

Facts About California's New Requirements for Foster Youth Services Coordinating Programs (Senate Bill 860)

Effective January 1, 2021, California adopted new rules clarifying the role of Foster Youth Services Coordinating Programs (FYSCPs) to include coordination of efforts to support FAFSA completion among foster youth who are high school seniors. It also adds FAFSA completion rates to their bi-annual reporting requirement.

WHAT IS 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.

WHAT ARE THE NEW OBLIGATIONS OF FYSCPs?

As a condition of receiving funding, each FYSCP must develop and implement a foster youth services coordinating plan, which describes, among other things, how the program will facilitate coordination with local postsecondary educational institutions to ensure foster youth pupils meet admission requirements and access programs that support their matriculation needs. Under SB 860, the plan must now also describe how the program will coordinate efforts to ensure, to the extent possible, the completion of the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) or the California Dream Act Application for foster youth in grade 12.

WHAT ARE THE NEW REPORTING REQUIREMENTS?

Prior to the enactment of SB 860, statute required that FYSCPs report to the Superintendent by May 15 of each even-numbered year, various information, including the number of pupils in foster care participating in FYSCPs who successfully transition to postsecondary education. In addition, prior statute required 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. These data are then reported to the appropriate policy and fiscal committees of the Legislature and the Governor.

Under SB 860, FYSCPs must also now report the number and percentage of pupils in foster care who successfully complete a Free Application for Federal Student Aid or California Dream Act Application while in grade 12.

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 CADA. This system enables FYSCPs to both track the completion status at the student level and compile aggregated statistics. In 2021 CSAC will implement a streamlined system that provides FYSCPs with regular status reports for all high school seniors identified by the FYSCP as foster youth.