

**Senate Bill 860 (Beall)**  
Frequently Asked Questions

**1. What is the goal of Senate Bill 860?**

The goal of this bill is to ensure that efforts undertaken over the past two years to increase the rates of completion of the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) among high school seniors in foster care by Foster Youth Services Coordinating Programs (FYSCP) continue to be prioritized under the FYSCPs' existing obligations to facilitate collaboration between county agencies, school districts, and community organizations to ensure that students receive support with transitions to postsecondary education.

By ensuring that foster youth are completing FAFSAs, a greater number of these students will have the resources they need to be successful in college.

**2. What is the role of the Foster Youth Services Coordinating Program?**

FYSCPs are housed within County Offices of Education and are responsible for coordination of services across agencies and ensuring that school districts and other local educational agencies are providing services to foster youth pupils with the purpose of ensuring positive educational outcomes for these students.

The program was established by the legislature based on a recognition that the academic status of pupils in foster care is often profoundly impacted by the foster care system. This reality, combined with the intricacies of state and federal laws that govern educational requirements for foster youth and the small numbers of these students relative to the general student population requires a specialized form of support beyond what can be provided solely by school districts and other local educational agencies.

**3. Do FYSCPs have responsibilities currently related to college preparation and matriculation?**

Current statute defines the responsibilities of the FYSCPs related to college preparation and matriculation as follows:

Facilitating collaboration between county agencies, school districts, and community organizations to ensure coordinated and nonduplicative service delivery and to ensure pupils in foster care receive the educational supports and services they need to succeed in school. This may include, but is not limited to, education emancipation services such as support with transitions to postsecondary education or career technical education programs. (EDC 42921(e)(1)(A)(ii))

Describing in their coordinating plan how the program will facilitate coordination with local postsecondary educational institutions, including, but not limited to, the California Community Colleges, the California State University, and the University of California, to ensure foster youth pupils meet admission requirements and access programs that support their matriculation needs. (EDC 42921(e)(3)(B))

#### **4. How do foster youth college outcomes compare to the general student population?**

The evidence is abundant that foster youth are not faring well in college. In California, foster youth are 35% less likely to pass courses than their peers.<sup>1</sup> By age 26 just 8% of former foster youth have achieved an Associate's degree or higher as compared to 47% of the same-age population of non-foster youth.<sup>2</sup> A 2019 study found that when comparing first-year academic outcomes in community college, foster youth completed six fewer credit units than their peers and earned half a grade point less than non-foster youth students. The average GPA for foster youth is just 1.61, below the standard required to maintain financial aid and remain enrolled.<sup>3</sup>

#### **5. Why is it important for foster youth to achieve a college degree?**

Without a college degree, foster youth have a much lower likelihood of long-term economic security. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the median weekly earnings of an individual with a Bachelor's degree is \$1,137. In contrast, the median weekly earnings of a worker with only a high-school diploma is roughly half of that figure, at \$678.<sup>4</sup> Since 2008 the U.S. economy has lost 5.6 million jobs that require only a high school diploma or less while gaining 9.7 million jobs requiring a post-secondary credential.<sup>5</sup>

#### **6. What is the relationship between FAFSA completion and college enrollment?**

According to the National College Access Network, completion of the FAFSA is one of the best predictors of whether a high school senior will go on to college, as seniors who complete the FAFSA are 84% more likely to immediately enroll in postsecondary education. For students in the lowest socioeconomic quintile, FAFSA completion is associated with a 127% increase in immediate college enrollment.<sup>6</sup>

#### **7. What is the relationship between financial aid and college retention and completion?**

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<sup>1</sup> Educational Results Partnership, *Charting the Course: Using Data to Support Foster Youth College Success* (2015).

<sup>2</sup> [Midwest Evaluation of the Adult Functioning of Former Foster Youth: Outcomes at Age 26](#). (2011)

<sup>3</sup> Pipeline to Success (2019)

<sup>4</sup> [US Bureau of Labor and Statistic. Current Population Survey](#) (2015)

<sup>5</sup> Georgetown University Center of Education and the Workforce analysis of Current Population Survey (CPS) data, 2007-2016.

<sup>6</sup> National College Access Network, [Survey Data Strengthen Association Between FAFSA Completion and Enrollment](#) (2019).

Student success increases with improved access to financial aid. 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 or transferred, compared to 17 percent of those who received between \$1,001 and \$2,500.<sup>7</sup> A randomized control group study in Wisconsin found that a \$1,000 increase in grant aid improves college retention rates by one to five percentage points.<sup>8</sup>

A recent study that examined the impact of Pell grant receipt specifically on foster youth in California found that students who received a Pell grant during their first year had a GPA that was on average .07 points higher than those who did not and completed 2.12 more units. Receipt of other student support grants such as the Chafee grant (which also requires completion of the FAFSA) resulted in a .2 point increase in GPA and completion of 3 additional units.<sup>9</sup> Research from the CalYouth Study, which examines youth participating in California's extended foster care program found that youth receiving a Chafee grant were 4.26 times more likely to persist than those who did not, after controlling for a variety of factors.<sup>10</sup>

## **8. Are foster youth receiving the financial aid that they are eligible for?**

Despite virtually all foster youth meeting income eligibility requirements to receive a federal Pell grant, in 2017/2018 just 49% of first-time students in community college who identified as foster youth received a Pell grant. This compares to 78% of these same students who received a community college fee waiver. The key difference in eligibility between these two sources of aid is that the completion of a FAFSA is required in order to obtain a Pell grant.

