

Supporting Transitions and College Success

Fostering Success in Higher Education Act of 2017

Youth experiencing homelessness and youth from foster care face unique barriers to accessing and completing higher education. Lack of family and supports, coupled with histories of neglect, abuse, trauma, mobility, and deep poverty, create roadblocks to their path to and through post-secondary education. Yet higher education is their best opportunity for economic independence and healthier lives. This issue brief provides detailed information on the Fostering Success in Higher Education Act (FSHEA), S. 1792/H.R. 3742, intended to assist foster and homeless youth to obtain a post-secondary degree and achieve higher education success.

How The Fostering Success in Higher Education Act of 2017 (FSHEA) Supports States in Creating Higher Education Supports for Foster and Homeless Youth

1. [The proposed law creates a grant programs to enable states to establish or expand initiatives that improve access to and success in higher education for homeless and foster youth.](#)

The Secretary of Education will establish grants to support states in creating “Statewide Transition Initiatives,” which include programs and services that improve enrollment of foster and homeless youth in higher education institutions. Twenty-five percent of the total grant received by the state must be used for such state-wide initiatives. States must use the funds in support of the following activities:

- Increasing the number of foster and homeless youth that apply and enroll in institutions of higher education by creating intensive outreach efforts and preparing youth for higher education enrollment.
- Providing education to foster and homeless youth on the benefits of postsecondary education, career exploration, financial aid opportunities and available Federal and State support services.
- Assisting foster and homeless youth with submitting applications for enrollment in higher education institutions, financial aid, and scholarships.
- Providing free programming, including free transportation, to prepare foster and homeless youth for postsecondary education during the summer before the youth first attend college.

2. The proposed law requires states to award subgrants to higher education institutions to develop robust campus-based support services and financial assistance for homeless and foster youth through the development of Institutions of Excellence.

States must use seventy percent of grant funds to provide subgrants to higher education institutions to improve college access, retention, and completion rates for foster and homeless youth. Institutions must use the funds for the following activities for homeless and foster youth:

- Providing flexibility and assistance in completing enrollment applications.
- Coordinating programs with relevant stakeholders to increase enrollment.
- Providing financial aid support by adjusting the cost of attendance to include housing during periods of non-enrollment, providing institutional aid to meet the cost of attendance that is not covered by other Federal or State grants, and subsidizing fees associated with student orientation.
- Ensuring youth are aware of housing availability during periods of non-enrollment.
- Hiring and providing training for a point of contact to provide regular meetings with youth.
- Establishing campus support programs to help youth with financial aid, career advice, and leadership development.
- Ensuring the availability of robust student health services that meet the needs of youth.
- Establishing or expanding early alert systems to identify and support students who are struggling academically.

Because foster and homeless youth lack the family and community support systems of traditional college students, these grants will allow higher education institutions to create support systems specifically tailored to the needs of foster and homeless youth.

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