

Building Your Future:

Postsecondary Education, Community Supports, and Your Voice

September 30, 2026



Office of Juvenile Justice
and Delinquency Prevention

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Welcome and Introductions



Meet the Team



Introductions



Who is in the room?



What do you hope to
take away from
today?



Agenda

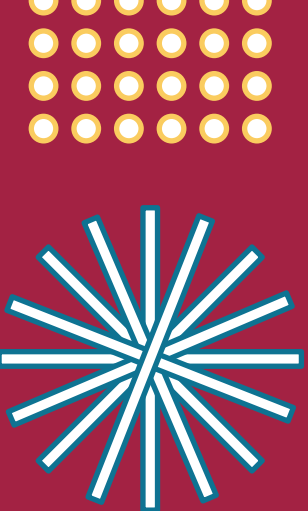
- Welcome
- Introductions
- National Resources
- Know Your Rights
- Building Community
- Group Discussion & Debrief
- Break
- Community Sessions

Poll: What Has Your Experience Been?

- The adults in my life have helped me find the support and resources I need.
- I know about resources, but they can be hard to access.
- I have gotten some support, but I have had to figure a lot out on my own.
- No one has really talked with me about what resources are available.
- I am not sure what resources or support are available to me.

National Resources





Introduction



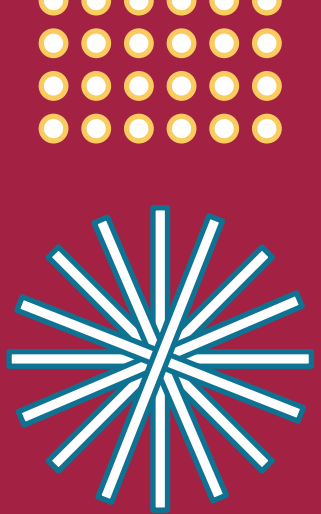
Christina Dukes
Founder and Principal

[Pearl Strategies](#)

**Pearl
Strategies**

Pearl Strategies is

- A small, woman-owned business focused on educational access and success for students who have experienced homelessness or foster care
- #TeamEducation
- #TeamYouth

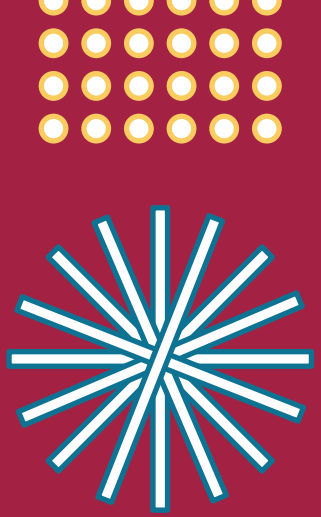


What is This All About?

We're going to explore

- Post-secondary education today: Why it matters and what is available
- How to pay for post-secondary education
- How to find support once enrolled

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>LI 'STXSRWLI 'FEK'ERH'] SYV'WTTSVX'WUYEHk
CSYV'JYXM 'WB'[M'XLERO'] SYK' 😄



The Vibe for Today

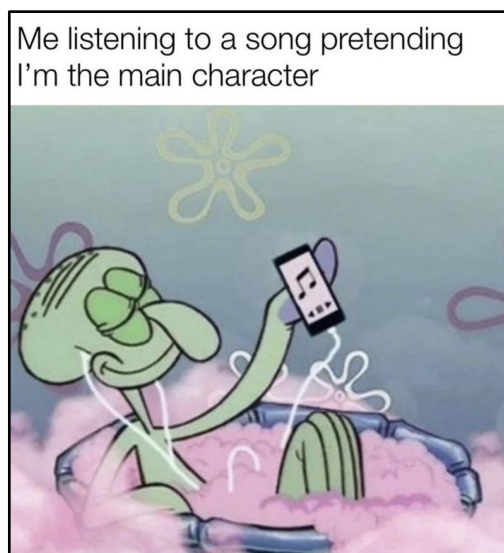
- Your story does not have to look like anyone else's.
- There are multiple ways to “win”.
- It is okay if you are still figuring things out or feel unsure.
- Every step forward counts.
- Today is about options, not pressure.



What Do You Think?: DJ Hype Song

**You are today's official event DJ.
What song are you playing to “set the vibe”?**

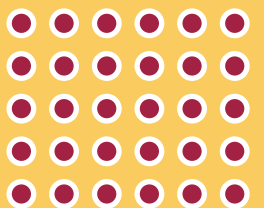
Feel free to share in the chat!



