

TURNING DREAMS INTO DEGREES:

A TRAINING TO EMPOWER L.A. COUNTY'S CAREGIVERS AND PROVIDERS TO SUPPORT FOSTER YOUTH TO ENROLL AND SUCCEED IN COLLEGE

Facilitator's Guide
November 2019



Produced by the OYC Foster Youth College Advancement Project

Acknowledgments

An initiative within the L.A. Opportunity Youth Collaborative, the Foster Youth College Advancement Project seeks to increase foster youth postsecondary attainment in L.A. County in order to help youth transition to sustainable careers and achieve self-sufficiency. The project is jointly convened by John Burton Advocates for Youth and UNITE-LA, and brings together key stakeholders and partners from K-12 education, higher education, child welfare, local government, and the nonprofit sector to advance this goal.

The project partners recognize the important role that caregivers/providers play in supporting foster youth in their college journeys and have designed these training materials to empower caregivers/providers with comprehensive information about the college planning and matriculation processes. We also recognize the important role that child welfare and higher education professionals play in providing ongoing support and training to caregivers/providers and hope that these materials equip them with a strong foundation in college planning.

For their leadership in designing these materials, the project partners would like to acknowledge Jessica Petrass of John Burton Advocates for Youth and Juana Hernandez and Akin Abioye of UNITE-LA. The partners would like to thank Maria Granados and the FKCE Programs at Citrus College, El Camino College, L.A. Mission College, and Pasadena City College for reviewing and providing early feedback on these materials.

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Introduction

Thank you for your work to empower caregivers/providers with the information they need to support foster youth in their college planning. Together with the accompanying *Turning Dreams into Degrees* presentation slides (“Education Course 1: Supporting Foster Youth through Early College Awareness and Preparation” and “Education Course 2: Supporting Successful Transitions from High School to College”), this facilitator’s guide will prepare you to train caregivers/providers on the college planning process. It will also provide you with helpful background information, general facilitation tips, and additional resources for further reference.

It is worth noting that the college matriculation process is a complex and multifaceted process. As such, caregivers/providers and foster youth should begin preparing for this process early on. It is not uncommon for foster youth to postpone college planning until they reach their senior year of high school, or to even wait until after high school graduation to begin making a college plan. This type of delayed planning can greatly reduce the likelihood that a foster youth will complete college, as well as limit their college enrollment options and financial aid resources.

As such, we recommend engaging caregivers/providers in early and sustained conversations about college planning. Education Course 1 is designed for caregivers/providers who have youth in grades 6-10 in their care, while Education Course 2 provides information that is appropriate for caregivers/providers with youth in grades 11 and 12. Education Course 2 may also be useful for caregivers/providers who have youth who have recently completed high school but who have not yet entered college. Both courses are tailored for our California context, taking into account our unique systems of higher education, available state financial aid programs, and local campus programs and student support services.

This guide summarizes key learning objectives for each section, provides additional context and ideas for facilitation, and clarifies complex information with illustrative examples. The guide concludes with additional resources and a list of suggested readings for those looking to further deepen their knowledge on this topic.

General Facilitation Tips

These materials are intended for public use, to be distributed widely and at no cost, provided that proper citation is noted. The target audience for these presentations are caregivers/providers with youth ages 12 -19 in their care who are currently enrolled in middle or high school, or recent high school graduates who have not yet enrolled in college. When determining which Education Course to complete, caregivers/providers should pick the course that most closely corresponds with the grade level of their youth.

Each course is intended to be delivered over a 3-hour timeframe to allow sufficient time to review technical information, incorporate interactive opportunities, provide participants with a break, and allow for a question and answer period. The course presentations are formatted into sections to more easily enable facilitators to modify the presentation length when needed.

Presentation slides also contain notes that further explain each slide's content. As the text on a particular slide may have been greatly reduced to make it more visually accessible for the audience, the notes section may contain explanatory details and additional information for the facilitator's reference. There are a large volume of slides that contain dense information on policies and program eligibility requirements. As such, facilitators may wish to print a copy of the slide notes to review in advance and to have on hand during a presentation.

This guide is intended to complement, rather than duplicate, the slide notes. The guide thus focuses more on setting the context, connecting concepts across sections, and highlighting learning outcomes rather than on summarizing content slide by slide. It is strongly recommended that facilitators take the time to review this guide in advance of presenting the course material.

To ensure a successful presentation, it is also recommended that facilitators have the following resources available:

- Laptop or desktop computer
- Projector and projection screen
- Education Course 1 and Education Course 2 PowerPoint slides
- Printed slide notes and Facilitator's Guide (for personal reference)
- Printed copies of the PowerPoint slides (for participants)
- Post-It notes
- Internet access (if needed for suggested Interaction Opportunity activities)
- Copies of the [***Foster Youth Educational Planning Guide***](#) and of the [***Financial Aid Guide for California Foster Youth***](#) - now available in both English and Spanish!
 - Foster and Kinship Care Education (FKCE) program trainers can request hard copies of these guides from the FKCE Los Angeles Regional Coordinator, Maria Granados, by emailing GranadMI@lamission.edu.
 - Other child welfare professionals can contact John Burton Advocates for Youth at info@jbay.org to request hard copies. Printing and postage fees may apply.

Education Course 1: Supporting Foster Youth Through Early College Awareness and Preparation

Duration: 3 hours

Target Audience: Caregivers/providers with students in grades 6 -10.

Description: The purpose of this module is to empower caregivers/providers to discuss the value of higher education with their youth and provide ideas for how they can play an active role in supporting their youth to college. For caregivers/providers with youth in middle school or in the early high school grades, college can seem so far into the future that it can take secondary importance to more immediate concerns. Caregivers/providers will learn the significance of early college exploration and preparation and key steps that they can take to help youth turn their dreams into degrees.

Contents and Suggested Pacing: The table below provides an overview of each course section and the suggested amount of time to facilitate each section.

Education Course 1: Supporting Foster Youth through Early College Awareness and Preparation		
Presentation Section	Slides #s	Suggested Timing
Welcome & Introductions	1 - 4	10 mins
Section I: Why College?	5 - 12	10 mins
Section II: What Unique Barriers do Foster Youth Face in Higher Education?	13 - 20	20 mins
Section III: How Can You Make a Difference?	21 - 26	15 mins
Break	--	15 minutes
Section IV: A College Path for Everyone	27 - 33	20 mins
Section V: College is Possible	34 - 41	20 mins
Section VI: Education Planning Milestones	42 - 53	15 mins
Closing, Q&A and Survey	54	15 mins

Learning Objectives

Upon completion of Education Course 1, participants should be able to:

- Explain the benefits of postsecondary education
- Recognize the unique barriers foster youth face in education and the impact of trauma
- Identify strategies to create a college-going culture in the home
- Describe the resources and supports that are available to help foster youth achieve their postsecondary educational goals
- Identify resources to help students explore their career interests and college pathways
- Describe key educational planning milestones between 6th-10th grade

Section I: Why College? (slides 5-12)

Caregivers/providers assume responsibility for many aspects of a youth's life, including responsibility for physical safety and holistic health and wellbeing. Compared to many of the day to day responsibilities that caregivers/providers must juggle, college can seem like a remote concern that lacks the urgency of other matters. This can be particularly true for caregivers/providers with youth in middle school or in the early high school grades.

