

Item 12

(Information Item)

Supporting foster youth students

SUMMARY:

This item provides an overview of the programs and benefits administered by the California Student Aid Commission (Commission) to support foster youth students in higher education. Programs include the California Chafee Grant for Foster Youth, the Cal Grant Foster Youth Access Award and Cal Grant B increased eligibility, and the Middle Class Scholarship. Additionally, this item includes general information on other programs, benefits, and resources that may be available to foster youth students to help fill in the gap where families would traditionally step in and assist with higher educational costs.

RECOMMENDATION:

This is an information item; no action is required.

BACKGROUND:

California Education Code section 66025.9 defines foster youth and former foster youth as a person in California whose dependency was established or continued by a court of competent jurisdiction, including a tribal court, on or after the youth's 13th birthday.

California Chafee Grant for Foster Youth

The California Chafee Grant for Foster Youth (Chafee Grant) is administered by the Commission through an interagency agreement with the California Department of Social Services (CDSS). The Chafee Grant awards up to five thousand dollars a year for up to five years to eligible foster youth students at any eligible California college or university, career or technical school, and qualifying schools in other states within the United States. To qualify for the Chafee Grant, a student must be under the age of 26 by July 1 of the award year and meet one of the following two criteria:

- Be a current or former foster youth who was a dependent or ward of the court, living in out-of-home foster care placement for at least one day between the ages of 16 and 18.
- Be a youth who was placed in out-of-home care by a tribe or tribal organization between the ages of 16 and 18.

Foster care eligibility is verified by the CDSS and overall funding for the program is subject to the federal and state funding allocation for the award year. For the 2023-24

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academic year, a total of \$17,079,637 million is available for the Chafee Grant, with about two thirds of that amount funded by the state and a third funded by the federal government. Based on the total number of eligible students, the Commission offers preliminary awards to students based on the following priority selection criteria:

1. Paid renewal students under the age of 26.
2. New and unpaid renewal students who will be 26 years old as of July 1 of the award year.
3. New and unpaid renewal students who have dependents.
4. New and unpaid students who have an unmet need of \$5,000 or more.
5. New and unpaid renewal students who have an unmet need of less than \$5,000.

All eligible students to date have been awarded for the 2023-24 academic year.

Chafee Grant for Foster Youth Awards			
	Academic Year		
Description	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24**
Number of Chafee Applicants *	9,068	11,804	7,927
Number of Chafee Awards	8,049	9,136	7,278
Number of Paid Recipients	4,305	4,709	3,516
Paid Rate	53%	52%	48%

** Includes new applicants and applicants from prior years with continued eligibility*

*** 2023-24 is an open year and will continue to award and pay students through August 2024*

Chafee Grant for Foster Youth Paid Awards by Segment			
	Academic Year		
School Segment	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24**
California Community College	3,036	3,337	2,529
California State University	693	665	596
University of California	168	172	153
Private Non-Profit	123	110	95
Private For-Profit	229	242	97
Out of State	55	65	46
Totals	4,304	4,591	3,516

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Cal Grant Access Awards for Foster Youth

Beginning with the 2021-22 academic year, current and former foster youth students attending a University of California campus, a California State University campus, or a California Community College campus are eligible for increased benefits under the Cal Grant program. The 2022-23 state budget further expanded eligibility for current and former foster youth attending a nonprofit independent institution of higher education. Eligible Cal Grant A and B foster youth students may receive an access award of up to six thousand dollars, and eligible Cal Grant C foster youth students may receive a books and supplies award of up to four thousand dollars. To qualify, students must be under the age of 26 by July 1 of the award year; and meet one of the following criteria:

- Be a foster youth or former foster youth in California whose dependency was established or continued by a court of competent jurisdiction, including a tribal court, on or after the youth's 13th birthday.
- Be a homeless youth or former homeless youth who has been verified at any time during the 24 months immediately preceding the receipt of the youth's application for admission by a qualifying institution, as a homeless child or youth, as defined in subsection (2) of Section 725 of the federal McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. Sec. 11434a(2)), by at least one of the following:
 - a. A homeless services provider, as that term is defined in paragraph (3) of subdivision (e) of Section 103577 of the Health and Safety Code.
 - b. The director of a federal TRIO program or Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs program, or a designee of that director.
 - c. A financial aid administrator for an institution of higher education.
 - d. A homeless and foster student liaison
 - e. For American Indian students, a representative of the student's tribe or a representative of a tribal organization that is a homeless services provider.