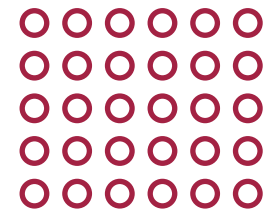


Post-Secondary Education Today

Why It Matters and What Is Available



What Do Research and Data Tell Us?



Youth without a high school credential were identified as the youth subgroup most at risk of homelessness.

Source: Chapin Hall, *Missed Opportunities: Youth Homelessness in America*

People with higher levels of education tend to fare better across many areas of life...but “details” matter.

Sources: Georgetown University, *The College Payoff: More Education Doesn't Always Mean More Earnings*; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Education Pays*; U.S. Census Bureau, *Who Is Receiving Social Safety Net Benefits?*

There are more options than ever to build a successful career with or without a 4-year degree.

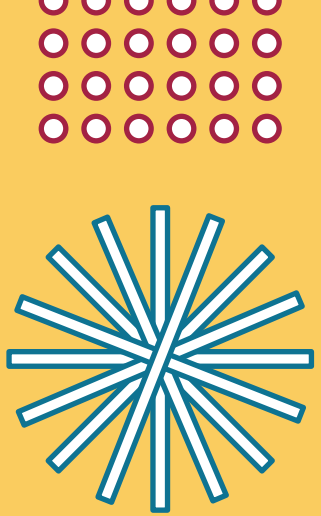
Source: Georgetown University, *A College Education is Still the Most Reliable Pathway to the Middle Class*

The Evolving Post-Secondary Landscape

The post-secondary landscape is offering more types of credentials that can be used on their own or stacked together.

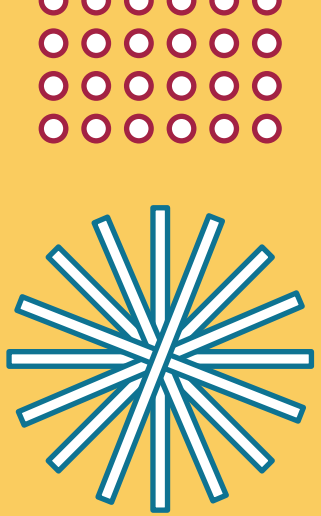
- College degrees (2-year and 4-year)
- Non-degree credentials
 - Certificates
 - Apprenticeship certificates
 - Industry certifications
 - Occupational licenses





Types of Credentials

Credential and What It Is	Examples
Post-secondary Degrees Degrees earned from a college or university after completing a program of study	• Associate of Science in Nursing • Associate of Science in Computer Information Systems • B.A. in Human Resources Management
Certificates Shorter programs that build specific job skills and are awarded after completing required coursework and assessments	• Computer Programming • Culinary Arts • Paramedic
Apprenticeship Certificates Credentials earned while learning on the job and getting paid as you gain skills	• Aviation Operations on the Ground • Construction Management • Plumbing and Heating • Vehicle Body and Paint



Types of Credentials

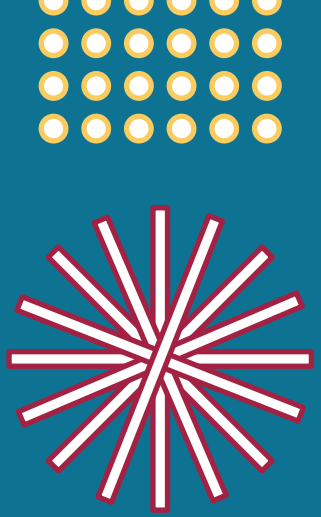
Credential and What It Is	Examples
Industry Certifications Credentials that show you have proven skills or knowledge needed for a specific job or field by passing an exam	• Project Management • HVAC • Supply Chain Professional
Licenses Government-issued credentials that allow you to work in certain careers. Requirements may include education, training, exams, or work experience	• Accounting • Cosmetology • Nursing • Real Estate

Where Credentials Are Offered



Post-secondary credentials are offered in a variety of environments, including:

- Community, technical, and 4-year colleges
- Trade and vocational schools
- Workforce development programs and community-based organizations
- Workplaces (apprenticeships / on-the-job training)
- Online platforms and “bootcamps”



