POLICIES AND PROCEDURES
Academic Year 2018/2019

THE CALIFORNIA FOSTER YOUTH FAFSA CHALLENGE, led by John Burton Advocates for Youth (JBAY) in partnership with the California Department of Education and the California Community College Chancellor's Office (CCCCO), is a statewide campaign to increase the number of foster youth who are prepared for success as they matriculate from high school into college by ensuring that foster youth are accessing financial aid.

GOAL OF THE CAMPAIGN: The goal for 2018/2019 is that at least 60 percent of California's high school seniors in foster care complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) or California Dream Act application.[1]

HOW THE CAMPAIGN WORKS: Local efforts are led by County Office of Education (COE) Foster Youth Services Coordinating Programs (FYSCP) in collaboration with local partners including school districts, community-based organizations, child welfare agencies, Independent Living Programs, and local colleges. JBAY provides technical assistance, promotional materials, student incentives, support for tracking FAFSA completion, and other resources to participating FYSCPs to support them in this effort. FYSCPs "taking the challenge" will be recognized and celebrated throughout the campaign.

BACKGROUND: Every year, billions of dollars in federal financial aid go unused because eligible students do not complete the FAFSA. According to the California Student Aid Commission (CSAC), 58 percent of California's high school seniors in the class of 2018 completed the FAFSA or California Dream Act. While there has been a push in recent years, both nationally and in California, to increase the number of high school seniors who complete the

FAFSA, students in foster care are not being reached in high numbers. The rate of FAFSA completion among high school seniors in foster care in 2017/2018 was 45 percent, a rate lower than that of other high school seniors. With education a key driver toward financial stability in adulthood, and receipt of financial aid crucial to enrolling and persisting in college for youth from low-income backgrounds, foster youth need and deserve the same access to financial aid as their peers.

Successful completion of the FAFSA (or California Dream Act for undocumented students) is the single most important step in ensuring foster youth receive financial aid and subsequently enroll and persist in college, including career and technical education programs provided by California's 115 community colleges. Data shows that 90 percent of high school seniors who complete the FAFSA go on to enroll in college within 12 months as compared to just 45 percent of high school seniors who do not complete the FAFSA. A February 2017 report on community college students in California found that 47 percent of students with a zero-expected family contribution who received more than $7,500 in financial aid graduated from college or transferred from a 2-year to 4-year institution, compared to 17 percent of those who received between $1,001 and $2,500.

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[1] While it is anticipated that the majority of foster youth will be eligible to complete the FAFSA, undocumented students, including those with an application for Special Immigrant Juvenile Status pending, are not eligible for federal financial aid but can access State aid by submitting a Dream Act application. If an undocumented student does not have an application for SIJS pending, the child welfare agency should be contacted to ensure one is put in place immediately.

PARTNERS: The lead state agency partnering with JBAY on the California Foster Youth FAFSA Challenge is the California Department of Education's Foster Youth Services Coordinating Program (FYSCP), a statewide agency charged in state law with preparing foster youth for post-secondary education. This legislative mandate, established in 2016 with the passage of Assembly Bill 854, charges each of the 58 county FYSCPs to prepare foster youth for post-secondary education. Other partners include the California Community College Chancellor's Office and various local government agencies, school districts, and community based organizations who will directly support high school seniors in foster care in completing the FAFSA or California Dream Act.

HOW TO REGISTER: Registration is open to FYSCPs only. FYSCPs can join the challenge by completing a short registration form that can be found HERE. The deadline to register is **November 15, 2018**, however FYSCPs are encouraged to register as early as possible. Information requested in order to register includes:

1. Name of the FYSCP point person who will be JBAY's primary contact for the FAFSA Challenge.

2. Number of qualified high school seniors attending school in the county for the 2018-19 academic year (see "Determining the Baseline" below for additional information regarding determining this number).

Partner organizations wanting to support the effort can use this same link to provide their contact information, and JBAY will connect them with their local county contact.

PARTICIPATING COUNTIES RECEIVE:

- **Free promotional materials** that can be used to communicate the importance of filing the FAFSA or Dream Act, highlight important things to know when completing the form, and remind students of key deadlines.

- **Access to free copies of JBAY's new *Financial Aid Guide for California Foster Youth* including a Spanish language version.** The number of copies made available will be dependent on the number of high school seniors reported. The Financial Aid Guide for Foster Youth is available online at www.jbaforyouth.org/ca-fy-financial-aid-guide.

- **Two chances to win up to $1000 in unrestricted program grant funds.** One round of winners will be selected in March 2019 and another round will be selected in June 2019. At the end of the challenge an additional award will be given to the county showing the biggest improvement over 2017/2018 rates.