A caregiver's/provider's own firsthand experience with higher education can shape their perceptions of college planning and their level of comfort with this topic. For example, a caregiver/provider who has no previous experience with college may not realize the many steps that are involved in early college planning. In addition, caregivers/providers may not be able to readily name foster youth role models who have gone to college. Facilitators can use Slide 6 as an interaction opportunity to spark discussion with caregivers/providers about the college possibilities for their youth, regardless of their youth's gender, race or ethnicity, or career goals and interests.

Interaction Opportunity: Are they a former foster youth?

Slide 6 uses animation to list photos and descriptions of various well-known individuals who experienced foster care. These individuals are of diverse backgrounds, including gender identity, race and ethnicity, and age. They have also achieved success in a range of fields, including sports and the performing arts, public service and the law, and technology and entrepreneurship. What they share in common is that they all experienced foster care and all attended college. To use Slide 6 as an interaction opportunity, the facilitator may click through each individual and ask participants to raise their hand if they think the individual is a former foster youth. Alternatively, the facilitator may list all individuals and then ask participants to vote by show of hands for the individual who they think is a former foster youth. This activity is meant to illustrate some of the many possibilities that foster youth can achieve by pursuing a higher education.

Section I orients all caregivers/providers, irrespective of previous college exposure, to the urgency

of college. It connects postsecondary education attainment to the greater goal of self-sufficiency for foster youth by laying out the economic returns to a college degree. Slide 7 highlights the higher annual earnings that college graduates enjoy, relative to adults who only have a high school diploma. Section I builds off of this economic argument to demonstrate the many other ways that earning a college degree or credential can benefit individuals, such as improved health outcomes and greater civic participation.

There is good reason to believe that foster youth are hearing the message that a college education pays; as shown in Slide 9, 91% of foster youth in California say they want to go to college¹. However, the reality is that only 43% of youth end up enrolling in college and just 8% succeed in completing a 2- or 4-year degree by the age of 26². Section I concludes with an interaction opportunity on Slide 12 to get caregivers/providers actively reflecting on their own ideas, fears, and questions related to college.

Interaction Opportunity: Group Discussion

Slide 12 lists three discussion questions that the facilitator may choose to incorporate in different styles, depending on the size of the group. Below are three different ways to facilitate a group discussion with these guiding questions.

Pair and Share: Ask participants to introduce themselves to one person seated next to them. As a pair, participants will ask each other the questions listed on the slide. Once the facilitator calls participants back into one large group, volunteers will share back what responses their partner provided. The facilitator will then guide the discussion to identify common themes and experiences.

Post-It Collage: Before the presentation, the facilitator can place 3 Post-It notes at each seat. At Slide 12, the facilitator can ask audience members to jot down their answers on each Post-It that correspond to questions #1-3. Participants can then stick their notes up on a wall in a section that corresponds to the question. The facilitator can cluster common responses together and read aloud the messages that were most common and guide group discussion.

Poll the Audience: Before the presentation, the facilitator can place a red note card and a green note card at every seat. At Slide 12, the facilitator can read aloud several statements and ask participants to hold up a green card if they agree with the statement (or if the statement applies to them) or to hold up a red card if they disagree with the statement (or if the statement does not apply to them). For example, the facilitator might read aloud the statement “I think that college is essential to achieving a meaningful job” or “I think that college is expensive.” The facilitator can then call on 1-2 volunteers to elaborate on why they agreed/disagreed with the statement and facilitate a group discussion. The facilitator can then ask 2-3

¹ Courtney, M., et al (2016).

² California College Pathways (2013).

participants to share any questions they may have about college that they are hoping to get answered during the training. These three discussion questions will be reviewed again at the end of the training (Slide 52) and utilized to reflect with participants throughout the training.

Section II: What Unique Barriers do Foster Youth Face in Higher Education? (slides 13-20)

Section II goes on to lay out some of the reasons why a pronounced gap exists between the self-expressed college aspirations of foster youth and their actual college attainment rates. Slides 14 and 15 point to the academic challenges that can arise when foster youth experience frequent school changes, and point to a resource for caregivers/providers to better understand the educational rights of foster youth as they relate to school stability. Slide 16 also highlights other reasons why foster youth may struggle to realize their college dreams, such as having less access to financial resources and less support with college planning activities. These realities are why it is so important that caregivers/providers be thoughtful and proactive in how they approach supporting foster youth with college planning.

Slides 17 and 18 explain how trauma can also have an adverse impact on a youth's academic performance and college planning. Facilitators may wish to reference the Invisible Suitcase activity from the RFA training modules to help caregivers/providers unpack the concept of trauma. This section concludes with some examples of how trauma can manifest through various classroom and home behaviors and provides some examples of how caregivers/providers can use a trauma-informed approach with their youth.

Interaction Opportunity: The Invisible Backpack

Slide 18 includes animation that the facilitator can use to solicit audience participation. For example, the facilitator may display the initial slide which only shows the student's statement, "I don't want to go to college." The facilitator can ask participants to guess what thoughts or feelings may be behind this statement. After a few responses have been shared, the facilitator can then click through the slide animation to show possible thoughts or feelings that the youth may be experiencing.

For facilitators who wish to delve deeper into the idea of the Invisible Backpack, please see the corresponding activity in the RFA training modules.

Section III: How Can You Make a Difference? (slides 21-26)

While numerous barriers keep foster youth from completing college, the research shows that a consistent, caring adult can make all the difference. Section III aims to empower caregivers/providers to see themselves in that critical role and to provide tips on how they can build a college-going culture at home. Even if caregivers/providers have not attended college

themselves, they have all of the necessary skills to support foster youth in attaining their educational goals. Importantly, caregivers/providers can motivate and encourage youth to set high expectations of themselves and to see themselves as future college students. Slides 23-26 provide some suggestions for how to send affirming and encouraging messages to foster youth about college goal-setting.

Section IV: A College Path for Everyone (slides 27-33)

The term “college” can mean a lot of things. While the common college experience portrayed in the media is that of a first-time college freshmen enrolling directly at a four-year university, there are in fact many more paths available. Foster youth should be empowered with information about these various paths so that they can make the choice that is best for them at this point in time. For some foster youth, that will mean enrolling directly at a four-year university while others will choose to enroll in a community college. Some foster youth may decide to start at a community college with the goal of transferring to a four-year university while others may set a goal to complete an associate degree or a short-term job training certificate or career and technical education program.

Regardless of what a student’s ultimate goal is and where they want to begin their college journey, one thing is consistent: they will be best set up for success if they get started right away. Students who enroll in college directly after high school are 40% more likely to persist in college than are students who take a year or more off³. As such, it is important for caregivers/providers to understand the different options available and to help students transition directly into the program that is the best fit for them.