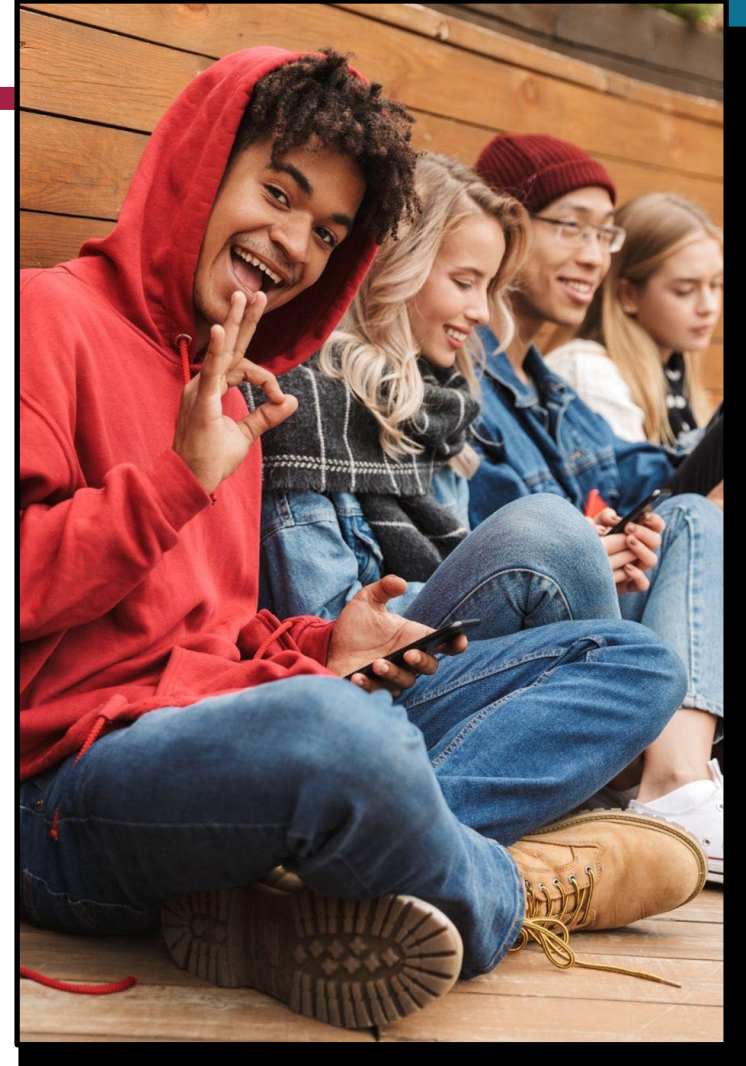
What Do You Think?: The Benefits of Options

1. Why is it important for people to have different education and training options to choose from?
2. Bonus points: What (old but classic) movie is this meme from?



The Importance of Options

- Different people have different goals, interests, and learning styles.
- Multiple pathways means there are different ways to pursue education and career training.
- Flexible options make it easier for people to continue their education while managing other responsibilities and life circumstances.
- Different pathways help people gain skills that match employer and job market needs.



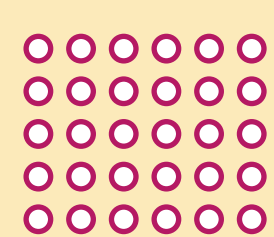
Benefits of Different Pathways

- Some pathways can help people gain skills and start working sooner while spending less money on education.
- Learners can build credentials over time and continue advancing their education when they are ready.
- Apprenticeships and similar programs allow people to “earn while they learn”.



Having options is a Win!





Resources: Learning About Different Pathways

- **Apprenticeships**

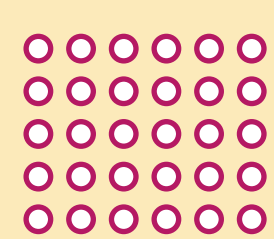
- [Apprenticeship Fact Sheet](#)
- [Apprenticeship Frequently Asked Questions](#)
- [Apprenticeship Office by Location Search](#)

- **Career and Technical Education (CTE) Pathways**

- [About CTE Career Clusters](#)

- **College Degrees**

- [Quick Guide: Your College Degree Options](#)
- [Certificate vs. Degree: What Is the Difference?](#)

