Foster Youth Strategic Initiative: 2019 Snapshot

Postsecondary education: Accomplishments and next steps

To support foster youth to earn postsecondary credentials that open career pathways, the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation's Foster Youth Strategic Initiative funds efforts to make postsecondary education accessible for foster youth and support their persistence and completion

Foster youth financial aid applications increased substantially in LA,[1] yet foster youth continue to trail behind their peers in college enrollment

Percent of LA high school seniors in foster care who completed a FAFSA application | *Los Angeles, 2017-2018 & 2018-2019*

2017-2018	33%
2018-2019	61%

Foster youth in LA have lower college enrollment rates than their peers (45 percent, compared to 62 percent), and the rates for both populations have declined over time.[2]

A greater proportion of youth exiting care in NYC were enrolled in postsecondary education in 2018.[3]

Percent of NYC foster youth ages 18–20 aging out of care enrolled in postsecondary education | *New York City, 2018*

	2017	2018
Enrolled in college	10%	15%
Enrolled in Vocational/Trade School	2%	4%

- - - Enrolled in Vocational/Trade School   —— Enrolled in college

Accessible postsecondary education

As foster youth prepare to apply to college, grantees continue to partner with public agencies to ***connect youth to available resources***. For example, **United Friends of the Children** hosts an annual "Ready to Succeed" event in **LA** in partnership with the child welfare agency to connect youth with resources, and a workgroup in **NYC** co-facilitated by the child welfare agency and the **Juvenile Law Center** developed factsheets to educate caseworkers on postsecondary resources.

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[1] John Burton Advocates for Youth (2019). Join the California Foster Youth FAFSA Challenge. Retrieved from https://www.jbaforyouth.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Join-the-California-Foster-Youth-FAFSA-Challenge-Webinar-Slides-1.pdf.

[2] College enrollment within 12 months of high school graduation, among youth graduating in 2017-2018. Source: California Department of Education. (n.d.) *2017-18 College-Going Rate for California High School Students by Postsecondary Institution Type.* Retrieved from https://data1.cde.ca.gov/dataquest/DQCensus/CGR.aspx?agglevel=County&cds=19&year=2017-18.

[3] Among other data sources, this report uses Preparing Youth for Adulthood (PYA) data which is youth- or caseworker-reported and not verified, along with more reliable administrative data. These data should be interpreted with caution. Sources: New York City Administration for Children's Services. (2018). *Report on Youth in Foster Care.* Retrieved from https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/acs/pdf/data-analysis/2018/ReportOnYouthInFC2018.pdf. New York City Administration for Children's Services. (2017). *Report on Youth in Foster Care.* Retrieved from https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/acs/pdf/data-analysis/2017/YouthInFosterCare2017.pdf.

Once foster youth enroll in college, grantees are providing resources and support to *ensure a smooth transition to campus*. For example, the City University of New York's (CUNY's) Foster Care Initiative connects foster youth with academic bridge programming and other supports in **NYC**, and United Friends of the Children provides intensive one-on-one coaching from 11th grade through college completion in **LA**. The Coalition for Responsible Community Development's Project Tipping Point at **LA** Trade Technical College provides high-touch case management during the high school to college transition period. However, many bridge programs in **LA** are not foster-youth-specific, and there may be an opportunity to better meet their needs through more tailored supports.

Stakeholders and grantees in LA and NYC identified the need to strengthen *career and technical education*. First Place for Youth in **LA** is working with foster youth to assess their postsecondary readiness and fit with different career paths. Technical education programs such as those facilitated by The Door in **NYC** serve intentionally small cohorts of foster youth to ensure they receive individualized support. **NYC** has apprenticeship opportunities but lacks comprehensive data on foster youth involvement and completion. Grantees perceive these programs to be underutilized.

Supports for postsecondary completion

New legislation passed in 2019 (SB 150) ensures that foster youth in **California** have access to financial aid earlier in the semester and streamlines the process for reinstating financial aid when academic performance improves. With several key policies enacted in recent years increasing financial and programmatic support for foster youth, grantees *supported campuses with policy implementation* in 2019. The California Community College Chancellor's Office partnered with John Burton Advocates for Youth (JBAY) to create a learning community to regularly convene community college representatives to support the implementation of state-funded campus support programs for foster youth ("Next Up" programs). In **New York**, Children's Aid and the New York Foundling provided technical assistance to college campuses on the financial and program supports available to foster youth through the state's Foster Youth College Success Initiative.

Looking ahead, grantees will continue to *pursue policy solutions and support implementation*. For example, JBAY plans to focus on strengthening coordination and data sharing between housing agencies and colleges, educating campus support programs on new rapid rehousing services available for college students, and developing policy solutions to standardize eligibility requirements for postsecondary resources.

New research findings underscore the importance of financial aid and programmatic supports for foster youth on college campuses. The University of Chicago's CalYOUTH study found that participation in campus support programs for foster youth and receipt of a Chafee grant significantly increased the odds of foster youths' postsecondary persistence.[4] A study by Education Results Partnership and California

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[4] Okpych, N. (2019, October). Findings from the CalYOUTH Study. Presented at Blueprint for Success Conference. Los Angeles, CA.

College Pathways identified that financial aid and counseling/advisement services, among other factors, are positively associated with first year success.[5]

Grantees are addressing identified gaps, such as the complicated pathways for foster youth to identify and apply for available campus-based resources. In 2019, **iFoster's** TAY Americorps program (described in greater detail in the employment issue area), stationed TAY Ambassadors on college campuses and at county agencies in **LA** to provide peer support navigating available resources. **NYC's Fair Futures** coaching model will provide individualized support to youth and help to address the challenge that many provider agencies lack the resources to have dedicated staff with specialized skillsets to support youth in college.

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[5] Financial aid includes student support grants and Pell Grants. Concurrent enrollment in high school and community college and developing an educational plan were also associated with first-year success. Source: Education Results Partnership & California College Pathways (2019). *Pipeline to Success: Supporting California Foster Youth from High School to Community College.* Retrieved from https://www.jbaforyouth.org/erpfosteryouthreport/.