- **Technical Support:**
  - ○ Toolkit with resources and strategies to help FYSCPs develop their campaign and boost FAFSA and Dream Act completion.
  - ○ Access to webinars on FAFSA- related topics.
  - ○ Phone and e-mail support for technical questions about the FAFSA/Dream Act. In most cases, responses will be provided to questions within one business day.
  - ○ One-on-one support via phone, e-mail, and in-person meetings with developing a local campaign and tracking FAFSA and Dream Act completion.

DETERMINING THE BASELINE: Upon registration, each FYSCP will be asked to provide the number of current 12th grade foster youth attending school in their county based on the information available in CalPADS. FYSCPs are requested to provide the number of 12th graders as indicated on their countywide CalPADS 5.7 report, Foster Focus *Financial Aid Checklist Report* or other system used by your county. Reports should be pulled on or around the date of registration for the Challenge. Numbers should include students in alternative education settings, and students in family maintenance and family reunification placements.

JBAY recognizes that the number of 12th graders will change over the course of the year as students enter and exit counties. This baseline number is meant to provide JBAY with a general sense of the size of your county's eligible population. Note that the campaign is based on FAFSA completion rates of current foster youth who are high school seniors and does not include former foster youth who exited foster care prior to their senior year.

All 12th graders should be included, regardless of credit count. While some 12th graders may not have enough credits to graduate, because it is administratively onerous for many counties to track this information on an ongoing basis, it is not practical for the Challenge to exclude these students from the count. Additional information regarding tracking students who enter or exit your county or foster care during the school year is included later in this document.

TRACKING FAFSA COMPLETION: FYSCPs must track the number of their high school seniors who complete the FAFSA or Dream Act through WebGrants, the online portal through which schools and districts submit GPA information for Cal Grant consideration. The federal FAFSA completion initiative, started under the Obama administration, entitles County Offices of Education to have access to this student-level FAFSA completion data.

Reports can be generated that show which students have submitted a FAFSA or Dream Act, which have not, which of these applications are complete, and which are incomplete. This information will be compared with the list of known foster youth who are high school seniors within each county to determine the rate of FAFSA completion overall. Note that all FAFSA completions should be included regardless of whether the FAFSA was completed before or after the FYSCP signed up for the FAFSA challenge.

Information regarding FAFSA completion is typically updated in WebGrants about 5-7 business days after submission of the application. If a student completes the California Dream Act application, information is updated in real time. WebGrants reports are updated each weekend.

In order to request a log-in credential to the WebGrants system, FYSCP Coordinators should first determine if their COE already has a WebGrants administrator. COEs without an existing WebGrants administrator can contact JBAY for additional instructions or consult the WebGrants manual posted on the FAFSA Challenge webpage.

Once a log-in credential has been obtained, FYSCP coordinators can consult the WebGrants manual on the FAFSA Challenge website or contact the JBAY support team for assistance with downloading the appropriate reports. The California Student Aid Commission also offers a user help line at schoolsupport@csac.ca.gov or (888) 294-0153 and provides webinars about how to use the WebGrants system HERE.

It is required that FYSCPs utilize the WebGrants system as this will provide the most up-to-date and accurate information as well as be the easiest and most accessible method of tracking FAFSA completion. Local schools and districts also have access to WebGrants, and if an FYSCP is unable to utilize WebGrants themselves, requesting data from individual schools or districts can also be a method for obtaining the data, however counties must confirm that the school or district verified the information through WebGrants. Keep in mind that this method will require FYSCPs to contact each high school or district individually for each reporting period and will make it challenging for an FYSCP to update their FAFSA completion list on a regular basis. It is recommended that FYSCPs also request that the school or district provide information regarding whether the student has a "No EFC" flag and if a GPA was successfully matched.

In the case of a student attending a non-accredited or non-public school whose information cannot be obtained through WebGrants, viewing the student's FAFSA submission confirmation or Student Aid Report (SAR) is allowable, but only in these limited circumstances.

STUDENT OUTREACH: Based on the information obtained from WebGrants regarding which students have and have not completed the FAFSA or Dream Act, FYSCPs will coordinate with local school districts and other local partners such as ILPs and community colleges to ensure direct support is provided to students who have not yet completed the FAFSA or Dream Act.

During student outreach, it is also strongly encouraged that FYSCPs assist students to ensure that their high school GPA has been uploaded to WebGrants by their high school, to submit a Chafee Grant application (if eligible) and to sign up for a student WebGrants Account.

- **GPA Verification**: In order to qualify for a CalGrant, students must have a verified GPA submitted to CSAC. In most cases this will be submitted electronically by their high school. It is important to verify that the information has been correctly submitted and matched to the student's FAFSA or CADAA. Consult the WebGrants User Manual for additional information.