## **9. What is required in order to obtain financial aid?**

For all forms of federal financial aid, the CalGrant and the Chafee Education and Training Voucher, students must complete a FAFSA. Undocumented students who do not qualify for federal aid can complete the California Dream Act Application to receive state aid. Students must meet income criteria to qualify for aid and GPA minimums and age requirements for the CalGrant. For the Chafee ETV students must have been in foster care after the age of 16, be under 26 years old, be enrolled at least half time and complete a separate Chafee grant application.

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<sup>7</sup> The Institute for College Access and Success, [Aiding Success: The Role of Federal and State Financial Aid in Supporting California Community College Students](#) (2017).

<sup>8</sup> Sara Goldrick-Rab, Robert Kelchen, Douglas Harris, and James Benson. (2015). "Reducing Income Inequality in Educational Attainment: Experimental Evidence on the Impact of Financial Aid on College Completion." University of Wisconsin-Madison, IRP Discussion Paper No. 1393-12.

<sup>9</sup> Educational Results Partnership, [Pipeline to Success: Supporting California Foster Youth from High School to Community College](#) (2019).

<sup>10</sup> [Presentation](#) at 2019 Blueprint for Success conference by Nathanael Okpych, October 28, 2019.

The only source of government aid that does not require a FAFSA is the Promise Grant tuition waiver at community colleges. This program waives tuition costs, however it does not provide any funding for non-tuition costs such as housing, books and transportation.

**10. How much is available to students who complete a FAFSA?**

The FAFSA opens the door to a variety of forms of financial aid. The most common forms available to foster youth are the Pell grant, Cal Grant and Chafee ETV.

<b>Form of Financial Aid</b> (Levels listed are maximum awards)	<b>Community college</b>	<b>CSU</b>	<b>UC</b>	<b>Private College</b>
Federal Pell Grant	\$6,195	\$6,195	\$6,195	\$6,195
State Cal Grant	\$1,672	\$7,414	\$14,302	\$10,895
Chafee ETV	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$5,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$12,687</b>	<b>\$18,609</b>	<b>\$25,497</b>	<b>\$22,090</b>

**11. Why is the FYSCP the entity that should be tasked with the responsibility of coordinating FAFSA completion efforts?**

FYSCPs are the entity that has been designated by the state to coordinate education-related services for foster youth across agencies including school districts, child welfare and probation agencies, Independent Living Programs, community partners and post-secondary institutions. The responsibility for supporting students with FAFSA completion does not lie with a single agency, but rather is a task undertaken by a range of partners. While there are a variety of places that a student can receive help with FAFSA completion, no agency is currently explicitly tasked with coordinating these efforts. Child welfare and probation agencies are required to identify in the case plan of any youth 16 or older who will support the youth to complete the FAFSA,<sup>11</sup> however these agencies do not have access to the systems that enable them to track FAFSA completion.

FYSCPs are the ideal home for this missing piece. The proposed legislation does not anticipate that FYSCP staff will provide the direct service necessary to ensure FAFSA completion, but rather that these programs coordinate efforts of other partners, provide technical assistance to school districts about the specialized needs of foster youth and track countywide completion rates in order to gauge progress in this essential element of the college transition process.

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<sup>11</sup> WIC 16501.1(g)(B)(20)

**12. What efforts have been undertaken previously to support foster youth FAFSA completion?**

FYSCPs began a concerted effort to track rates of FAFSA completion among high school seniors in foster care during academic year 2017/2018. John Burton Advocates for Youth sponsored a “Foster Youth FAFSA Challenge” and provided resources to FYSCPs to support them to coordinate FAFSA completion efforts in their counties. This effort was repeated in 2018/2019 and is currently underway for a third year. More details about this effort can be found [HERE](#). Currently, 50 of 58 counties participate in the challenge. All non-participating counties but one, Sacramento County, are very small counties with fewer than 10 high school seniors in foster care countywide.

**13. Is there evidence that this approach will increase rates of FAFSA completion?**

During the first year of the FAFSA challenge, 45% of foster youth who were seniors in high school completed a FAFSA. The effort was repeated in 2018/2019 and by focusing attention on FAFSA completion, providing resources to school districts and child welfare partners, and tracking completion rates, the rate increased to 57%.

**14. How many foster youth are enrolled in California schools as high school seniors?**

In 2017/2018 there were 4523 foster youth identified as high school seniors across the state’s 58 counties. Thirty-seven (69%) of counties have fewer than 50 students. Just six counties have more than 200 high school seniors in foster care across the entire county, with Los Angeles being home to just over a quarter of high school seniors. Foster youth represent just less than one percent of the total population of high school seniors in California.

**15. How many foster youth currently go on to college after graduating high school?**

Of those foster youth who graduated high school in 2017/2018, 48.3% enrolled in college. Of these, 82% enrolled in a community college and 17% enrolled in a 4-year college or university. By comparison, 64.4% of all high school graduates enrolled in college and 55% of these students enrolled in a community college and 44% enrolled in a 4-year college or university.

**16. What are the current reporting requirements for FYSCPs related to post-secondary education.**

Existing statute requires that FYSCPs report the number of pupils in foster care participating in foster youth services coordinating programs who successfully transition to postsecondary education.

In addition, current statute requires that CDE collaborate with the Chancellor of the California Community Colleges and the Chancellor of the California State University to identify indicators

that can be used to track access to postsecondary education for pupils in foster care participating in a foster youth services coordinating program. CDE has opted to include FAFSA completion rates as a required data element for the past two years based on this section.

**17. Is there a mechanism in place for FYSCPs to report FAFSA completion rates?**

County Offices of Education are able to access the WebGrants system operated by the California Student Aid Commission (CSAC) in order to verify whether a student has completed a FAFSA or CADAA. This system enables FYSCPs to both track the completion status at the student level and compile aggregated statistics. CSAC has developed a streamlined system for larger counties that provides these counties with regular FAFSA status reports for all high school seniors identified by the FYSCP as foster youth.