While the accompanying presentation does not try to imply that any one path is inherently better than another, it does hope to convey that there are good reasons to be cautious when selecting a proprietary or for-profit institution. In recent years, there have been several high-profile cases of proprietary and for-profit institutions offering credentials that do not lead to favorable employment outcomes, wage gains, or expanded career opportunities. This is of particular concern when students are expending their financial aid funds and taking out student loans to cover high tuition costs. As such, government agencies have moved to more closely monitor these institutions. For example, the California Student Aid Commission currently restricts use of state Cal Grant dollars at for-profit institutions that do not demonstrate favorable student outcomes. Foster youth can confirm that an institution is approved by the California Student Aid Commission as one indicator of an institution’s quality before they decide to enroll.

Lastly, Section III recommends some websites that caregivers/providers can use to guide foster youth in exploring career paths. Some of these tools enable foster youth to take self-assessments to determine what types of careers align with their interests and identified strengths. Other tools enable youth to see what types of jobs are hiring, and what median earnings are in a given profession. These tools can help caregivers/providers learn about professions and fields that are

³ Frerer, K., et al (2013), as cited in California College Pathways (2015).

beyond their own frames of reference so as to better support foster youth in their career exploration. If internet is available, facilitators may pull up one of these websites or ask participants to navigate to the site on their smartphones. Alternatively, the presentation includes screenshots of one website as a sample, should internet access not be available.

Section V: College is Possible (slide 34-41)

This section helps transition from the topic of trauma to a theme of hope and resiliency. Slides 35-40 engage participants in a set of True or False questions to test their existing knowledge and assumptions about higher education. In addition, these slides provide general information about resources and benefits available to support foster youth in college to reinforce the message that college is possible. Ideas for how to use these slides to solicit participant interaction are included below. Slide 41 provides two different links to videos that contain uplifting perspectives from foster youth themselves. If the facilitator has internet access they should be able to click through to one or both of these videos to show foster youth speaking about their own college journeys. While each student's journey is different and has its unique challenges, they all model resiliency, speak with hope about their future, and provide words of encouragement for other foster youth.

Interaction Opportunity: True or False?

There are several ways to facilitate this activity depending on group size and energy. For each slide, the facilitator should read each statement in green aloud before displaying the answer in blue. Facilitator may call on participants individually, ask for a volunteer to raise their hand, or invite the group to shout out their answer. To encourage audience participation, the facilitator may give out candy or small prizes like college pens, pencils, buttons, or stickers. At times, these items may be donated to trainers by college offices like admissions and records, Extended Opportunity Program & Services (EOPS), NextUp (formerly CAFYES), or foster youth campus support programs of other names.

Section VI: Education Planning Milestones (slides 42-53)

Once caregivers/providers have developed an understanding of the importance of college, the trauma and resilience that foster youth have, and the role that they can play in assisting their youth, it is important to provide practical examples of what do next.

This section provides concrete resources and tools, starting with the [**Foster Youth Educational Planning Guide**](#) and the [**Financial Aid Guide for California Foster Youth**](#). These guides provide detailed information and a checklist of recommended activities and milestones for youth to prepare for college, by grade level. FKCE trainers in Los Angeles County can request copies of these guides in English and Spanish from the FKCE Regional Coordinator, as the L.A. County Department of Children and Family Services has purchased a set of materials just for FKCE. Other trainers may access these documents online or by contacting John Burton Advocates for Youth to request printed copies. Please note that a fee may apply for printing and postage.

While the facilitator may use the Guides as visual demonstrations, they should spend more time reviewing the information on Slides 45-47, which provide a summary of the most important activities and milestones for students in grades 6 through 10. These milestones build upon each other, with some key activities (such as enrolling in A-G college preparatory courses or meeting with the high school counselor) repeating year after year. The notes section of each slide contains additional clarifying information about these milestones.

Section VI also provides a list of resources so that caregivers/providers know they are not alone in this process. There are many adult professionals who can provide support, including within their child's school, within the child welfare system, and on college and university campuses. Slides 48-50 provide examples of where to go for additional information and support. The facilitator may also make copies of the Additional Resources that are compiled at the end of this Facilitator's Guide to distribute to caregivers/providers.

Interaction Opportunity: Student Vignettes

Now that facilitators have reviewed all information, it is time to practice applying these concepts! Slide 51 provides instructions for how to facilitate small group discussion using the accompanying Student Vignettes. If you are facilitating with a small group, you may choose to do this activity altogether rather than breaking into small groups.

Interaction Opportunity: Discussion Reflection Questions

Utilize Slide 52 as an opportunity to explore if participants' perceptions about college have shifted or changed throughout the training. Trainers can reflect with participants about their experience and check-in to see if they still have any fears or concerns about college for their youth. Facilitators should ensure that their questions have been answered during the training as well.

As discussed throughout the training, caregivers/providers can play an active role in supporting their youth to college. Lastly, ask the group the new question on the slide that states, "So now, what will YOU do?"

Ask each participant to share aloud one thing that they plan to do differently with their youth within the next 30 days to support them in achieving a higher education based on what they have learned in this training.

Education Course 2: Supporting Successful Transitions from High School to College

Duration: 3 hours

Target Audience: Caregivers/providers with students in grades 11-12, or recent high school graduates

Description: Life after high school is a big transition and many foster youth do not start preparing early enough. This session will help caregivers/providers understand how to support their youth to make a smooth transition from high school to college. Caregivers/providers will learn about the benefits of college and the different college pathways available so they can encourage youth to make a plan that is right for them. Caregivers/providers will also learn about the key steps youth must take in the junior and senior year of college, and the supports and resources that exist to help youth along the way.

Contents and Suggested Pacing: The table below provides an overview of each course section and the suggested amount of time to facilitate each section.

Education Course 2: Supporting Successful Transitions from High School to College		
Presentation Section	Slides #s	Time Length
Welcome & Introductions	1 - 4	10 mins
Section I: Why College?	5 - 11	10 mins
Section II: A College Path for Everyone	12 - 18	20 mins
Section III: Setting up Foster Youth for College Success	19 - 26	30 mins
Break		15 min
Section IV: Education Planning Milestones	27 - 34	30 mins
Section V: Paying for College	35 - 54	40 mins
Closing, Q&A and Survey	55 - 58	15 mins

Learning Objectives

Upon completion of Education Course 2, participants should be able to:

- Explain the benefits of postsecondary education
- Identify resources to help students explore their career interests and college pathways
- Describe key educational planning milestones between 11th-12th grade

- Describe the specific resources, benefits and supports available to help foster youth achieve their postsecondary educational goals
- Understand key steps and resources for applying for financial aid
- Understand how to support students in their transition into college

Section I: Why College? (slides 2-11)

Caregivers/providers assume responsibility for many aspects of a youth’s life, including responsibility for physical safety and holistic health and wellbeing. Compared to many of the day to day responsibilities that caregivers/providers must juggle, college can seem like a remote concern that lacks the urgency of other matters. Even for parents with older youth, the idea of college may feel more remote than other prospects, such as helping their youth find a job. Before diving into content, we suggest you take 10-15 minutes on Slide 2 to facilitate an icebreaker activity to help participants get to know each other, and to enable you to understand what ideas of college they are bringing into the training.

