



## The California Foster Youth FAFSA Challenge, Sponsored by John Burton Advocates for Youth *Fact Sheet*

- The Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) provides access to the largest source of financial aid to pay for college, including career and technical education at California's community colleges. In addition to federal aid, the FAFSA is used to determine eligibility for aid from the state as well as from colleges. Students who do not qualify for federal aid can complete the California Dream Act Application to apply for state-based financial aid.
- John Burton Advocates for Youth (JBAY) is sponsoring the California Foster Youth "FAFSA Challenge" in collaboration with the California Department of Education and the California Community Colleges Chancellor's office. The Challenge aims to ensure that foster youth have access to the financial aid they need to launch careers and prepare them for success in life.
- There are nearly 64,000 children and youth in California's foster care system. Of these, over 16,000 are youth 16-21 years old. Ninety-six percent of California's foster youth aspire to complete college; however, by age 26, just 8 percent of foster youth have obtained an associate or bachelor's degree as compared with 46 percent of the non-foster youth population.
- Only about half of foster youth who enrolled in California's community colleges last year received a federal Pell grant even though nearly all would qualify. The goal of the Challenge is to get at least 60 percent of foster youth who are high school seniors in each of California's 58 counties to complete the FAFSA or California Dream Act Application.
- A primary focus of the FAFSA Challenge is helping local school officials identify and connect to foster youth and supply them with the information they need to receive financial aid. For a variety of reasons, FAFSA completion campaigns aimed at the broader student population have had difficulty reaching foster youth and making them aware of opportunities for financial assistance.
- JBAY is providing promotional materials, training, and incentives for counties to reach out to foster youth and help them complete the application. The FAFSA Challenge is administered at the local level by County Offices of Education Foster Youth Services Coordinating Programs in collaboration with schools and districts, community-based organizations, child welfare agencies, Independent Living Programs and nearby colleges.
- Studies have shown that 90 percent of high school seniors who complete the FAFSA go on to enroll in college within 12 months, compared to just 45 percent of high school seniors who do not complete the application.

- JBAY provides a wide range of educational resources for foster youth scholars and for educators at [cacollegepathways.org](http://cacollegepathways.org). Its *Financial Aid Guide for California Foster Youth* is available as a free download on the site.
- Counties with the highest rates of foster youth completing the FAFSA will receive an award of up to \$1,000.
- John Burton Advocates for Youth is a statewide non-profit organization based in San Francisco, working to improve the quality of life for California's foster, former foster, and homeless youth. More information is available at <http://www.jbaforyouth.org/>.