

## Higher Education Success for Youth in Foster Care: What Works

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We can help youth succeed in programs of higher education by addressing the barriers they face. This means helping them fill financial gaps and providing supportive services.

HB 1745 brings to Pennsylvania two powerful strategies to promote higher education success—tuition and fee waivers and single points of contact and lays the ground work for a third, student support programs.

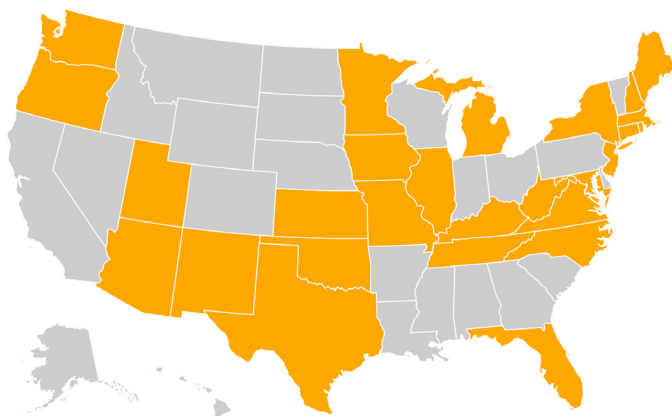
### TUITION WAIVERS & SCHOLARSHIPS

#### What are tuition waivers and scholarships for youth in foster care?

Tuition waivers and scholarships are two of the most common strategies for financial assistance available to youth in the foster care system. While various states implement tuition waivers in different ways, they generally help students pay the amount of tuition (and sometimes fees) that remain outstanding after other federal and state aid has been applied. Some state aid programs also cover books, supplies, and room and board.

#### How many states have tuition waivers or scholarships for youth in foster care?

[28 states](#) offer tuition assistance programs for youth in foster care.



## How do tuition waivers and scholarships help youth to access and complete higher education?

Tuition waivers and scholarships help ease the financial barriers that prevent youth in the foster care system from entering or completing higher education. Youth in foster care do not have the financial resources or family support that many youth rely on to pay for college and related expenses. The financial stress can prevent a youth from even considering college as an option and increases the likelihood they will drop out. Easing the financial burden can make a tremendous difference.

For example, Arizona implemented a pilot program to waive in-state college tuition for foster youth. Waiver recipients [reported](#) that the waiver positively impacted their ability to attend college and succeed by easing financial constraints. Recipients reported that the waiver helped them attend college when they otherwise may not have been able to afford it and helped alleviate financial stress so they could focus on their academic success.

## LIAISONS OR SINGLE POINTS OF CONTACT (SPOCs)

### What are liaisons and single points of contact?

Liaisons and single points of contact (SPOC) are knowledgeable and supportive college administrators or other staff who are committed to helping foster youth successfully navigate the college life. SPOCs can assist students with identifying and applying for financial aid and provide information and referrals for on-campus and community-based support services and resources including admissions, housing, financial aid, health, mental health, tutoring, career, academic advising, and other services. For example, in California all 110 community and technical colleges have a designated foster youth liaison.

### How do liaisons support higher education success?

Liaisons are critical sources of information, advocacy, and connection. Liaisons serve as an important source of support for youth in foster care who may not have family to rely on. They are knowledgeable about the foster care system and the challenges that youth may face as well as the resources that are available to them and can help educate other campus stakeholders about supporting youth in foster care. Liaisons can provide crucial advocacy and ensure that youth are connected with the many resources that are available on campuses and in the community.

## STUDENT SUPPORT PROGRAMS

### What are student support programs for youth in foster care?

Student support programs provide counseling, services, and connections with resources that help youth meet the challenges of college life. Supports provided by such programs include housing assistance, mentoring, tutoring, counseling, access to food and clothing banks, and social networks. These supports can be vital to youth who may not have the support of family or social networks that many youth rely on to navigate and thrive in college. Student support programs improve retention rates and prevent students from dropping out.

### What states have student support programs?

Colleges across the country are seeing the benefit of student support programs for youth in foster care and the value in student retention for the investment. [Support programs](#) that focus on youth in foster care are available in states as diverse as: Washington, Idaho, California, Texas, Oklahoma, Kansas, Missouri, Michigan, Ohio, Virginia, North Carolina, Georgia, and Florida.

## Are there student support programs for youth in foster care in Pennsylvania?

Yes. Currently the following schools have or are developing student support programs for youth in foster care:

- Bloomsburg University
- Cabrini College
- Community College of Philadelphia
- Chestnut Hill College
- Kutztown University
- Manor College
- Montgomery County Community College
- Penn State Abington
- Penn State University Park
- Temple University
- Westchester University

Many of these programs have been supported by the Foster to Care to College Workgroup that is led by the Field Center for Children's Policy, Practice & Research. Many colleges from across the commonwealth have expressed an interest in launching student support programs and the Field Center will be providing technical assistance for new programs statewide.

HB 1745 lays the groundwork for the development of these programs by building an infrastructure of support and expertise.

### How do these programs support higher education success?

[Research](#) shows that campus advocates and campus support programs for foster youth can help youth achieve the same graduation rates as non-foster care students. They do this by providing direct support and connecting youth with existing services.

For example, in Washington, education support programs for foster youth that offer services such as educational advocacy and financial assistance [are credited](#) with an increase in college enrollment among youth in foster care from 16% in 2005-2006 to 20% in 2008-2009.

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