Interaction Opportunity: Step-In/Step-Out

If space permits, have participants move to the front of the room or readjust chairs to clear space in the center of the room. Ask participants to stand in a circle, facing the center. As the facilitator, you may stand at the center of the circle or stand outside of the circle. Inform participants that you will be reading a series of statements to help the group get to know each other. Before each statement, you will instruct participants to take one “step in” toward the center of the circle, or one “step out,” if the statement applies to them. Help the group warm up by starting with less personal questions related to college, such as “Step in, if you enjoy watching college football,” or “Step in, if you can name the UCLA mascot.” Gradually, incorporate more personal questions, such as, “Step out if you feel 100% knowledgeable about the college application process,” or “Step in if you have a concern about how to support your child in college.”

After repeating for several rounds, ask for volunteers to reflect on how the activity made them feel. Provide some reflections of your own, such as where you see areas of difference and areas of similarity for the group of participants. Participants may come from various educational backgrounds and have differing experiences with the educational system. It is important to remember that not all participants have attended college, and take efforts to normalize this perspective. This exercise is designed to build rapport amongst participants and identify common ideas, interests, fears, or questions that are shared amongst the group related to the topic of college.

A caregiver’s/provider’s own firsthand experience with higher education can shape their perceptions of college planning and their level of comfort with this topic. For example, a caregiver/provider who has no previous experience with college may not realize the many steps that are involved in early college planning. In addition, caregivers/providers may not be able to readily name foster youth role models who have gone to college. Facilitators can use Slide 5 as an

interaction opportunity to spark discussion with the audience members about the college possibilities for their youth, regardless of their youth's gender, race or ethnicity, or career goals and interests.

Interaction Opportunity: Are they a former foster youth?

Slide 6 uses animation to list photos and descriptions of various well-known individuals who experienced foster care. These individuals are of diverse backgrounds, including gender identity, race and ethnicity, and age. They have also achieved success in a range of fields, including sports and the performing arts, public service and the law, and technology and entrepreneurship. What they share in common is that they all experienced foster care and all attended college. To use Slide 6 as an interaction opportunity, the facilitator may click through each individual and ask participants to raise their hand if they think the individual is a former foster youth. Alternatively, the facilitator may list all individuals and then ask participants to vote by show of hands for the individual who they think is a former foster youth. This activity is meant to illustrate some of the many possibilities that foster youth can achieve by pursuing a higher education.

Section I aims to orient all caregivers/providers, irrespective of previous college exposure, to the urgency of college. It connects postsecondary education attainment to the greater goal of self-sufficiency for foster youth by laying out the economic returns to a college degree. Slide 7 highlights the higher annual earnings that college graduates enjoy, relative to adults who only have a high school diploma. Section I then builds off of this economic argument to demonstrate the many other ways that earning a college degree or credential can benefit individuals. There is good reason to believe that foster youth are hearing the message that a college education pays; as shown in Slides 9-11, 91% of foster youth in California say they want to go to college¹. However, the reality is that only 43% of youth end up enrolling in college² and just 8% succeed in completing a 2- or 4-year degree by the age of 26³.

Section I goes on to lay out some of the reasons why this pronounced gap exists between foster youth's self-expressed college aspirations and their actual college attainment rates. Slide 11 points to the many barriers that impede foster youth in achieving their college dreams; from starting out with lower levels of academic preparation (which is attributable to both disruptions in placement and to school instability), to having less access to financial resources, and to having less information or misinformation about college and college matriculation processes. These realities are why it is so important that caregivers/providers be thoughtful and proactive in how they approach supporting foster youth with college planning.

Section II: A College Path for Everyone (slides 12-18)

The term "college" can mean a lot of things. While the common college experience portrayed in the media is that of a first-time college freshmen enrolling directly at a four-year university, there are in fact many more paths available. Foster youth should be empowered with information about

these various paths so that they can make the choice that is best for them at this point in time. For some foster youth, that will mean enrolling directly at a four-year university while others will choose to enroll in a community college. Some foster youth may decide to start at a community college with the goal of transferring to a four-year university while others may set a goal to complete an associate degree or a short-term job training certificate or career and technical education program.

Regardless of what a student's ultimate goal is and where they want to begin their college journey, one thing is consistent: they will be best set up for success if they get started right away. Students who enroll in college directly after high school are 40% more likely to persist in college than are students who take a year or more off⁴. As such, it is important for caregivers/providers to understand the different options available and to help students transition directly into the program that is the best fit for them.

While the accompanying presentation does not try to imply that any one path is inherently better than another, it does hope to convey that there are good reasons to be cautious when selecting a proprietary or for-profit institution. In recent years, there have been several high-profile cases of proprietary and for-profit institutions offering credentials that do not lead to favorable employment outcomes, wage gains, or expanded career opportunities. This is of particular concern when students are expending their financial aid funds and taking out student loans to cover high tuition costs. As such, government agencies have moved to more closely monitor these institutions. For example, the California Student Aid Commission currently restricts use of state Cal Grant dollars at for-profit institutions that do not demonstrate favorable student outcomes. Foster youth can confirm that an institution is approved by the California Student Aid Commission as one indicator of an institution's quality before they decide to enroll.

Lastly, Section III recommends some websites that caregivers/providers can use to guide foster youth in exploring career paths. Some of these tools enable foster youth to take self-assessments to determine what types of careers align with their interests and identified strengths. Other tools enable youth to see what types of jobs are hiring, and what median earnings are in a given profession. These tools can help caregivers/providers learn about professions and fields that are beyond their own frames of reference so as to better support foster youth in their career exploration. If internet is available, facilitators may pull up one of these websites or ask participants to navigate to the site on their smartphones. Alternatively, the presentation includes screenshots of one website as a sample, should internet access not be available.

Section III: Setting Up Foster Youth for College Success (slides 19-26)

Despite all the unique challenges that foster youth may face in college, there are a vast array of services and supports available to help them successfully reach their higher educational goals. A continuum of resources are available at both the community colleges and at the 4-year public

⁴ Frerer, K., et al (2013), as cited in California College Pathways (2015).

universities throughout California to help foster youth succeed. In addition, many private colleges are beginning to offer similar support services. It is important that caregivers/providers recognize that college is possible for all foster youth, regardless of their college pathway.

In the past 10 years, the number of campus-based resources for foster youth has drastically increased to better meet youth's holistic needs. In 2006, the California Community College Chancellor's Office recognized a need to support foster youth and formed the statewide Foster Youth Success Initiative in partnership with the Foundation for California Community Colleges. Due to these efforts, a Foster Youth Liaison can now be found at every California community college to provide foster youth with additional support and advocacy (Slide 20).

In addition to this support, most community colleges, California State University (CSU) and University of California (UC) campuses also have support programs specifically designed to meet the needs of foster youth (Slide 24). Many foster youth lack a support system in their lives and can feel alone at college. In addition to the tangible resources these programs may provide such as transportation assistance or food, these programs also help to create a community that feels safe and supportive to foster youth. Because these programs are typically funded by private foundations and by local campus budgets, they can vary widely in name, availability of student support services, and eligibility criteria. Many of these programs go by the name of "Guardian Scholars," but not all. Foster youth may need assistance in learning about these various programs and their unique names, such as REACH, STARS, LINC, Resilient Scholars, RISE, and so on. A comprehensive list of campus programs and contact information is available on the California College Pathways website, which is listed in the Additional Resources section of this guide.