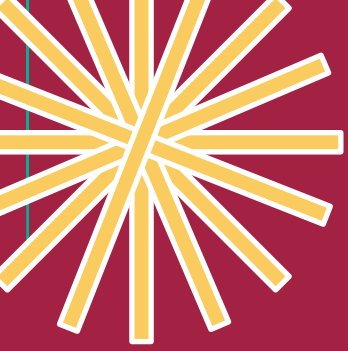


Resources: Finding A Good Personal Fit

- [CareerOneStop Interest Assessment](#): This quick, 30-question quiz takes about five minutes and helps you discover potential career paths that match your interests.
- [My Next Move: Interest Profiler](#): This comprehensive 60-question tool helps you explore careers by your favorite activities, providing deep dives into daily duties, salary data, job outlooks, and required education levels. You can also [search careers by key words or browse careers by industry](#).
- [CareerOneStop Exploration Toolkit](#): This website provides tools you need to research careers, find training, or search for jobs.
- [GetMyFuture](#): This website provides information and resources to help you find a career you like, finish high school, apply to college, get education or training, or get a job.

Questions or Comments?



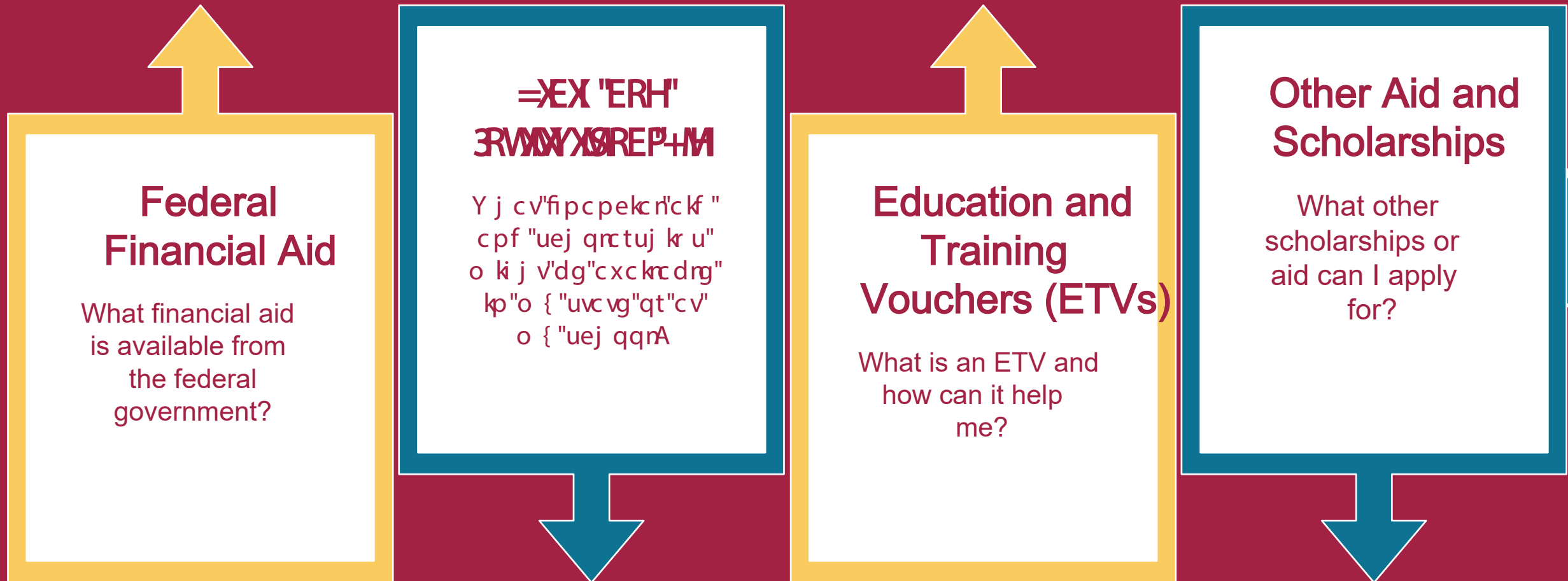


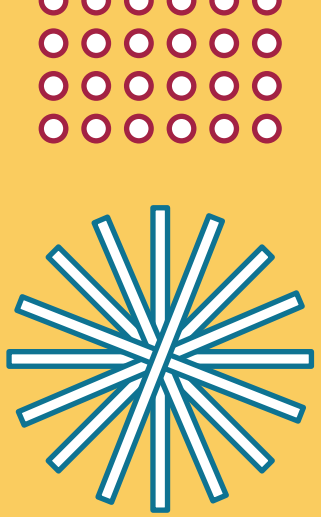
Paying for Post-Secondary Education

“Securing the Bag”