Cal Grant Access Awards for Foster Youth						
	2021-22 Academic Year			2022-23 Academic Year		
School Segment	Award Offers	Paid Awards	Paid Rate	Award Offers	Paid Awards	Paid Rate
California Community College	3,157	1,587	50%	3,296	1,860	56%
University of California	376	283	75%	376	295	78%

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California State University	1,277	986	77%	1,238	965	78%
Independent Colleges and Universities	N/A	N/A	N/A	192	139	72%
Totals	4,810	2,856	59%	5,102	3,259	64%

Cal Grant B for Foster Youth

The Cal Grant B for Foster Youth program expands eligibility for current and former foster youth students through the following:

- Increased lifetime eligibility: Foster youth students are eligible to renew their Cal Grant B award for up to eight years of full-time attendance in an undergraduate program versus the traditional four years.
- Extended timeframe to qualify for a high school entitlement Cal Grant A and B award: Unlike other students who have the year they graduate and one year out of high school to qualify under the high school entitlement award cycle, foster youth students have until their 26th birthday to apply and qualify for this award.
- Extended application deadline for the high school entitlement award cycle: Foster youth students attending a California Community College can apply for a high school entitlement award through the September 2nd deadline rather than the March 2 deadline for all other students considered under this award cycle.

Middle Class Scholarship

Beginning with the 2023-24 award year, Middle Class Scholarship (MCS) awards for eligible current and former foster youth students will be funded at one hundred percent. Foster youth students will still be subject to the same award-amount calculations (including consideration of self-help and other aid) but will not be subject to the proportionate reduction that occurs to MCS awards based on the program's current state budget allocation.

The Commission must determine if the funding appropriated for the program in each fiscal year is sufficient to cover the costs of the MCS projected awards. If the funding will not be sufficient for this purpose, MCS awards are reduced proportionately by an equal percentage for all recipients. Based on the funding available and projected expenditures for the MCS program in 2023-24, a 36-phase-in percentage was applied to all awards with the exception of foster youth MCS awardees. This phase-in percentage is the percentage of their total MCS award that non-foster youth students qualify for in 2023-24.

Additionally, Senate Bill 142 (TBL) enacted on September 13, 2023, changed the treatment of emergency assistance awarded by an institution-based foster youth

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support program. Beginning with the 2023-24 award year, only the amount in excess of the student contribution and parent contribution (if applicable) is considered in the calculation of the MCS award amount.

Middle Class Scholarship Awards for Foster Youth		
	2023-24 Academic Year	
School Segment	Award Offers (Non-Foster Youth)	Award Offers (Foster Youth)
California State University	187,169	881
University of California	79,824	82
California Community College (Baccalaureate Degree)	32	0
Totals	267,025	963

School Segment	Average Max Award (Non-Foster Youth)	Average Max Award (Foster Youth)	% Increase in Max Average Award for Foster Youth
California State University	\$ 3,406.00	\$ 8,446.00	148%
University of California	\$ 3,061.00	\$ 7,031.00	130%
California Community College (Baccalaureate Degree)	\$ 3,157.00	N/A	N/A

Campus Support Programs and Other Foster Youth Resources

There are different programs that offer support to foster youth students, such as NextUp, Guardian Scholars, Renaissance Scholars, and more. These initiatives encompass a range of services, including dedicated advisors and personal counselors, academic guidance, housing aid, tutoring, mentoring, financial support, tailored assistance for students with disabilities, counseling services, engaging social activities, and a plethora of other valuable resources. Some additional programs and resources include:

- **Department of Social Services:** The Department of Social Services provides housing support, financial assistance, and other resources for California's foster youth. In California, foster care benefits don't end at 18. When foster youth turn 18,

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they have new options for supportive housing, financial assistance, and more, up to the age of 21.

- **Independent Living Program (ILSP or ILP):** A voluntary program for students who were in care at least one day after their 16th birthday offered through the child welfare and probation departments that provides services and benefits to assist foster youth until their 21st birthday in achieving self-sufficiency. Some KinGAP youth are also eligible.
- **Application Fee Waiver:** Most foster youth qualify for an application fee waiver for up to four CSUs, four UCs, and four private universities based on their income.
- **California College Promise Grant:** Allows low-income students at California Community Colleges to have enrollment fees (the cost of classes) waived. Foster youth can maintain this benefit regardless of academic performance once in college.
- **iFoster:** Provides free resources to foster youth such as cell phones, tutoring services, and a digital locker to safely store important documents.
- **Medi-Cal Health Insurance:** Available for young people in care on or after their 18th birthday through age 26. Insurance includes coverage for mental health services.
- **California Foster Youth Ombudsperson's Office:** A neutral office that provides information about the rights of foster youth and helps resolve complaints about the care they receive. This office can also provide former foster youth with a dependency/ward of the court verification letter which is often required to access benefits in college such as priority registration or campus support programs.
- **John Burton Advocates for Youth (JBAY):** JBAY is a comprehensive resource hub that equips California foster youth with vital information about financial aid. Their platform offers a financial aid guide specifically tailored for foster youth in California, providing step-by-step instructions for completing FAFSA and CASDAA applications. In addition, JBAY provides a wealth of scholarship resources to help foster youth access additional funding and resource opportunities for their education.

RESPONSIBLE PERSON(S):

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ATTACHMENT(S):

Supporting Foster Youth Programs Presentation Presented on November 30, 2023