potential students who might not otherwise apply to their school. Additionally, students with foster care experience face a much higher rate of basic needs insecurity—food and housing insecurity as well as homelessness—than students with no foster care experience (78 percent to 57 percent) (The Hope Center for College, Community, and Justice, 2021). They may also need nontuition financial supports, such as housing assistance, free meal plans, help with school supplies such as laptops or textbooks, assistance for car insurance or other transportation expenses, on-campus employment opportunities, and other related supports. The Urban Institute's [Foster Care, Postsecondary Education, and the Need for Financial Aid](#) provides more details about foster care, postsecondary education, and financial aid.

INCORPORATE YOUTH VOICE

Program administrators should [involve young people](#) in shaping campus support programs for students who have experienced foster care. Programs should engage young people in the design of programs and services that affect their lives, elevating their voices and providing the opportunity to participate in decision-making processes. In general, programs developed in partnership with youth are more likely to be effective at engaging young people. Supporting and integrating youth voice may include asking young people for their input, providing opportunities for them to make decisions through peer staff positions, and soliciting feedback through surveys, meetings, or student advisory boards. Youth and young adults involved in these partnerships can create important connections that can help them develop leadership skills, strengthen their self-efficacy and sense of empowerment, and improve relationship building skills (Opportunity Now, 2020).

FOSTER INDEPENDENCE AND ENHANCE SELF-DETERMINATION

The instability faced by young people who have experienced foster care, along with disruptions in personal relationships, may have hindered their ability to develop the skills necessary for independence and self-determination in adulthood. Program activities can be designed to help students recognize their strengths, build their sense of identity and sense of belonging in a community, and [build independence](#). For example, campus support programs can help students [learn financial literacy](#) and [money management tips for college students](#).

Program staff can advocate for students as they help them achieve their personal goals. However, they should be intentional about when to intervene, respecting students' self-determination and ability to problem-solve (Lee et al., 2021). For more information about supporting youth as they transition to adulthood, visit Information Gateway's [Independent Living and Transitioning From Foster Care webpage](#).

OFFER ACCOMMODATIONS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Children living with foster families have higher rates of certain chronic health conditions and developmental disabilities, including anxiety, behavioral disorders, developmental delays, and speech and language disorders, than children living with biological or adoptive families (Bilaver et al., 2020). To be more inclusive of all students, including students with health conditions, college programs should make sure students receive the proper screenings and assessments to identify any conditions that may require accommodations and help students secure them. To learn more, you can read Child Trends' [Children and Youth With Special Health Care Needs in Foster Care](#).

DEVELOP PARTNERSHIPS AND BUILD RELATIONSHIPS

Campus-based support programs can develop community and campus partnerships to enhance their services. Having institutional support—financial and otherwise—is essential to any campus support program's sustainability. It also signals that the college or university is committed to helping program participants succeed. Campus support programs also can partner with other student offices, such as counseling, housing, and financial aid, to plan and coordinate services (Lee et al., 2021). They also can collaborate with academic departments, such as social work and psychology, to build relationships with faculty, staff, and graduate students who are knowledgeable about foster care. These departments can offer training related to the needs of and challenges faced by students with foster care backgrounds. In addition, developing and maintaining relationships with high school guidance counselors and other precollege academic partners can help spread the word about the program's mission and recruit new students.

OTHER POSTSECONDARY SUPPORTS

Campus-based support programs complement other available resources to assist youth and young adults who have experienced foster care and promote their transition to adulthood. Campus support programs can direct the students they support to these programs as needed.

TUITION AND FEE WAIVERS

Many States offer [tuition and fee waivers](#) for students who have experienced foster care. Research the types of tuition assistance programs available in your State.

INDEPENDENT LIVING

Independent living programs, often funded in part through the Federal [John H. Chafee Program for Successful Transition to Adulthood](#) (Chafee program), are in every State and county. They provide services and supports to youth and young adults in foster care to help them make a successful transition to adulthood. Chafee program funds may aid youth and young adults in pursuing postsecondary education or vocational training. Specific services and supports are determined by State and local child welfare agencies and are often based on the individual needs of the young person.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING VOUCHER PROGRAM

The Education and Training Voucher (ETV) program, which is part of the Chafee program, helps all States and Tribes provide financial resources to help meet the postsecondary education and training needs of young people who have aged out of foster care or who left foster care after age 16 through kinship guardianship or adoption.² Eligible students may receive grants of up to \$5,000 per year for up to 5 years or until their 26th birthday. Contact your [State's independent living coordinator or ETV program coordinator](#) to see if a student is eligible. ETVs have been found to increase the enrollment and success in postsecondary educational programs of youth and young adults currently or formerly in foster care (Hanson et al., 2023).