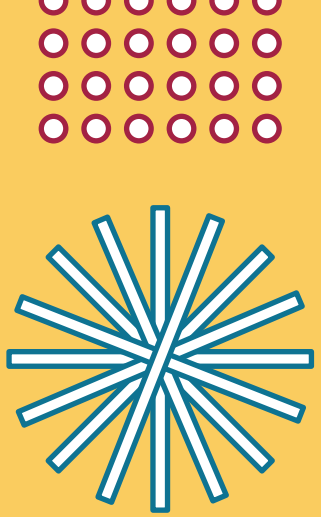
Aid and Scholarship Options





Federal Financial Aid

- To get federal financial aid for post-secondary education, you need to fill out a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA).
- Aid available through the FAFSA includes
 - Grants
 - Loans
 - Work-study
 - State and institutional aid (many states and schools use the FAFSA to determine eligibility for aid)

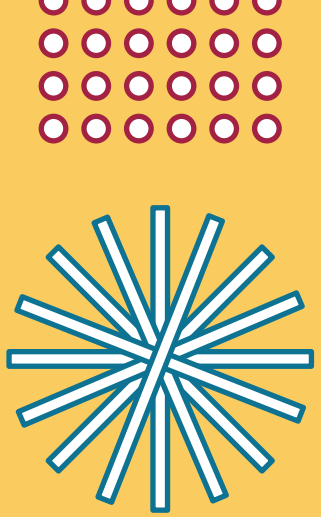


Federal Financial Aid Reminders

To be eligible for federal financial aid, you must

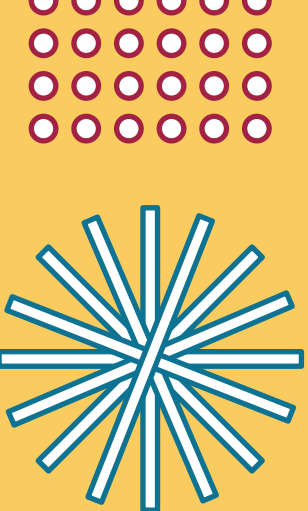
- Have a legal immigration status
- Have a high school diploma/credential
- Be enrolled or accepted for enrollment in an eligible degree or certificate program at a school that participates in federal aid
- Maintain Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) (keep up your grades and meet credit-hour minimums set by your school)

**Some states or institutions provide aid to students regardless of immigration status*



Federal Financial Aid Reminders

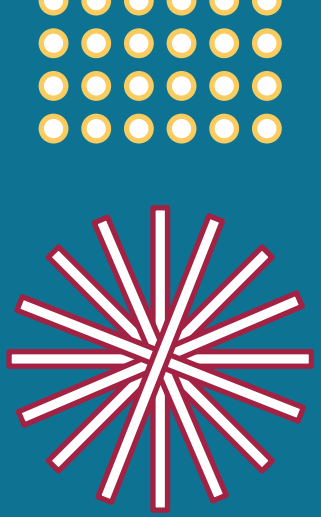
- ***“Workforce Pell”**: New in 2026, Workforce Pell lets low-income students use federal Pell grants for in-demand 8-to-15 week trade programs. States are still figuring out which programs will be approved for Workforce Pell.
- The FAFSA is released each year on or before Oct 1 for the following school year.
- Fill out the FAFSA as soon as you can, as some aid programs are first-come, first-served.



Independent Student Status

- Students experiencing homelessness on their own (“unaccompanied homeless youth”) and students who were in foster care at any time after turning 13 qualify as independent students on the FAFSA.
- Independent students **do not need to include parent information on the FAFSA** and their financial aid is based only on their own income and assets (not those of their parents/guardian).





Education and Training Vouchers (ETVs)

- The ETV is a federally funded, state-administered support program for foster and adopted youth enrolled in post-secondary education.
- Eligible students can receive up to \$5,000 per year for a maximum of five years or until age 26.
- Funds can be combined with other aid and used to pay for tuition, books, housing, and other school costs.

Education and Training Voucher (ETV):
How can it help pay for education after high school/GED?

College is expensive and using resources you qualify for can help you reach your educational goals!

The Education and Training Voucher (ETV) Program is a federally-funded program that helps young people who were in foster care pay for post-secondary education and training like vocational and trade programs or college!

