
WEBINAR #4: Maximizing Financial Aid for Foster Youth • Presented, July 14, 2020

- 1. Since the college does not collect the information that would indicate if a student is a foster youth, wouldn't it be more beneficial to have the student submit the request directly to the state and let them know which school they plan to attend? This way the information would be sent from the state to the college with the amount of the award.**

All colleges have access to at least one indicator of foster youth identification through the FAFSA data. We encourage IHEs and financial aid officers to review FAFSA data for students that identified affirmatively on question 52, and then follow up to confirm their foster care experiences. We recommend that staff explain to students that by disclosing their foster care background, they may be eligible to access financial aid and support services specifically earmarked for this population. In addition, SUNY includes a foster youth identification question on their admissions application. We encourage other schools to use this strategy. Sample student identification questions are featured in Chapter 6 of the *College Success Resource Guide* [here](#).

- 2. Do foster care agencies let foster youth know about these additional resources? Do they encourage youth to let their college know about their status as soon as they decide what school they will be attending?**

Foster care agencies are required to provide career and educational planning support to foster youth.

- 3. How would we know if an undocumented student qualifies if they don't file a FAFSA, as they do not qualify for federal aid?**

We encourage all financial aid officers to ask students if there might be any circumstances that might impact their ability to access financial support for college (including directly asking about a potential foster care experience).

While undocumented students do not qualify for Federal Aid, they may receive private scholarships as determined by a scholarship entity or institutional aid, per the awarding criteria of the college. Some institutional aid may be available at their specific college.

In NYS undocumented students can file the Senator Jose Peralta New York State Dream Application for consideration for NYS-administered awards such as the TAP Grant or NYS HESC Scholarships such as the Excelsior Scholarship.

Financial aid counselors usually advise students on which expenses are covered by each available scholarship or program (e.g., TAP and Excelsior are tuition only). Counselors often direct students to the HESC website, which provides the eligibility requirements and applications for the various State programs. Many SUNY campus websites also feature a link to the [Dream Act page on the HESC website](#), which allows students to directly access program and eligibility information.

- 4. Is it true that non-HEOP students are allowed to participate in the *Foster Youth College Success Initiative* (FYCSI)?**

All foster youth attending a private IHE that currently operates a HEOP program funded by the NYS Education Department, are eligible to receive FYCSI funding whether or not they are enrolled in the HEOP.

5. How can Education Specialists make sure youth in care are able to access FYCSI funding?

The Education Specialist should encourage foster youth to self-identify as youth in care, and guide them to submit a consent form for verification to the financial aid office at the school they are attending. The OCFS consent form is available for download on the *College Success Resource Guide* website (scroll down to the materials under the FYCSI Webinar [here](#)).

6. How applicable is the Excelsior Scholarship for youth in care?

Visit this [chart](#) in Chapter 3 of the *College Success Resource Guide* for more information about the Excelsior Scholarship and other available scholarship and grant opportunities for youth in care.

7. We emailed our FYCSI roster and consent forms to FYCSI@suny.edu. Will we get a confirmation that the roster was received?

After OCFS verifies the students on your roster, SUNY (Osei Agyeman) will email the list back to you indicating the verified students. If there are students on your list who have not been verified, SUNY will notify you in the same email. If you need an immediate confirmation that your list was received, please send a follow-up email to FYCSI@suny.edu to request confirmation and you will receive a response (we recommend you send this second email due to the large volume of email received on the July 15th applicant list deadline).

8. It seems like there might be a better way to identify these students other than through the college financial aid office. It's such a great resource for foster youth.

We encourage IHEs to consider and implement the policies presented in Chapter 6 of the *College Success Resource Guide* including these two recommendations: [Student Identification Policies](#) and [Establish a Foster Youth Campus Liaison](#).

9. I am a college student who is interested in advocating for youth in care. How can I do that on my college campus?

Every year the Fostering Youth Success Alliance accepts a new cohort of youth advocates who are enrolled in college across New York State. This is a wonderful program for interested youth to begin their advocacy journeys. As an advocate you have the opportunity to participate in shaping child welfare policy, join our FYSA steering committee, participate in advocacy events throughout the year, develop soft skills as a future young professional, and so much more. Please reach out to fysa@childrensaidnyc.org to learn more about how to apply.

Interested students also might consider starting student organizations on their campuses focused on the needs of foster youth. This would help build a supportive community and provide a safe space for yourself and your peers with a foster care background.

10. Are you also reaching out to high schools and counselors regarding these resources for foster youth so they can be shared with high school students?

Thank you for this suggestion. Our initial outreach efforts have primarily been focused on higher education and child welfare professionals. We will explore ways to share these resources with staff at the high school level, as well.