TURNING DREAMS INTO DEGREES

College Resources and Support for Foster Youth

December 19, 2017

John Burton Advocates for Youth

John Burton Advocates for Youth is a statewide non-profit organization based in San Francisco, working to improve the quality of life for California’s foster, former foster, and homeless youth.

John Burton Advocates for Youth works in three areas: education, housing and health.

Go to our website to learn more & sign up for our newsletter: www.jbaforyouth.org
Why College?

Understanding what is at stake for our youth
Education Pays Off

Education Pays Off in Other Ways...

- Lower rates of incarceration
- Improved health outcomes
- Higher levels of civic participation, including voting
- Greater likelihood of one’s children attending college
- Increased career satisfaction
College Aspirations vs. College Realities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Want to go to college</th>
<th>Enroll in college</th>
<th>Complete 2 or 4 year degree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Academic Preparation for College

English Language Arts proficiency, as measured by performance on California state standardized exams.

- 24% of the general population is proficient.
- 35% of the economically disadvantaged population is proficient.
- 50% of the foster youth population is proficient.
Foster youth are 4 times more likely than their peers to change schools in a given school year.

Nearly 1 in 5 foster youth has a disability, twice the rate of the general population.

15% of foster youth attend the lowest performing 10% of California schools, compared to just 10% of the general population.

Why this gap in academic preparation?

Other challenges unique to foster youth:

- Inadequate housing
- Lack of financial resources
- Frequent changes in home and school leave youth unprepared
- Impact of trauma on the brain
- Lack of adult role models
- Lack of information about higher education, financial aid, support resources etc.
Student Perspectives
Brendan Doyle & Daniella Lafoya

Choosing a College Pathway
Understanding available higher education options
## Finding Your Best Fit

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of College</th>
<th>Example</th>
<th>Known For...</th>
<th>Watch Out For...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community College</td>
<td>East Los Angeles College</td>
<td>Affordable option for a 2-year degree, certificate and CTE programs, or a transfer path to a 4-year institution</td>
<td>Remediation delays, unclear educational goals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>California State University</td>
<td>CSU Northridge</td>
<td>Affordable option for a 4-year degree, especially in fields like teaching and nursing</td>
<td>Large classes, challenges for commuter students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of California</td>
<td>UCLA</td>
<td>4-year degree from institutions with world-class faculty and research facilities</td>
<td>Higher tuition and non-tuition costs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private, nonprofit college or university</td>
<td>USC</td>
<td>Some private schools have religious affiliation, may offer small classes</td>
<td>High tuition costs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Out-of-State School</td>
<td>Arizona State University</td>
<td>Provides a new environment, may offer unique programs or generous financial aid</td>
<td>Culture shock, may have high tuition costs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proprietary, vocational, or trade school</td>
<td>ITT Tech</td>
<td>Career and technical education</td>
<td>Higher tuition costs, unclear or spotty employment outcomes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A note about Career & Technical Ed

Tools for Exploring Career Paths

- Learn what the cost of living is in your community and what you need to earn using the Living Wage Calculator: livingwage.mit.edu
- Take a career assessment, explore careers, and find California Community College programs with My Path: www.cccmypath.org
- Explore the real earnings of California Community College graduates, by program type using Salary Surfer: salariesurfer.cccco.edu
Educational Planning Milestones

Foster Youth Educational Planning Guide

- Step-by-step information on how to prepare and apply to college
- Can be found at www.cacollegepathways.org/resources-reports/college-planning-resources/
Benefits When Applying to College
Supporting youth with application and enrollment

Applying to Community College

• Apply at [www.cccapply.org](http://www.cccapply.org)
• Encourage youth to check off the “foster youth” box to get connected to resources
• Apply for support programs early, such as EOPS & CAFYES (if applicable)
• Take advantage of Priority Registration

Start the process early!
Priority Registration

Allows a student to register early so they can get into courses they need

Eligibility requirement for priority registration at community college and CSU’s expanded with SB 906:

- Effective January 1, 2017 eligibility requirement expanded to foster youth who were in foster care on or after their 16th birthday & under the age of 26.

3 Steps for Priority Registration - AB 595 (2013)

1. Participate in Orientation
2. Complete the Assessment Process
3. Develop an Education Plan

Contact your college to learn more about the process or go to www.stepforward.cccco.edu
Tips for Applying to a Community College

- Be aware of deadlines, which vary by school
- Start the process early
- Can be difficult to find all of this information online, may need to call or go in person
- Get connected to the FYSI Foster Youth Liaison and/or Foster youth campus support programs in the beginning of the process
- Meet with an EOPS counselor to get help with your Education Plan, if possible

Applying to a CSU or UC

- Application Fee Waiver at Up to 4 Campuses
- Priority Access to On-Campus Housing AB 1393 (2009)
- Priority Registration SB 906 (2016)

Note- CSU’s that have student housing open during school breaks are required to give first priority to current and former foster youth. UC’s are "requested" to do so for FY who are otherwise eligible for a particular campus housing facility
Residency status- AB 669 (2009)

- Allows colleges and universities to grant resident status to foster youth under the age of 19 who were residing out of state as a dependent or ward under California’s child welfare system.