ETV can help you pay for things scholarships may not (transportation, food, clothing, housing, etc)

PRO TIPS:

- Ask your worker if you qualify for Chafee ETV (Education and Training Voucher)
- Ask your case worker for documentation of being in foster care, sometimes called a Verification Letter.
- Complete your FAFSA first to access grant, scholarship and ETV money. <https://studentaid.gov>

Eligibility:

- Young people who have aged out of foster care or left foster care after age 16.
- Young people who were adopted or became part of a kinship or guardianship arrangement after age 16.
- Some states have programs that support young people who have left as early as age 14.

Benefits:

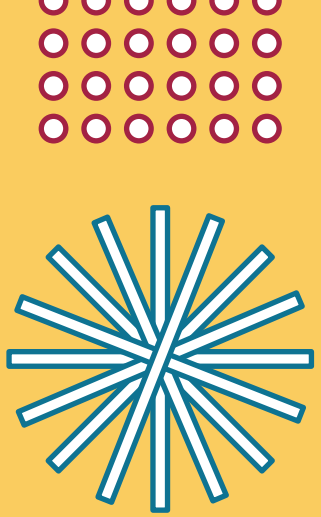
- Up to \$5,000 per academic year for up to five years or until the state's age limit.
- Funds can be combined with other grants and scholarships.
- Funds can be used for tuition, books, fees, rent, food, transportation, health insurance, disability services, dependent childcare and more!

TALK TO US!
Email: outreach@fosterclub.com
Call: (503) 717-1552
Post: app.fosterclub.com



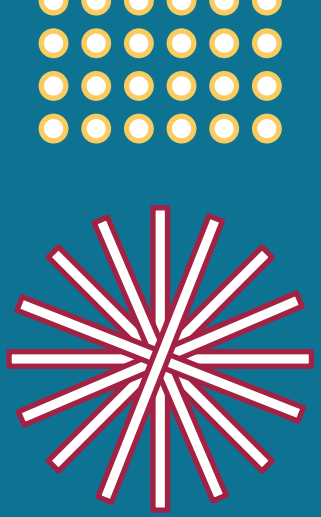
[Learn more about ETVs from FosterClub](#)



State and Institutional Aid

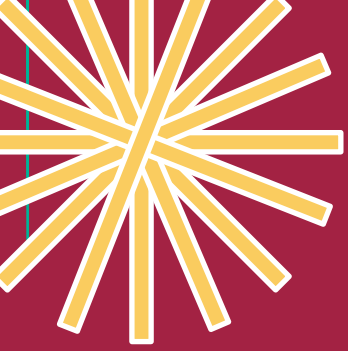
Many states have aid and scholarship programs for specific (e.g. homeless or foster) and broader (e.g. first generation or lower-income) student groups.

- **California:** [CalGrant awards for current or former foster youth](#), the [Middle Class Scholarship for Foster Youth](#), and [broader CalGrant programs](#)
- **Maryland:** Tuition waiver for [homeless youth](#) and [foster care recipients](#)
- **New York:** [Foster Youth College Success Initiative \(FYCSI\)](#) and [SUNY Educational Opportunity Program \(EOP\)](#)
- **North Carolina:** [NC Reach](#) and [Next NC Scholarship](#)
- **Texas:** [State College Tuition and Fee Waiver](#) and [Toward Excellence, Access & Success \(TEXAS\) Grant Program](#)



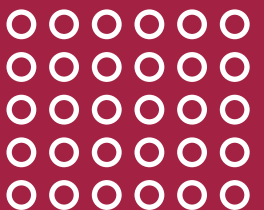
Other Aid and Scholarships

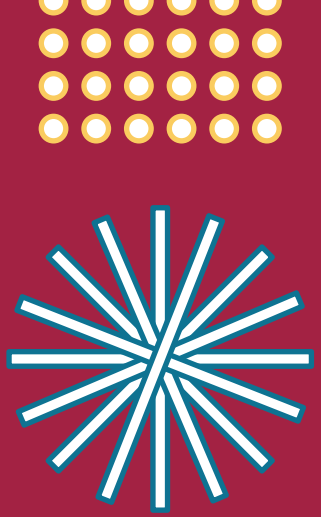
- It is a good idea to do a thorough search for scholarships, including online and/or with a school counselor or other trusted peer or adult.
- Examples of other scholarships include the [SchoolHouse Connection scholarship](#) for current or formerly homeless students and the [Horatio Alger Association scholarship](#) for students who have overcome adversity.
- Remember to pay attention to eligibility criteria and be aware of potential scams (e.g., you need to pay to apply).