Slides 21-22 describe some of the state-funded programs that are also available to foster youth, such as the Extended Opportunity Programs & Services Programs (EOPS) at community colleges and the Extended Opportunity Programs (EOP) at CSU and UC campuses. Most foster youth qualify for these programs, which are designed to assist disadvantaged students in reaching their educational goals. In 2014, Senate Bill 1023 was passed to create a state-funded program specifically for foster youth called the Cooperating Agencies Foster Youth Educational Support (CAFYES). Now called NextUp, this program is currently available at 45 community colleges, including 11 colleges within Los Angeles County. NextUp is housed within EOPS and provides services that go above and beyond those that are typically offered to EOPS students who are not foster youth.

While there are a wide range of supports available specifically for foster youth, it is important for caregivers/providers to recognize that some students may not want to self-identify once in college. Some youth may feel a negative stigma about their involvement in the foster care system or may want to no longer have involvement with the foster care community. Caregivers/providers should take the time to educate youth about the benefits of disclosing their foster youth status and the range of supports available to them.

In addition to the above programs, there are also a range of support services that colleges provide, regardless of foster care status. Slide 24 provides an overview of these resources, which include: CalWorks & CARE for parenting students; counseling and psychological services; food assistance

programs; tutoring support; student disability services; and cultural programming and student clubs.

Students may associate a negative stigma with these services and may hesitate to ask for help, especially when it comes to mental health counseling and disability services. Foster youth may have an even harder time asking for help due to their past experiences of trauma, neglect and abandonment. Facilitators should emphasize that caregivers/providers can play a tremendous role in normalizing these services, in explaining the benefits, and in reducing any negative stigma. It is helpful to proactively inform foster youth of the services available to them so that they can get connected to support early on. Starting college with the rights supports can help ensure that foster youth have a positive experience and succeed in reaching their educational goals.

Section IV: Education Planning Milestones (slides 27-34)

Once caregivers/providers have developed an understanding of the importance of college, the different college pathways, and the resources available to support foster youth in college, it is important to provide practical examples of how they can assist foster youth in preparing for and applying to college.

This section begins with the [*Foster Youth Educational Planning Guide*](#). This youth-friendly Guide provides detailed information and a checklist of recommended activities and milestones for youth to prepare for college, by grade level. FKCE trainers in Los Angeles County can request copies of these guides in English and Spanish from the FKCE Regional Coordinator, as the L.A. County Department of Children and Family Services has purchased a set of materials just for FKCE. Other trainers may access these documents online or by contacting John Burton Advocates for Youth to request printed copies. Please note that a fee may apply for printing and postage.

Interaction Opportunity: Educational Planning Guide

Facilitators may wish to use this as an opportunity to distribute the hard copies of the guide or to pull up the PDF version of the guide on the internet. Facilitators can walk participants through the guide and highlight some college planning milestones by grade level.

Facilitators will highlight important activities and milestones for students in grades 11 and 12 in Slides 29-33, however more detailed information and steps can be found and referenced within the Guide. Some caregivers/providers may not be aware of the college-planning steps required in 9th and 10th grade. It is important to briefly summarize some of the early “building blocks” that caregivers/providers should be mindful of, especially as some may also have younger youth in their care. Many of these milestones build upon each other, with some key activities (such as enrolling in college preparatory courses or meeting with a high school counselor) repeating year after year. The slide notes section contains additional clarifying information about these milestones.

Just as there are numerous college options available, there are different considerations that foster youth should be aware of when it comes to the college application process. Different types of higher education institutions have different eligibility requirements, application components, and application timelines. Slide 31 provides a broad overview of the key milestones for grade 12, and briefly indicates that students should submit college applications and financial aid applications in their senior year. Facilitators should note that Slides 32-33 will provide more details on key aspects of the application and enrollment processes for the California State University and the University of California systems and for the California Community Colleges. In addition, Section V will provide a more detailed overview of the financial aid application process.

California State University and University of California

While there are several paths for community college students to transfer to a baccalaureate program at a California State University or University of California campus, students who wish to enroll at a CSU or UC campus directly from high school should begin their college planning much earlier. While CSU and UC campuses will look closely at coursework and academic performance in grades 9 through 12, caregivers/providers should begin conversations with youth about college in the middle school years. Slide 32 summarizes some of the key steps that caregivers/providers should know as well as some of the benefits and resources available for foster youth.

Foster youth should build strong relationships with their high school teachers and counselors to get support in reaching these milestones, particularly when it comes to ensuring that their coursework aligns with CSU and UC admissions requirements. The CSU and UC systems require that students complete subject area requirements, which are known as the “A-G” requirements. The “A-G” requirements stipulate certain levels and years of study in subject areas like social science, English, math, science, foreign language, visual and performing arts, and approved electives. As these requirements may change slightly from year to year, facilitators should emphasize the importance of building and maintaining a strong relationship with a high school counselor.

Beyond completing a college preparatory curriculum in high school, foster youth must also take the ACT or SAT exam for CSU and UC admissions, as well as for many private colleges and universities. Youth can begin preparing in the 10th grade by registering for the PSAT practice exam. Caregivers/providers can find free study guides for the PSAT, ACT, and SAT at their local public library, as well as online.

The CSU and UC systems offer several benefits to foster youth which they should know to look for at the time of application. These benefits include application fee waivers, priority consideration for campus housing, and access to priority registration. Facilitators should again emphasize, however, that these benefits are only available if students self-identify as foster youth. Students might feel a negative stigma or sense of shame about being in the foster care system and may not want to self-identify. It is very important that caregivers/providers emphasize the advantages of self-identifying for the purposes of accessing these benefits in college.

California Community Colleges

It is a common misconception that students can arrive at a community college campus the day

before classes begin to complete the application and course registration process. Caregivers/providers should be prepared to assist youth with the several steps involved in application and registration. Facilitators should emphasize that there is no fee to apply for community college and foster youth have the opportunity to also apply for a college's Extended Opportunity Programs & Services (EOPS) or foster-youth support program, such as NextUp or Guardian Scholars. Section III provides more information on these programs and the resources that they provide. If foster youth check the box on the CCCApply.org online application indicating their foster care status colleges might also follow up with them about additional financial resources and student support services for which they may qualify.

Many community colleges in Los Angeles County have high enrollments and limited course offerings so priority registration can be key for foster youth to gain access to the courses they need for graduation or transfer. California law stipulates that all foster youth under the age of 26 who were in care on or after their 16th birthday are eligible to receive priority registration at both the California Community Colleges and the California State University system. However, students must complete three steps to receive priority registration: orientation, assessment, and education planning.

These registration steps may vary slightly at each campus. For example, some colleges offer orientation online while others only offer orientation in-person. If a school offers an extended orientation or summer bridge program for new students, it is highly recommended that the caregiver/provider discuss this option with their youth. These programs can help a student learn about campus resources, build connections with peers and with faculty and staff, and further develop their academic skills.

The passage of Assembly Bill 705 marks a new era in community college assessment practices. Previously, community colleges often used a single test, such as the Accuplacer exam, to determine students' English and math course placement. Under this old system of high-stakes assessment testing, many students placed into non-credit remedial courses (also called developmental courses). In some cases, students would place several levels below the college-level course that was required for graduation or transfer. Research showed that students placed into remedial courses often struggled to reach their college completion goals.