Resources to Succeed in College

Accessing campus resources at community college and 4-year universities.
Foster Youth Success Initiative (FYSI)

- At least one FYSI Liaison for foster youth is at each of the 113 California community college campuses.
- Often housed in the financial aid office

Foster Youth Campus Support Programs

- Campus advocate
  - one-stop center
- Support specific to foster youth
  - Financial workshops, partnerships
- Community connect with others with similar experience; share resources; feel normal
- Resources specific to foster youth
  - cash and other assistance to fill the gaps

- Various names: Guardian Scholars, Renaissance Scholars Program, etc.
- Program services & eligibility criteria can vary
- Found at most community colleges, CSU’s, UC’s and some private schools
Extended Opportunity Programs & Services

NextUp, also known as CAFYES-SB 2013 (2014)

**Students must be:**
- Under age 26
- In foster care on or after their 16th birthday
- Enrolled in at least 9 units
- Also apply for EOPS

- Academic and personal counseling; Emotional support
- Books & supplies
- Seminars & workshops
- Meal cards, bus passes, gas cards
- Tutoring
- Cultural events
- Agency and community referrals
General Campus Resources & Supports

- CalWorks & CARE
- Counseling & Psychological Services
- Food Assistance
- Tutoring
- Student Disability Services

www.cacollegepathways.org

Find FYSI Liaisons, Campus Support Program, & NextUp (CAFYES) Program contacts
www.student.cacollegepathways.org

Paying for College
Understanding financial aid resources and processes
Financial Aid Makes a Difference

Foster youth who access financial aid have better college outcomes

State & Federal Gift Aid

Federal Pell Grant

Awards up to $5,815 for full-time enrollment; is pro-rated if enrolled less than full time. Maximum award may vary year to year.

Cal Grant

Covers tuition at CSU and UC and up to $1,670 for community college expenses

Money for college in California for students who apply within one year after high school, meet income eligibility, get at least a 2.0 GPA and submit a FAFSA or CADAA by the March 2nd deadline
Financial Aid for Foster Youth

CA Chafee Grant

• Provides up to $5,000 to eligible former foster youth

CA College Promise Grant (formerly Board of Governor’s Fee Waiver)

• Waives the cost of tuition at CA community colleges for eligible low-income students
• Foster youth can maintain this regardless of academic performance

Are foster youth getting financial aid?

A 2009 study found that only 4% of foster youth college applicants receive all three forms of financial aid:

● Pell Grant- up to $5,815
● Cal Grant- up to $12,240
● Chafee Grant- up to $5,000
Common Barriers to Financial Aid

- **Applying by the March 2nd deadline**
  - Unaware of March 2nd state priority deadline and what information is needed
  - May feel overwhelmed and in need of adult support

- **Meeting additional eligibility requirements**
  - Taking a year off between high school and college or earning a GED can disqualify youth for some Cal Grant awards.
  - Some Cal Grants also have GPA thresholds

- **Completing verification or other follow-up steps**
  - May be flagged for verification - where they need to provide additional documentation, like tax information
  - Other procedural hurdles before aid is dispensed

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How to Apply for Financial Aid

- **If the applicant is a U.S. Citizen, a permanent resident or other eligible non-citizen:**
  - Complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) at [www.fafsa.ed.gov](http://www.fafsa.ed.gov)

- **If the applicant is an undocumented immigrant:**
  - Complete the CA Dreamers Act Application (CADAA) at [dream.csac.ca.gov](http://dream.csac.ca.gov)
When to Apply for Financial Aid

The priority application period for FAFSA and CADA is October 1– March 2\textsuperscript{nd}

Students can apply after March 2\textsuperscript{nd}, but may receive less financial aid

Students can apply for financial aid before they apply for admissions into a college or university

Three Parts to Maximize Financial Aid

**FAFSA TIP**

- Complete the FAFSA (30-45 minutes depending on the student)
- Complete the Chafee application (5-10 minutes)
- Create a WebGrants Account (5 minutes)
What a Student Will Need to File FAFSA

- Name as it appears on their social security card
- Social security number
- Email address
- List of up to 10 schools students are interested applying to
- Income information, such as taxes or any income received for the requested year

Complete a FAFSA at fafsa.ed.gov

Students must complete a FAFSA every year
Student Eligibility questions

Tip: Answer yes to “Are you a foster youth or were you at any time in the foster care system” to get connected to resources and support.

Tip: Select “Other/unknown” for “Highest School Completed by Parent.” This does not refer to a legal guardian or foster parent. Foster youth do not need to provide parental information.