Finding Support Once Enrolled

“Squadding up”





Campus Support Programs

Many campuses have support programs for specific (e.g. homeless or foster) and broader (e.g. first generation or lower-income) student groups

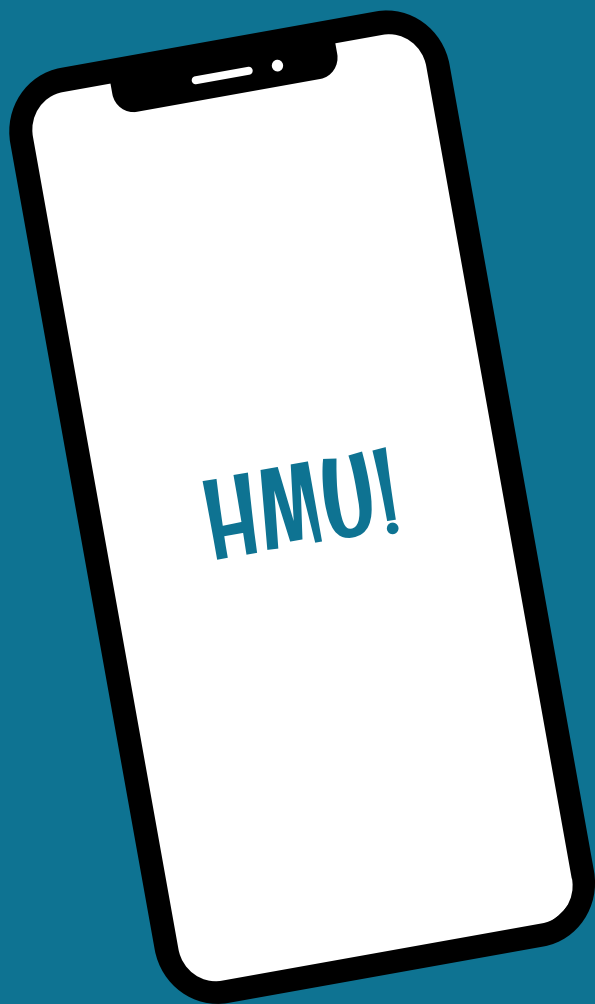
- **Federal:** [TRIO Programs](#)
- **California:** [NextUp / Guardian Scholars Programs](#)
- **Washington:** [Supporting Students Experiencing Homelessness \(SSEH\) Program](#)
- **[Other States](#)**
 - Campus-based homeless and/or foster care student liaisons
 - Enrollment and/or housing priority



Visit the SchoolHouse Connection State Laws Supporting College Students Experiencing Homelessness webpage for more information!

Questions or Comments?





Thank You!



Feel free to reach out with
questions at
christina@pearlstrats.com

**Pearl
Strategies**

Your Rights, Community, and Discussion



Know Your Rights: Housing

Before You Sign, Pay, or Move In

- Understand to what you are agreeing
 - Lease
 - Rent
 - Fair Housing
 - Deposits
 - Landlord Tenant Relationship
- Learn your tenant protections

Building Community Matters

- Support should not end when a program or placement ends
- Identify people, places, and organizations you can stay connected to
- Build more than one pathway for asking for help
- Building Community Toolkit

Group Conversations

- What is one resource or support that young people in your area should know about?
- What is one gap you wish communities or systems addressed better?

Debrief

- What stood out?
- What resources or ideas should everyone hear?
- What themes have you noticed?



Break

Take a few minutes to reset.

We will return at 2:20 PM EST for Community Sessions.

Community Sessions



Community Care Menu

Create a personalized “care menu” with simple options for taking care of yourself based on what you need and the time you have.

Consider what you can do when you have five minutes or an hour, when you need connection, or when you need space. You will leave with a practical tool you can use whenever you need it.



Karaoke Roulette

Pick from fun, random song categories and volunteer to sing if you are feeling brave! Whether you grab the mic or cheer from the crowd, everyone has a role—the goal is to have fun, hype each other up, and build connection with no pressure to perform.





How it Works!

1. 🎡 We will spin the virtual wheel to choose your song.
2. 🎤 When your name is called, get ready — **no song swapping!**
3. 🎵 The song will be played/shared on screen.
4. ⌚ Give us your best performance for **30–60 seconds**.
5. 🙌 Everyone else: hype them up in the chat, reactions, or sing along!
6. 😂 Do not know the song? **Make it up, hum it, dance it out — just have fun!**

Camera on is encouraged, but never required.