As of Fall 2019, all community colleges will transition to using multiple measures to determine English and math course placement. Rather than using a single test score, colleges will use additional measures such as high school coursework, high school grades, and high school GPA to determine placement. AB 705 requires that colleges place students directly into college-level courses--saving them valuable time and money--unless there is ample evidence to suggest that it would be highly unlikely for the student to succeed in the college-level course. In some cases, students may be recommended or required to take a concurrent course to receive additional support, such as supplemental instruction or tutoring. Under AB 705, a student who is placed below college-level courses must be able to complete both the remedial course and the college-level course within a one-year timeframe.

Upon completing the assessment process, youth will next need to meet with an academic advisor

or counselor to complete their education plan. Entering foster youth may be directed to Student Success counselors, but they should also inquire about counseling that is tailored for foster youth and that is often available through programs like EOPS or Guardian Scholars (see Section VII). Facilitators should emphasize the importance of forming an early relationship with a counselor who can guide foster youth in exploring academic programs and clarifying their educational goals, such as whether they wish to transfer onto a baccalaureate program.

Private Colleges and Universities

Given the wide variance across private institutions, this presentation focuses only on California's public higher education systems. Private schools may have different applications, deadlines and requirements so students may need additional assistance in successfully navigating the college application process at private schools. Facilitators should note that private colleges and universities may offer similar benefits and resources, though each institution has discretion in what policies, programs, and services they tailor for foster youth.

Where to Get Support

College planning can be overwhelming and confusing for both students and caregivers/providers. Throughout the process, caregivers/providers can lean on various groups for support. First, they can connect with the grade-level counselor or college counselor at their student's high school. Second, caregivers/providers can connect with the foster care liaison at their school district. The Los Angeles County Office of Education (LACOE) maintains an online list of all foster care liaisons across L.A. County school districts, the link to which is included in the Additional Resources section of this guide. In addition, some K-12 school districts like LAUSD have a specialized program for foster youth. The LAUSD Foster Youth Achievement Program employs foster youth counselors who can work with caregivers/providers, birth parents, and educational rights holders to assist youth with college planning.

Finally, caregivers/providers can turn to local community-based organizations that specialize in supporting foster youth to college. One example is United Friends of the Children, which provides intensive support to foster youth as they transition from middle school to high school and from high school to college. United Friends of the Children and other community-based programs are also listed in the Additional Resources section of this guide. Facilitators may print this section separately as a handout for participants.

If a caregiver/provider and their youth are unsure who is the best person to assist the youth with the college matriculation process the Child and Family Team (CFT) meeting can be leveraged to make a plan to identify adults to assist the youth ([ACL NO. 18-104](#)). Adults who are supporting the youth's educational goals can also be invited to attend the CFT, such as their school counselor, CASA or local campus-based foster youth support program representative. It is actually encouraged that education representatives are included in the CFT process. If the appropriate representative from the middle school or high school is unknown, the recommended first point of contact is the Foster Youth Services Coordinating Program (FYSCP) within the County Office of Education ([ACIN NO. 1-71-18](#))

Section V: Paying for College and Closing Activity (slides 35-57)

This section will provide caregivers/providers a brief overview of the financial aid process, the various types of aid available and how to access this aid. While plenty of financial aid resources exist for foster youth to assist with the costs of college, many struggle to access this money. Foster youth may lack accurate information about financial aid and how to apply for it or lack support in completing the application steps. Another barrier that deters foster youth is misperceptions of cost. Indeed, many students assume that college will require an upfront investment that they simply cannot afford. Foster youth may believe that, because of their own lack of financial resources or familial financial support, they will not be able to self-finance a college education. In addition, foster youth and caregivers/providers might incorrectly assume that a foster youth must supply personal and financial information for biological parents on their financial aid application, which can deter a youth from even beginning an application.

Given the complexities of the financial aid process, it is important that foster youth get connected to accurate information and support. Available in both Spanish and English, the [Financial Aid Guide for California Foster Youth](#) (Slide 37) provides a more in-depth overview of the financial aid process, including an explanation of the types of aid available, a step-by-step guide to completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), tips on what to do after the FAFSA, and how students can maintain their financial aid. Facilitators should provide participants a hard copy of this Guide to take home.

Foster youth can qualify for state, federal, and institutional financial aid that can help them finance college through a combination of tuition waivers, grants, work-study awards, scholarships, and even student loans. Slide 39 explains how “financial need” is determined for need-based financial aid such as the federal Pell Grant and federal work-study. Slide 40 provides a breakdown of the types and sources of financial aid programs. It is important for caregivers/providers to understand the basic difference between gift aid, such as grants and scholarships, and other types of aid that must be earned or repaid. Facilitators should emphasize that, unlike student loans, gift aid is free money that does not need to be repaid, so long as students successfully complete their coursework and make satisfactory progress toward completion (Slide 41).

Slides 42-45 orients caregivers/providers to key steps in the financial aid application process, such as how to apply, when to apply, and what youth need to complete the FAFSA or the California Dream Act Application (CADAA) if they are an undocumented immigrant student. Within these applications there are unique considerations for foster youth. Slides 46-47 review these items, such as how to determine independent status on the FAFSA. Because caregivers/providers may not be familiar with the current FAFSA questions or may have not navigated the online version of the application, facilitators can direct them to reference the *Visual Guide* (Slide 38) which provides screenshots of each FAFSA question and detailed instructions on how to accurately complete each question. These questions mirror the questions on the CADAA. This information can help caregivers/providers feel more at ease when assisting youth with submitting their application forms.

Some common types of gift aid that caregivers/providers should be particularly aware of are

federal Pell grants, state Cal Grants, and the CA College Promise Grant (Slide 48-49). Caregivers/providers should know that these grants can be packaged together so that students are able to cover a greater portion of their cost of attendance, which includes both tuition expenses and non-tuition expenses like books, transportation, and housing. Other common types of aid are also referenced in the [Financial Aid Guide for California Foster Youth](#).

Slide 49 informs caregivers/providers that students must ensure that their high school submits verified GPA information to the California Student Aid Commission (CSAC). While all public high schools and charters are required to submit this information, it is important that facilitators understand that some schools do not automatically submit this information. At times, a student may change schools and their GPA may not be submitted by their new school on time. This puts the responsibility on the student to contact their high school, verify if their GPA has been submitted or manually submit a [Cal Grant GPA Verification Form](#), if needed. Students will not be alerted to do this step, so it is important that caregivers/providers assist youth in determining if their GPA Verification has been submitted. Students can contact their high school counselor or log-in to their WebGrants account (Slide 52) to view this information.

While application submission is a critical first step, caregivers/providers need to understand what comes next in the financial aid process. Each year, many students miss out on thousands of financial aid dollars simply because they do not complete all of the necessary follow-up steps. Slides 50-53 provide caregivers/providers with information about critical next steps to maximize aid, such as completing the Chafee Grant application to access up to \$5,000 in aid for eligible current and former youth and creating a WebGrants account. Creating a WebGrants Account is a simple and often missed step in the process. It allows students to view the status of their Chafee Grant and Cal Grant awards, as well as update their contact information and school of attendance. Many foster youth are highly mobile, so it is critical that they keep their information current on this account. When students are completing their Chafee Grant application they are only able to indicate one college, often before knowing where they will be accepted into college or where they chose to attend. As soon as a foster youth determines where they plan to attend college it is important that they update their Webgrants account with this college to guarantee that the funding is sent to the correct campus. If this step does not occur, funding may be delayed or the student may not receive the aid.

