

FOSTERING YOUTH SUCCESS ALLIANCE

NEXT STEPS:



BUILDING ON THE FOSTER YOUTH COLLEGE SUCCESS INITIATIVE

BACKGROUND

For any youth seeking to go to college, the college and financial aid application processes are often daunting tasks. Those responsibilities might seem like insurmountable obstacles for youth in the foster care system and those who have aged out of care. Many lack supportive adults to help navigate confusing applications and processes before ultimately making huge decisions. Even generous financial aid packages still leave gaps that do not cover the full costs of attending college. In the last budget season, the Fostering Youth Success Alliance advocated for the establishment of a comprehensive statewide initiative—the Foster College Success Campaign—aimed at not only closing the financial gaps youth face in attending, but also providing the necessary on-campus academic and social support services. **In the FY 2016 budget, the state allocated \$1.5 million to establish the Foster Youth College Success Initiative (FYCSI).**

CRITICAL ACCOMPLISHMENTS TO DATE

A total of 352 students will be served through FYCSI across CUNY, SUNY, and independent universities operating EOP/HEOP/SEEK/ College Discovery programs in New York State for the 2015-16 school year. FYSA has encouraged collaboration among the government agencies to ensure that the implementation of FYCSI is highly effective and aligned among universities. This work has also resulted in the establishment of interagency memorandums of understanding and the **recovery of almost \$400,000 in lost financial aid** specifically for youth in care. Government agencies and higher education institutions are working together to identify ways to leverage existing and new resources to ensure youth have the supports needed to be successful in college.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FY17

The state budget funding allocation to support FYCSI is a momentous first step in building the foundation to ensure foster youth are given an equal opportunity to realize their dreams of a college education. New York State has an obligation to ensure that youth in foster care can make the transition to independence. A college degree is critical in that transition.

Therefore, to continue to support this transition, we urge the state to take the next steps:

- 1. Commit to developing a sustainable funding strategy for FYCSI and allocate \$4,101,585 in the 2016-17 state budget to support cohort 1, of 352 continuing students and 375 first-year students (cohort 2) for a total of 727 students.**
- 2. Amend the FYCSI statute eligibility criteria to reflect the intended population as current or former foster youth and, to require students to apply for services by their 25th birthday.**
- 3. Develop a standardized identification mechanism for students to self-identify for this initiative at the first point of contact (during application for admission) on CUNY and SUNY applications.**
- 4. Implement a public marketing campaign that includes the creation of a website targeted to youth in care, their guardians, foster care agencies, and other stakeholders.**