

# TOP FIVE THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT COLLEGE FOR FOSTER YOUTH

## Community College is Available to Anyone

Most community college programs don't require that students have a certain grade point average (GPA) and there are no tests to take or essays to write in order to be admitted. Community colleges offer students training and education in more than 175 different fields, many of which are hands-on career education programs that can lead directly to good-paying careers through short-term certificates and 2-year associate degrees. A high school diploma or GED is not required for enrollment, although this is a requirement for most forms of financial aid.

The Community College Promise Grant pays tuition costs for low-income students, making this an affordable option for most students.

## The Priority Deadline for Financial Aid is March 2

Students must submit a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) or California Dream Act Application (CADAA) for undocumented students by March 2 to qualify for maximum financial aid. Download the [Financial Aid Guide for California Foster Youth](#) (also available in Spanish) for a detailed step-by-step guide on how to complete the FAFSA. Any youth in foster care after the age of 13 is not required to provide any income or asset information for their parents, and foster youth can qualify for thousands of dollars in grant aid. In addition to completing a FAFSA or CADAA, students should submit a [Chafee grant](#) application to qualify for even more money.

## Enrollment in a 4-Year University is a Viable Option for Foster Youth with Advance Planning

Over 5,000 students with experience in foster care are currently enrolled at Cal State University and University of California campuses. In order to qualify for admission, students must take specified courses in high school known as "[a-g courses](#)" and meet minimum GPA and test score thresholds, and so careful planning is required beginning in the 9<sup>th</sup> grade. Download the [Foster Youth Educational Planning Guide](#) for grade-by-grade checklists (also available in Spanish) and make sure the student is receiving guidance from a school counselor regarding the classes necessary for CSU/UC admission.

## Matriculation into College Requires Several Steps

Successful matriculation typically involves applying for admission, completing skills assessments and orientation, applying for housing, applying for campus support programs, creating an educational plan, paying fees and registering for classes. Use the checklists on the pages that follow to ensure students have completed all the necessary steps.

## Support is Available

All public colleges and universities in California have a foster youth liaison and most campuses now have dedicated support programs for foster youth. A variety of other programs also exist including EOPS/EOP, disabled student programs and programs for parenting students. Visit the [CA College Pathways website](#) for a list of foster youth campus support programs. Programs such as EOPS and EOP tend to fill up, so early application is essential.

# Foster Youth College Planning and Enrollment Checklists

## GRADES 9-11

- In order to qualify for admission to a 4-year university, students must take specified courses known as “a-g courses.” Students should meet with a counselor prior to the 9<sup>th</sup> grade and every year following to ensure they are taking the right classes. It also recommended that students take the SAT or ACT in the 11<sup>th</sup> grade.
  - *Tip: Students can use the High School Planner at [californiacolleges.edu](http://californiacolleges.edu) to track course enrollment and then upload courses taken directly into their CSU or UC application. More info is also available at <http://blogs.calstate.edu/college/students>.*
- All 11th graders will participate in the CAASPP (California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress) exam. Included on the Score Report is an Early Assessment Program (EAP) score which provides an indicator of their readiness to take college-level English and math courses. Students should mark the release button at the end of each exam to ensure that the CSU campus(es) receive the EAP results.
  - *Tip: EAP results are not used to determine admission eligibility but can be used to determine correct course placement. Students not on track for college readiness can use their senior year to gain skills. Taking math and English during their senior year is highly recommended for all students*
- Refer students to participate in college prep programs such as AVID, Upward Bound, MESA, and Early Academic Outreach Programs (EAOP).
  - *For comprehensive college planning checklists and more information about how to prepare for college, download the [Foster Youth Educational Planning Guide](#) (also available in Spanish).*