Dependency Status

Current or former foster youth may qualify for “Independent Status” on the FAFSA if they can answer “Yes” to any part of either of the two questions:

“At any time since you turned age 13, were both your parents deceased, were you in foster care, or were you a dependent or ward of the court?
Or
“Does someone other than your parents or stepparent have legal guardianship of you, as determined by a court in your state of residence?”
Dependency Determination

Qualified Foster Youth that are considered “Independent” do not have to submit any information in the Parent Demographics Section, including foster parents or legal guardians.

Financial aid will be based on the student’s income

FAFSA TIP

Financial Information

Foster youth DO NOT have to report the following information as income earned from working, or in the “Additional Financial Information” or “Untaxed Income” section:

- Extended Foster Care (AB 13) benefits, commonly known as SILP payments. Even if SILP payments are sent directly to youth. GEN-13-18 (2013)
- Supplemental Security Income (SSI)
Resource:

Financial Aid Guide for CA Foster Youth

www.cacollegepathways.org/financial-aid

Resource:

Online Visual Financial Aid Guide

www.cacollegepathways.org/financial-aid
After the FAFSA:
The FAFSA is just the first step to receiving financial aid

Checklist

- Apply for the Chafee Grant
- Create a WebGrants account
- Check your email & student portal regularly
- Request a foster youth verification letter
- Make sure that your Cal Grant GPA verification is sent by your high school
- Apply for additional scholarships
Apply for the Chafee Grant

**What is it?**
- The Chafee Grant provides up to $5,000 of free money for current or former foster youth to help pay for college or career and technical training.

**To Qualify:**
- Be a current or former foster youth who was a dependent or ward of the court, living in foster care, between the ages of 16 and 18
- Youth who were/are in kin-gap, non-related guardianship or were adopted, are eligible only if a dependent or ward of the court, living in foster care, was established between age 16-18
- Not have reached your 22nd birthday as of July 1 of the award year
- Have Financial need

**To Apply:**
- Submit the FAFSA at [www.fafsa.ed.gov](http://www.fafsa.ed.gov) or CADA at [www.caldreamact.org](http://www.caldreamact.org) by March 2nd
- Submit the California Chafee Grant Application online at [www.chafee.csac.ca.gov](http://www.chafee.csac.ca.gov), or complete the paper form and mail it in, by March 2nd
- Students can still submit later if this deadline is missed, but may receive less.
- If you receive a Chafee grant, you don’t need to reapply each year. If you do not receive a Chafee, you must reapply each year.

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Check Email Regularly for Updates

Results, known as the Student Aid Report (SAR), are sent from the Federal Processor via email within four weeks or less

If you have not received your SAR, contact the Federal Student Aid Information Center at 1-800-4FED-AID

Respond promptly to any request for additional information from your college, private scholarship organizations or your state’s higher education agency

Get the student connected to support for help reviewing, accepting and understanding their SAR
Foster Youth Verification

- **Current foster youth**: Contact their county social worker or ILP Coordinator
- **Former foster youth**: Contact their county child welfare agency, local ILP program or the State Foster Care Ombudsman’s Office (AB 592): 1-877-846-1602

**Ward of the Court Letter Example**

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**Ward of the Court Letter Example**

**Name of Youth**: Joe Brown  
**Date of Birth**: 7/16/07  
**Address of Youth**: 1234 Wiltshire Blvd.  
Los Angeles, CA 90010  
**Status of ODT Case**: Open  
**Eligible**: No

The following youth is a:  
- Current Foster Youth under age 21 (eligible for OPSS Foster enrollment)  
- Former Foster Youth under age 21 (eligible for OPSS Foster enrollment)

Any questions may be directed to:  
- Jenny Sarge, M.A.  
  Independent Living Program Manager  
  County of Los Angeles, Children & Family Services  
  Youth Development Services Division  
  (213) 871-8138  
  jenm@lacounty.gov

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**December 22, 2016**

This letter serves as verification of eligibility for the LA County Youth Jobs program as a youth involved with the Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services.
Apply to Additional Scholarships

Look into other scholarships foster youth may qualify for

Maintaining Financial Aid

Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP)

- Completing in reasonable time
- Completing with high enough GPA
- Passing enough classes along the way
How Can You Make a Difference?
Creating a college-going culture that inspires and motivates

The single most important factor influencing a positive outcome for children and youth is a lasting relationship with a caring, engaged adult.
Encouraging Foster Youth

- Motivate from a young age
- Danger of the self-fulfilling prophecy
- Set high expectations – regardless of past academic performance
- Consistently express the expectation that the student will graduate from high school and go on to college
- Use such phrases as “When you go to college...” instead of “If...”

Other Ways to Inspire & Support

- Connect youth to campus support programs
- Discuss non-academic benefits
- Explain differences between college and high school
- Career assessments
- Long term financial benefits
- Hold youth accountable
- Connect to mentors and role models
College is Possible

Regardless of grades, income, immigration status or foster youth status

Thank You

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This presentation was created with the support of UNITE-LA