★ **THE ONLY RULE:**

No judgment. No pressure. Just vibes. 🎵 😂

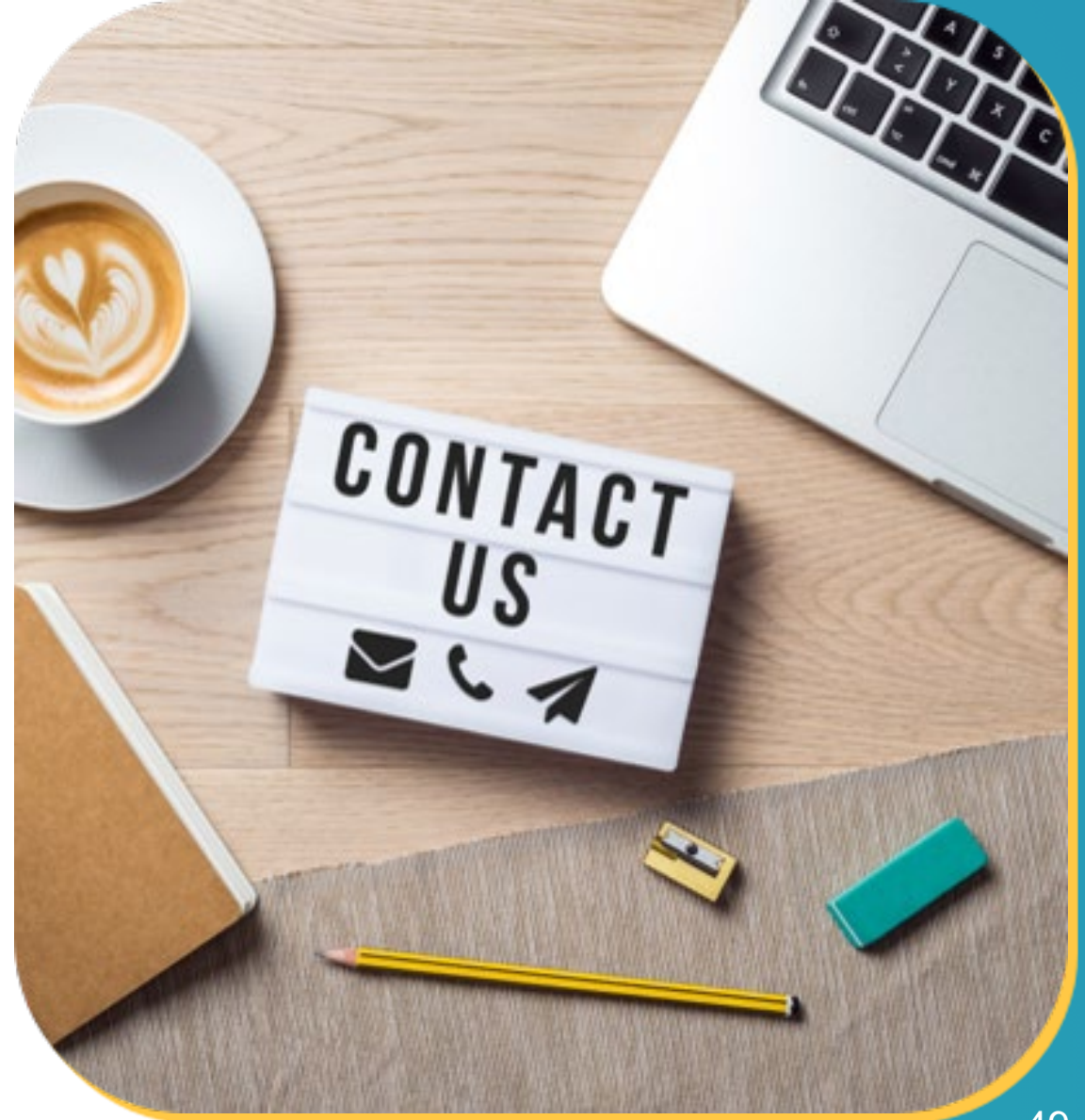
Pass the Mic

Draw a fun prompt and take 30 seconds to answer, share a story, or give your take before passing the mic to someone else. It is a quick, low-pressure way to get people talking, laughing, and learning a little more about each other.



Collab with Us!

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- Youth Collaboratory
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Thank You