## GRADE 12

### Community College

- Select a college.
  - *Tip: Support youth to visit college campuses and get comfortable with the idea of going to college.*
- Complete the online application at [www.cccapply.org](http://www.cccapply.org).
  - *Tip: A Student I.D. number and e-mail address will be assigned shortly after application. Correspondence from the college will be sent to the e-mail address, so students should check it at least once per week.*
- Apply for EOPS and/or the foster youth support program. Students with disabilities should also apply to the college’s disabled students program. Parenting students may qualify for additional services through the college’s CARE and/or CalWorks program.
  - *Tip: Visit the [CA College Pathways website](#) for a list of foster youth campus support programs. Programs tend to fill up so early application is essential.*
- Complete assessment: Students may be required to take Reading, English, and Math assessment tests in order to determine if they will need to enroll in basic skills courses. **These tests are very important and should be prepared for in advance.** Many institutions now rely not only test scores but other measures such as high school transcripts in the assessment process.
  - *Tip: Most college assessment centers offer links to test preparation materials on their website.*
- Orientation: Visit the college’s website to determine how to register for an orientation.
  - *Tip: Orientations may be available both in-person and online.*
- Educational Plan: Meet with a counselor to create an educational plan and select courses.
  - *Tip: Whenever possible, utilize an EOPS counselor rather than a general counselor to create the plan.*
- Enroll in courses.
  - *Tip: To access priority enrollment, foster youth must complete assessment, orientation and an educational plan prior to the priority enrollment period, which is typically in the Spring for the upcoming Fall term. Visit [www.stepforward.cccco.edu](http://www.stepforward.cccco.edu) for details and check the college’s website for exact registration dates.*
- Pay fees: While tuition costs are generally waived for low-income students through the Community College Promise Grant, many colleges have nominal health and student activity fees that are not covered by the waiver.
  - *Tip: Disenrollment may occur after registration if fees have not been paid within a certain timeframe. Check with the college admissions office for relevant deadlines.*
- Submit final high school transcript to college.

## **Four Year University**

- Confirm eligibility for admission to a CSU or UC campus. This will include taking all required courses (known as “a-g” courses), high school graduation and minimum GPA and test scores, which vary by institution.
  - *Tip: The [CSU eligibility index](#) shows what combination of GPA and SAT/ACT score is required to meet minimum admission requirements. Students who do not meet regular admission criteria still may be eligible for admission through the Education Opportunity Program (EOP).*
- Take the SAT or ACT by November of senior year.
  - *Tip: Fee waivers are available by contacting the student’s high school counselor.*
- Complete the online application no later than November 30 for fall admission. A personal essay is required.
  - *Tip: Both the CSU and UC systems will waive the application fee at up to four campuses for low-income students. A fee waiver can be requested through the admission application.*
- Apply for the Education Opportunity Program (EOP) along with the admission application. Three letters of recommendation are required.
  - *Tip: The EOP program provides ongoing support to students once they are enrolled. The EOP application must be submitted along with the application admission. Students cannot be admitted after enrollment.*
- Apply to participate in the foster youth support program on campus if one is available. Students with disabilities should also apply to the college’s disabled students program.
  - *Tip: Visit the [CA College Pathways website](#) for a list of foster youth campus support programs. Programs tend to fill up so early application is essential.*
- Submit the Intent to Enroll by stated deadlines.
  - *Tip: Foster youth campus support programs may be able to provide assistance with intent to enroll fees.*
- Have transcripts sent to requesting colleges.
- Apply for on campus housing.
  - *Tip: Foster youth qualify for priority access to on-campus housing, but must comply with all deadlines to qualify. Foster youth campus support programs may be able to assist with paying housing deposits.*
- Complete the assessment process: First-year CSU students must demonstrate proficiency in English and math, or enroll in their college’s Early Start Program or in enhanced courses designed to provide additional support.
  - *Tip: The CSU assessment process underwent a significant redesign in 2017. Visit the [CSU Assessment page](#) or the university’s website for up to date information.*
- Complete the university’s required orientation.
  - *Tip: Orientations may be available both in-person and online.*

## **Financial Aid (All Students)**

- Complete a FAFSA or California Dream Act Application.
  - *Download the [Financial Aid Guide for California Foster Youth](#) for a detailed step by step guide. For maximum aid, the application must be submitted by March 2.*
- Submit a Chafee Grant application at <https://www.chafee.csac.ca.gov>.
  - *Tip: Priority for grants is determined in part by the order in which applications are received, so early application is better.*
- Create a Webgrants account at [mygrantinfo.csac.ca.gov](http://mygrantinfo.csac.ca.gov).
  - *Tip: Students should make sure to update information in webgrants about what school they will be attending and any changes to contact information.*
- Ensure that your high school submitted your GPA verification.
  - *Tip: Public and charter schools are required to electronically submit student GPAs but it is important to verify that this has been done, in particular if the student changed schools during their senior year.*
- Confirm that your foster care status has been verified.
  - *Tip: Effective 2018, financial aid offices can automatically verify foster care status through webgrants. If a student is not automatically verified, they may need to provide verification manually.*
- Apply for private scholarships.
  - *Tip: Websites such as [Career One Stop](#) and [FastWeb](#) can help as well as the college financial aid office.*
- Meet with a financial aid counselor and respond to any requests for additional information.
  - *Tip: If the college requests additional information, make sure youth respond promptly.*