Information about follow-up steps after the FAFSA or CADAA are often communicated via email and can be easy to miss if a student does not know that they should be attentive to requests for additional information or documentation (Slide 53). While cumbersome, being responsive to these parts of the financial aid application process is essential for a student to be able to access all of the aid programs for which they are eligible. Upon successfully submitting FAFSA, students will receive a Student Aid Report that states their expected family contribution. This information is used by a college or university to determine how much aid they qualify for, after factoring the costs of attendance at that particular institution.

Colleges and universities may request additional documentation to verify information that was provided on the application. Delays in obtaining such documentation can adversely affect a student's ability to enroll on time and to access aid to cover tuition expenses. One common type

of verification that may be required is verification of nonfiling status, for students who do not file income taxes. The U.S. Department of Education (USDOE) may randomly screen individuals who report that they did not file taxes for verification. Previously, obtaining an IRS Verification of Nonfiling (VNF) Letter--which provides proof from the IRS that there is no record of a filed tax form (such as a form 1040, 1040A, or 1040EZ) for the requested year--was the only acceptable method of verification. Detailed instructions on how to complete and submit the IRS VNF Letter are available at: <https://ab12questionoftheweek.wordpress.com/2018/05/14/irs-verification-of-non-filing-letter/>

Because obtaining an IRS VNF Letter is often challenging for students, the USDOE issued guidance stating that, as of January 9, 2019, institutions would receive greater flexibility in how they can screen students for both the 2018-19 and 2019-20 academic years. While individuals are still required to obtain a VNF Letter from the IRS, institutions may accept alternative documentation if the individual is unable to obtain the VNF Letter and if the institution believes the student made a good-faith effort to obtain the VNF Letter.

Institutions may instead accept the following:

- (1) A signed statement certifying that the individual attempted to obtain the IRS VNF Letter and was unsuccessful, and that the individual has not filed and is not required to file a 2016 or 2017 income tax return. This signed statement should also list any 2016 or 2017 income sources and the amount earned from each source, if applicable.
- (2) A copy of IRS Form W-2, or an equivalent document, for each source of 2016 or 2017 employment income received by the individual.

Guidance on this institutional flexibility from the USDOE can be found here:

<https://ifap.ed.gov/eannouncements/010919Chngsto1819and1920VerificationReq.html>.

Students may also need to verify foster care status with their institution. The state of California recently automated the foster care verification process by matching student records from the California Student Aid Commission and the California Department of Social Services (CDSS). For students who indicated on their FAFSA that they were in care at least one day after the age of 13 and who are currently under the age of 26, foster care status should be automatically verified. In the unlikely event that a match is not made with CDSS, foster youth may need to provide verification through a ward of the court letter gathered from their social worker, probation officer, ILP coordinator or by contacting the state Foster Care Ombudsman office.

Lastly, caregivers/providers and foster youth may both have justified concerns about taking on student loans. To reduce student debt levels, foster youth should proactively seek out additional resources beyond state and federal financial aid. For example, many high schools, banks, community centers, religious organizations, employers, and nonprofit organizations offer private scholarships that foster youth can apply to. Applying to scholarships can be time-intensive so we strongly suggest that foster youth target their search to include scholarship programs that are specific to foster youth and/or that have a narrow geographic focus. A link to Scholarship Resources for L.A. County Foster Youth is included in the Additional Resources section of this guide. ILP can also be a great resource to connect students to other scholarships, financial

assistance and other relevant life skills.

This section can be particularly dense. Slide 55 enables the facilitator to come back to the bigger picture at hand. While a stock photo is provided on this slide, facilitators may switch it out with an image of students at their own campus, perhaps from their foster youth campus support program. This slide provides an opportunity for the facilitator to remind caregivers/providers that, while applying for financial aid can feel daunting and time-consuming, taking the time to complete the application accurately will pay off. Research has shown that students who receive financial aid are more likely to have greater success while in college. Financial aid attainment has been correlated with higher GPA and higher college completion rates.

Interaction Opportunity: Jeopardy Game Show

Slide 56 provides an opportunity to transition into a fun game of Jeopardy, which will get participants energized while also reinforcing key takeaways. Slide 56 provides a static image of a sample Jeopardy screen complete with suggested categories and dollar amounts. The corresponding Jeopardy Game Show Handout shows the sample clues and correct responses for each dollar amount. There are numerous ways to facilitate this activity to accommodate your group size and room set-up. For example, facilitators may wish to divide the group into two or three teams, or play as individuals. To help keep score, the facilitator might project this slide onto a whiteboard or chalkboard, which will enable them to cross out each box as it is called. Alternatively, a facilitator might print Slide 56 and have participants cross out boxes on their own. While the Jeopardy Game Show Handout provides sufficient questions to play the game, facilitators may choose to substitute out questions to meet their needs.

Interaction Opportunity: What will YOU do?

Slide 58 provides an opportunity for a final interaction opportunity. As discussed throughout the training, caregivers can play an active role in supporting their youth to college. Lastly, ask the group the question on the slide that states, “So now, what will YOU do?” Ask each caregiver to share aloud one thing that they plan to do differently with their youth within the next 30 days to support them in achieving a higher education based on what they have learned in this training.

Further Reading

California College Pathways (2013). At Greater Risk - California Foster Youth and the Path from High School to College. Available online at:

http://www.cacollegepathways.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/at_greater_risk.pdf.

California College Pathways (2015). Charting the Course: Using Data to Support Foster Youth College Success. Available online at: http://www.cacollegepathways.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/charting_the_course_final.pdf.

Courtney, M. et al (2011). Midwest Evaluation of Adult Functioning of Former Foster Youth: Outcomes at Age 26. Available online at:

http://www.chapinhall.org/sites/default/files/Midwest%20Evaluation_Report_4_10_12.pdf

Courtney, M., et al (2016). Findings from the California Youth Transitions to Adulthood Study (CaYOUTH): Conditions of Youth at Age 19. Available online at:

http://www.chapinhall.org/sites/default/files/CY_YT_RE0516_1.pdf.

Gross, J. (2016). Challenges and Experiences of Former Foster Youth in Postsecondary Education. Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin, Madison, Wisconsin Center for the Advancement of Postsecondary Education (WISCAPE). Available online at: <http://www.cacollegepathways.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/FFE-in-PSE.pdf>.

Lopez, K. and B. T. Duran (2016). Transition Age Foster Youth: Getting Them Into and Through College. Fresno, CA: Central Valley Higher Education Consortium. Available online at:

http://www.cacollegepathways.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Foster-Youth_CVHEC_report_final_2-1.pdf.

National Working Group on Foster Care and Education (2014). Fostering Success in Education: National Factsheet on the Educational Outcomes of Children in Foster Care. Available online at:

http://www.cacollegepathways.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/datasheet_jan_2014_update.pdf.