FREE APPLICATION FOR FEDERAL STUDENT AID (FAFSA)

The [FAFSA](#) form is the main way for prospective and current college students to apply for student aid, such as Federal and State grants, work-study funds, and public loans. If a young person was in foster care after their 13th birthday and can provide documentation of their foster care status, they could be eligible to receive funding to help pay for college. Because foster youth and young adults are considered independent students, they do not have to report any financial information about biological parents, foster parents, or other guardians. The only financial information they need to report is their own. Information regarding their income and household size do not need to be included.

SCHOLARSHIPS

Many scholarships are available for students who have been in foster care. Colleges often offer their own scholarships, and youth and young adults also can connect with local organizations for young people who have been in foster care. There are also websites not affiliated with any particular school that list potential opportunities, such as [Scholarships.com](#).

SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (SNAP)

SNAP is a Federal program that can provide food assistance to college students who meet [eligibility requirements](#). Through the program, eligible students receive an Electronic Benefits Transfer card, which is used like any other debit card at the grocery store. The money comes from a SNAP account.

TEMPORARY ASSISTANCE FOR NEEDY FAMILIES

Students with children may count college attendance towards their work requirements for this [Federal aid program](#) in many States. Eligible recipients receive monthly cash payments and other services to promote self-sufficiency, such as help with child care.

² "Aging out of foster care" means that a child is leaving the foster care system without a legal adoptive family. When a young person reaches a certain age (typically 18), they are considered legally independent.

EXAMPLES OF PRECOLLEGE AND CAMPUS SUPPORT PROGRAMS

There are many campus support programs available throughout the country. The following are examples of [campus support](#) and precollege programs across the country working to increase educational attainment and opportunities for youth and young adults who have experienced foster care.

STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK (SUNY)

Foster Youth College Success Initiative

The [Foster Youth College Success Initiative](#) (FYCSI) provides financial assistance and other supports to students who have experienced foster care in New York State. FYCSI funding can be used towards tuition and academic fees, meals, housing, books and supplies, transportation, tutoring, and personal expenses. The initiative operates as part of SUNY's [Educational Opportunity Program](#) (EOP), which supports academically underprepared students and those from families experiencing poverty. Participants in EOP receive on-campus academic and career advising, tutoring, and counseling from enrollment through graduation. The program also provides financial assistance for textbooks and school supplies. EOP also offers a precollege summer program to help students in foster care make a smooth transition to college. During the summer program, incoming students are introduced to campus-based academic support services. They are assigned a college counselor and attend daily classes and tutoring to help prepare them for the transition to higher education. The program has served over 1,100 students in FYCSI across more than 100 public and private colleges and universities throughout New York State.

Outcomes: FYCSI recipients have higher retention rates than comparable students not enrolled in the program. They are also more likely to reenroll from their first to second year in college than Pell Grant recipients, underrepresented minority groups, and SUNY students overall (Fostering Youth Success Alliance, 2024).

UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA

National Social Work Enrichment Program

Since 2010, the [National Social Work Enrichment Program](#) (NSEP) has offered a precollege program for 16-year-old students in foster care. The program at the University of Alabama includes a 6-week summer camp experience funded by the Chafee program. The students live on campus and work on college readiness, employment skill development, leadership, and healthy relationships. The college readiness component includes several hours of classroom workshops on topics such as completing college applications, financing college, finding housing, and using academic support services. The students participate in weekly tours of nearly 20 public community, technical, and 4-year colleges and universities across the State. Students participate 3 days per week in a paid internship experience with community-based agencies.

Outcomes: The precollege program has served over 300 Alabama young adults in foster care with the goal of increasing high school graduation rates and the number of students from foster care enrolling in college. A qualitative study was conducted about youth who completed the program within 5 years. Fourteen youths participated in detailed semistructured interviews. Like many youth transitioning from foster care, NSEP participants expressed aspirations to attend college. Students in NSEP reported increased self-efficacy, decision-making skills, and interpersonal skills after program completion. NSEP participants asserted that they felt more prepared for college due to the summer precollege experience. Building a sense of community emerged as a common theme as youth discussed how their experiences led to the development of lifelong friendships. Finally, participants voiced an increased sense of efficacy in several areas after participating in the program. For example, they felt more confident in navigating a college campus, sharing their feelings and interacting with others, and practicing public speaking skills. Participation changed youth perspectives about college, with more youth believing in the possibilities of college (Jackson et al., 2022).