- **Chafee Grant Application:** If the student was in foster care between 16 and 18 they may be eligible for $5,000 a year for their post-secondary education.

- **Student WebGrants Account:** This tool helps students manage the financial aid process including managing their Cal Grant and/or Chafee accounts online.

DATA SUBMISSION DATES: Participating counties will submit periodic reports with FAFSA/Dream Act completion information to JBAY. Data will be submitted to JBAY three times:

REPORT DEADLINE	PERIOD
December 12	Report on those who submitted between October 1, 2018 and November 30, 2018
March 18	Report on those who submitted between October 1, 2018 and March 2, 2018 (FAFSA priority application deadline)
June 15	Report on those who submitted between October 1, 2018 and May 31, 2019

If a student shows up in WebGrants as **"No EFC,"** meaning the student has submitted the FAFSA but the application contains errors that do not allow the FAFSA to be processed or the Expected Family Contribution **(**EFC**)** to be determined**,** the application will count toward the challenge but JBAY strongly encourages FYSCPs to follow up with any student who is designated as **"no EFC"** to correct errors so these students can get financial aid**.**

Information regarding how data should be calculated and submitted is included on page 5 and 6.

Challenge participants are strongly encouraged to get as many students as possible to complete the FAFSA or Dream Act by March 2nd so they have access to the greatest amount of aid.

FYSCP AWARDS: Four participating counties with the highest rates of FAFSA completion among counties of comparable size will be awarded unrestricted grants of up to $1000 to promote foster youth success in matriculating from high school to post- secondary education. JBAY will divide participating counties up by size (very small, small, medium, and large) based on their number of high school seniors in foster care. The county with the highest rate of FAFSA completion in each category will receive the award. **Two sets of awards** will be given: one for the highest completion rates as of the March 2 priority deadline and one set for the highest completion rates at the close of the campaign in June 2018. The first set of awards will be announced during the Foster Youth Education Summit in April 2019. The second set of awards will be announced no later than June 28, 2019. If more than one FYSCP has the same highest rate, a winner will be selected at random from among those with the highest rates.

In addition, a new award will be given this year for the county with the greatest increase in FAFSA/Dream Act completion rate as compared to the 2017/2018 rate submitted to JBAY.

CELEBRATING SUCCESSES: The award recipients based on the March 2 priority deadline (see above), along with all counties who meet or exceed the 60 percent target rate, will be recognized during the Foster Youth Education Summit in April 2019. The second round of award recipients in June 2019 will be highlighted in local and statewide media and will be celebrated during JBAY's annual Burton Book Fund event in August.

FOR MORE INFORMATION: Contact Deborah Pruitt at deborah@jbay.org.

SIGNIFICANT DATES:

SEPTEMBER

September 26, 2018: California Foster Youth FAFSA Challenge Webinar from 10:00–11:15 am.

Register here: https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/35178119797423 94881or go to www.jbaforyouth.org to listen to a recording of the webinar after September 26, 2018.

OCTOBER

October 1, 2018: FAFSA Opens and the Challenge Begins

NOVEMBER

November 15, 2018: Deadline to sign up for the challenge. Register HERE.

DECEMBER

By December 12, 2018: FYSCPs submit to JBAY the number of students who have completed the FAFSA or Dream Act between **October 1, 2018** and **November 30, 2018.** December reports can be submitted HERE.

MARCH

March 2, 2019: Priority FAFSA deadline.

By March 18, 2019: FYSCPs submit to JBAY the number of students who have completed the FAFSA or Dream Act between **October 1, 2018** and **March 2, 2019.** March reports can be submitted HERE.

APRIL

April 1-2, 2019: Awards ceremony for first round award recipients at Foster Youth Education Summit.

JUNE

By June 15, 2019: FYSCPs submit to JBAY the number of students who have completed the FAFSA or Dream Act between October 1, 2018 and May 31, 2019. This will be the last round of data collected for the 2018–19 challenge. June reports can be submitted HERE.

By June 28, 2019: Final award winners announced.

AUGUST

August 2019: Awards ceremony for second round award recipients at JBAY's Annual Burton Book Fund event.

TRACKING ENTRIES AND EXITS OF HIGH SCHOOL SENIORS: JBAY recognizes that foster youth are a highly mobile population and that new students will enter your county during the course of the school year, and students who were included in the original foster youth count will exit your county or foster care.

If you utilize Foster Focus, the *Financial Aid Checklist Report* will automatically generate a cumulative list of seniors who have been attending school in your county for 30 days. If, however you rely on the CalPADS 5.7 report, this report provides only a point-in-time snapshot. In this case, the protocol described below should be used to track entries and exits of students in order to provide accurate reports.