VIRGINIA (STATEWIDE)

Great Expectations

The [Great Expectations program](#) serves students in foster care and previously in foster care enrolled at 23 community colleges in Virginia. The program pairs each student with an adult coach to assist with career research, college applications and planning, scholarship applications, transportation for school and work, and more. The Great Expectations coach serves as an adult role model in the youth or young person's life. Coaches provide relational support that helps students make a healthy and lasting transition to higher education and self-sufficiency.

The program also offers tutoring, career coaching, life skills training, financial planning, and peer mentoring to help students succeed in college and beyond. The [Virginia Tuition Grant for Foster Youth](#) is an additional award for eligible applicants not already receiving sufficient grant funds to pay their tuition and fees. Tuition grants can also be used for noncredit workforce programs. In this case, students will not need to complete the FAFSA but will need to contact the college's workforce division to determine eligibility.

Outcomes: Since Great Expectations' inception, more than 1,200 degrees, diplomas, or certificates have been awarded to close to 900 students from Virginia's community colleges and other colleges and universities. More than 30 percent of all eligible young people who have experienced foster care in Virginia receive services through Great Expectations (Great Expectations, n.d.).

FLORIDA (STATEWIDE)

Positive Pathways

[Positive Pathways](#), established in 2015, is a statewide association of campus- and community-based professionals who help youth and young adults who have experienced foster care achieve success in college and graduate with a degree. The program's vision is that all students who have experienced foster care or homelessness have an opportunity to reach their highest potential through education and community support.

Youth and young adults who have experienced foster care or homelessness may qualify for free college tuition and fee exemptions at public postsecondary institutions in Florida through the age of 28. The Positive Pathways program has helped increase the number of students from foster care who have utilized the tuition and fee exemption by creating an informed and engaged group of professionals on college and university campuses and in communities across the State. These professionals help youth to become college-ready and assist with housing, mental health, and life skills to prepare students for success in higher education. Nine campus-based programs focus on students who have experienced foster care across Florida. As of academic year (AY) 2022–23, 5,288 students have utilized the Department of Children and Families tuition and fee exemption, and 1,168 students have utilized the homeless tuition and fee exemption. These students are served by campus support programs with 28 [State college liaisons](#) and 12 university foster liaisons and college coaches. Positive Pathways also hosts an annual conference (J. Moore, personal communication, Oct. 15, 2024).

Outcomes: The Florida Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability released a [report](#) that focused, in part, on the work of postsecondary campus-based foster care liaisons, many of whom are part of the Positive Pathways program. The report stated that the number of students using tuition waivers in Florida increased from 940 in AY 2016–17, when Positive Pathways began, to 1,458 in AY 2020–21, a 55-percent increase. The number of students using the Department of Children and Family waiver at Florida College System institutions increased from 3,701 in AY 2016–17 to 4,375 in AY 2019–20, an 18-percent increase. The number of students with foster care experience attending an institution with a campus-based support program increased from 905 in AY 2013–14 to 3,042 in AY 2020–21, a 236-percent increase (Florida Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability, 2022).

UNIVERSITIES OF WISCONSIN

Fostering Success

The Universities of Wisconsin offer the [Fostering Success](#) program, which aims to promote equity in college access and success for youth and young adults who have experienced foster care or homelessness, across 13 campuses. The 2022–23 academic year was the first full year the State funded the program. The program offers individualized guidance on campus and resources

to support students as they pursue a postsecondary education. The program offers academic assistance; a community of support and mentorship; free resources, including school supplies, food, and household and hygiene supplies; emergency funds; and work-study positions in Fostering Success offices. Students are also provided opportunities for leadership and advocacy on campus as well as emotional support. By addressing the unique needs and obstacles faced by youth and young adults formerly in foster care, the Fostering Success program increases their chances of obtaining a college degree and achieving success in the future.

Outcomes: At participating universities during the 2022–23 academic year, 492 total students were identified as eligible for Fostering Success programs, with just over half of those engaging in services (Universities of Wisconsin Fostering Success Programs, 2023). The program tracks a variety of data, including grade point average and semester-to-semester retention, and will follow students over time.

UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT SAN ANTONIO

Fostering Futures

The [Fostering Futures Program](#) supports students who have experienced foster care and helps them achieve their goals in higher education and beyond. The program's mission is to support college students through coaching, connections to resources on campus and in the community, and a sense of belonging. The program offers campus coaching to help students develop academic and life skills to help them succeed. The campus coach schedules weekly office hours to provide trauma-informed services. Additional supports and benefits include peer support, child care assistance, emergency funds, a food pantry, school supplies, clothing vouchers, a study space, and more.

The Fostering Futures Program offers a supervised, on-campus independent living program for students in extended foster care. The housing program allows students to use their tuition and fee waiver from the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services to live on campus and cover the costs of housing and meal plans. Participants also receive a monthly stipend to put toward living expenses.

Outcomes: Since the program's inception in 2019, the total enrollment of students at the university with a history of foster care has more than doubled. More than \$50,000 in emergency funds have been given to students, and students who engage in the Fostering Futures Program are 12 percent more likely to persist at the university compared with students with a history of foster care who did not participate in the program (Fostering Futures Program, 2022).

CALIFORNIA (STATEWIDE)

NextUp

[NextUp](#) is a statewide program in California that provides resources to community college students who have experienced foster care to help them overcome challenges and succeed in higher education. There are 115 participating community colleges throughout the State. Several times a semester, NextUp offers participating students access to a counselor who can help with college planning, academic advisement, career planning, life and financial skills, mental health services, and more. NextUp also provides financial assistance for books and supplies, help with child care, emergency housing, food assistance, health services, transportation assistance, and tutoring. The California Budget Act of 2022–23 increased funding for the NextUp program from \$20 million annually to \$50 million. (The University of California [UC] system also has a support program for young people in or formerly in foster care that offers guidance, counseling, academic advising, housing, financial aid, and other supports. For more information, visit the [UC website](#).)

Outcomes: NextUp students have been successful in completing their credit and transfer-level English and math courses. In the 2021–22 school year, 64 percent of students enrolled in credit English classes completed their courses, compared with 54 percent in the previous school year, and 61 percent completed their credit math courses, compared with 58 percent in the previous school year. Students also successfully completed transfer-level English and math courses at higher rates than the previous academic year (California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office, 2024).

WASHINGTON (STATEWIDE)

Passport to Careers

The [Passport to Careers](#) scholarship program was founded in 2009 by the State of Washington to help students who have experienced foster care, as well as unaccompanied homeless youth, overcome barriers to attending, persisting through, and succeeding in college. Participants in the program receive scholarships to help make college more affordable and are offered advising for academic, career, financial, and social matters. Scholarship funds can be used for tuition, fees, books, housing, transportation, and some personal expenses. Students in the program meet with staff regularly to set and discuss their personal goals and progress toward meeting them. Students also take part in biweekly advising meetings throughout their first year in college to help them develop time management skills and a study schedule and create a 4-year graduation plan. Services and support are available to Passport students at participating colleges and universities across Washington State.

The [College Success Foundation](#), which manages and administers a variety of scholarships to help students overcome financial barriers to attend college, provides peer mentors called Passport Navigators to students at campuses with high numbers of Passport-enrolled students. The foundation offers training to staff at colleges and other student-serving organizations at the annual

Passport Conference and Regional Summits. The Passport to Careers program also helps youth and young adults who have experienced foster care prepare for and succeed in college, apprenticeships, or preapprenticeship programs. Funds can cover tuition, class fees, and occupational costs, such as work clothes and tools.

Outcomes: Since its start in 2009, the Passport to Careers program has provided scholarships and incentive funds to 3,022 students in the State of Washington, including 920 students during the 2021–22 academic year (Nathanson et al., 2024). Seventy-one postsecondary institutions across the State have participated in the program at some point, ranging from 42 to 63 in any single year.

CONCLUSION

Despite the challenges they have faced, youth and young adults who have experienced foster care demonstrate determination and resilience. It is important to provide these youth, young people, and supportive adults with the resources needed to achieve stability and independence. With the right resources and opportunities, students who have been in foster care can be successful in college. Reducing obstacles that make it difficult for these students to access and complete postsecondary education has value for students at colleges and universities across the country. Postsecondary support programs are designed to promote students' academic success, offer support services and experiences that encourage active participation in campus life, and provide career development skills to help students succeed in college and life. These programs can nurture students' long-term success and transform their lives. Programs should consider incorporating mental health supports, financial assistance, adult and peer mentors, life skills education, and more. Programs should engage youth and young adults during program creation and beyond.

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