At the beginning of the Campaign, for the purpose of tracking FAFSA completion, FYSCPs should prepare a list of all high school seniors who are identified as attending school in their county. All 12th graders should be included, regardless of credit count. While some 12th graders may not have enough credits to graduate, because it is administratively onerous for many counties to track this information on an ongoing basis, it is not practical for the Challenge to exclude these students from the count.

If a student is in a charter school that is incorporated in one county but physically located in a different county, the county of incorporation does not need to include that student in the count. Please contact the FYSCP coordinator in the county of residence to ensure that the student has been identified to their program.

We recommend using an internal spreadsheet to track both the total cumulative count for the year and to easily track which students require additional outreach. An example is provided below and a template of this spreadsheet is available at www.jbaforyouth.org/fafsachallenge.

Those who are included on the initial list should be given a "start date" that corresponds to the date that the list was pulled. In the example below, the list was pulled on 9/4/18. As FAFSAs or CADAAs are completed and this information is verified through WebGrants, students can be "checked off" by indicating completion on the spreadsheet. As students exit the county or foster care, an exit date should be recorded on the spreadsheet and as new students enter and enroll in school in the county, they can be added to your list with their school enrollment date into school being the start date. The numbers reported to JBAY should be a cumulative total of the number of students enrolled in school in your county

for at least 30 cumulative days, regardless of whether the FAFSA was completed while in your county. Please note that:

- All eligible students who are enrolled in your county for at least 30 cumulative days from the FAFSA Challenge Launch (October 1, 2018) must be included in your *Total Foster Youth* count for a given reporting period. A student who left the county after 30 days should not fall off your total count of students for the following report.

- If a student has been enrolled in your county for less than 30 days or part or all of their 30 days in county was prior to October 1, that student should not be included in the *Total Foster Youth* count.

- If, however, a youth is enrolled in your county for less than 30 days and you assist her or him with completing the FAFSA while in your county, that student may be added to the *Total Foster Youth* and the *Total FAFSA Submissions* counts.

- CalPADS provides only point-in-time counts. You will need to utilize the *Internal Tracking Sheet* provided by JBAY to maintain the cumulative total count for the year OR the Foster Focus *Financial Aid Checklist Report*.

- Students who graduate prior to the end of the school year, who were enrolled in school in you county for at least 30 days, should be included in your total.

Using the example spreadsheet below, this county would report 5 FAFSA completions out of a total of 7 students, for a total of 71 percent. Although Joseph Washington completed a FASFA, he is not included in the total as he was not enrolled in the county for at least 30 days.

JBAY recognizes that this is not a perfect system and could result both in counties getting "credit" for FAFSAs completed by other counties as well as students without FAFSAs being counted "against" your totals even when the student was in your county only for a short period of time. We are hoping that these will balance each other out to some degree. This will also mean that some FAFSA completions will be double- or even triple- counted. However, because of the limitations of the WebGrants system, to attempt to track more precisely would involve considerable extra work on the part of the FYSCPs. As such, we have chosen to use a method for the FAFSA Challenge that is less precise, but easier to manage administratively.

Name	Start date	Exit date	FAFSA completed	Include in count?	Student WebGrants Account	Chafee Submitted	GPA Verified
John Doe	9/4/18		YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Mary Johnson	9/4/18		NO	YES	NO	NO	NO
Pedro Gonzalez	9/4/18		YES	YES	YES	NO	NO
Tameisha Williams	9/4/18	1/15/19	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Michelle Smith	9/4/18		YES	YES	NO	YES	YES
Joseph Washington	11/4/18	11/27/18	YES	NO	NO	NO	NO
Cindy Chen	12/8/18		YES	YES	YES	NO	NO
Xavier Brown	2/9/19		NO	YES	NO	NO	NO

SUBMITTING DATA: To qualify for the FAFSA Challenge awards for counties, a report of FAFSA completion rates must be submitted to JBAY via the online form(s) on or before December 15, March 18, and June 15. The respective forms can be found above under Significant Dates above and will also be sent out to counties two weeks prior to the deadline. The totals number of seniors who completed their FAFSA must be verified by WebGrants.

Reports should include:

1. Total number of foster youth high school seniors who have attended school in the county during the reporting period for at least 30 cumulative days,
2. Total number of foster youth high school seniors who have completed a FAFSA or Dream Act application, and
3. Percentage completion rate. (Total foster youth seniors who completed a FAFSA or CADAA/Total foster youth seniors)

The report will also ask you to provide information regarding the source(s) of data used to determine each number.

For an internal tracking spreadsheet template go to http://www.jbaforyouth.org/fafsachallenge.

Thank you for joining the

CALIFORNIA FOSTER YOUTH

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CHALLENGE