Wiegmann, W., et al. (2014). The Invisible Achievement Gap Part 2: How the Foster Care Experiences of California Public School Students Are Associated with Their Education Outcomes.

Available online at: <http://www.cacollegepathways.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/the-invisible-achievement-gap-part-2.pdf>.

Additional Resources

Below is a summary of resources referenced throughout both Education Course 1 & 2, as well as additional resources specific to the L.A. County Region.

Alliance for Children’s Rights - “Know Before You Go” Portal

<http://kids-alliance.org/knowbeforeyougo/>

The KnowB4UGo YouTube series and the accompanying website were created by foster youth, for foster youth, that lists helpful resources related to education, housing, legal services, birth control, parenting, and more.

Alliance for Children’s Rights - School stability, enrollment, and high school graduation rights of Foster Youth

<http://kids-alliance.org/programs/education/educational-equity/high-school-enrollment-graduation-rights/>

This site provides an overview of foster youth K-12 education rights.

Bruin Guardian Scholars Academy - An Initiative of First Star, DCFS, and UCLA

www.bgsa.ucla.edu

The Bruin Guardian Scholars Academy (BGSA) is a partnership with First Star and the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS). The mission of BGSA is to provide foster youth with necessary educational and psycho-social support to help them graduate high school and enroll in postsecondary education.

California Career Zone

www.cacareerzone.org

On this website students can learn about their career interests, explore available employment options, and discover training programs that are offered to support their career goals.

California College Pathways

www.cacollegepathways.org/

California College Pathways provides resources to campuses, caregivers and community organizations to help foster youth succeed at community colleges and four-year universities. This site includes a tool to help find campus support programs throughout the state.

California College Pathways - Student Version

www.student.cacollegepathways.org

This is the student version of the CA College Pathways site designed to support current and prospective students navigate resources available for college including finding campus support programs throughout the state.

California Community Colleges

<https://home.cccapply.org/colleges>

This website provides information about the California Community College system, which is made up of 114 campuses across the state, and the link to apply.

California Community Colleges Foster Youth Success Initiative (FYSI)

<http://extranet.cccco.edu/Divisions/StudentServices/FosterYouthSuccessInitiatives.aspx>

Every California community college has a foster youth liaison designated to assist foster youth in accessing financial aid, scholarships, student services, and resources. Local program contacts can be found on this website.

California Dream Act

<https://dream.csac.ca.gov/>

The California Dream Act allows undocumented and nonresident students (U.S. Citizens and eligible non-citizens) who qualify for a non-resident exemption under Assembly Bill 540 (AB 540) to receive certain types of financial aid such as: private scholarships funded through public universities, state administered financial aid, university grants, community college fee waivers, and Cal Grants.

California State University (CSU)

www2.calstate.edu/apply

The CSU system is made up of 23 campuses across the state of California. This website includes their online application, as well as information about their campuses, eligibility, and how to apply.

California Student Aid Commission (CSAC)

www.csac.ca.gov

The CSAC administers state based financial aid programs such as: Chafee Grant, Cal Grant & Promise Grants. This website provides information on these types of financial aid programs and how to apply.

Chafee Grant

www.chafee.csac.ca.gov

The California Chafee Grant is free money for eligible current or former California foster youth to help pay for college or career and technical training. The online application can be found here.

Federal Student Aid

www.studentaid.ed.gov

This website provides information about the Free Application for Federal Student Aid, types of financial aid available, eligibility criteria for financial aid, how to repay student loans, and general information on how to prepare for college.

Foster Youth Educational Planning Guide (English and Spanish)

www.jbaforyouth.org/fy-ed-planning-guide/

This education planning guide is intended to help foster youth chart their course to the college that is right for their interests and career goals. It also directs youth to the support and resources available for foster youth scholars on college campuses. The guide is also available in Spanish.

Financial Aid Guide for California Foster Youth and Visual Guide

www.jbaforyouth.org/ca-fy-financial-aid-guide/

The Financial Aid guide for California Foster Youth begins with an explanation of different types of financial aid available, includes a step-wise guide to completing the FAFSA, tips on what to do after

the FAFSA to ensure maximum aid awards, and explains how to stay in good standing and keep getting financial assistance for school.

The “Visual Guide” is intended to compliment Part 3 of the Financial Aid Guide for California Foster Youth, found within pages 6-10, with screen shots of the actual FAFSA application and detailed instructions.

icanaffordcollege.com - An Initiative of the California Community Colleges

www.icanaffordcollege.com/

This site has details on FAFSA, different types of financial aid and the CA community colleges.

L.A. Cash for College

www.lacashforcollege.org

L.A. Cash for College coordinates free financial aid completion workshops throughout L.A. County and provides scholarships.

L.A. County Department of Children and Family Services - Independent Living Program (ILP)

www.ilponline.org

ILP provides comprehensive services and resources to assist transition age youth (TAY) successfully transition from dependency to self-sufficiency.

L.A. County Department of Children and Family Services- Special Immigration Status Unit

http://policy.dcsf.lacounty.gov/Content/Immigration_Options.htm

This policy describes programs that may provide immigration relief to undocumented children and families and how to qualify and apply for them.

L.A. County Office of Education - Foster Youth Services Coordinating Program

www.lacoe.edu/StudentServices/HomelessFosterYouth/FosterYouth.aspx

The Foster Youth Services Coordinating Program works in collaboration with Foster Youth Liaisons in each of the 80 school districts in the county to provide technical assistance and professional development focusing on students in foster care.

LAUSD Foster Youth Achievement Program

<https://achieve.lausd.net/Page/1497>

Foster Youth Achievement Program is a specialized program within the Los Angeles Unified School District's (LAUSD) Pupil Services Unit that is dedicated to enhancing educational outcomes and academic achievement for students living in foster care.

Living Wage Calculator

livingwage.mit.edu

The tool helps individuals, communities, and employers determine a local wage rate that allows residents to meet minimum standards of living.

My Path

www.cccmypath.org

This site is designed to help current and prospective students identify a career pathway and

navigate the enrollment process in the California community college system.

NextUp (CAFYES) Program

www.nextup.cccco.edu

NextUp, also known as CAFYES (Cooperating Agencies Foster Youth Educational Support), provides community college students with resources that make a difference. The program offers eligible current and former foster youth support and services that could include help with books and supplies, transportation, tutoring, food and emergency housing.

Salary Surfer

www.salarysurfer.cccco.edu

This tool allows current and prospective students to view combined median earnings of those who completed a certificate or degree in 179 of the most widely enrolled programs at community colleges.

Scholarship Resources for L.A. County Foster Youth

<http://www.cacollegepathways.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/LA-County-Scholarship-Resources-for-Foster-Youth.pdf>

This is a non-exhaustive list of foster youth specific scholarships.

Scholars Rising- Guardian Scholars High School Program

www.lacitycollege.edu/services/guardianscholars/ScholarsRisingFlyerEdited.pdf

Scholars Rising is an outreach program designed to connect current sophomore, junior, and senior high school foster youth with direct access to resources within higher education through the Los Angeles City College (LACC) Guardian Scholars Program (GS).

Step: Forward

<http://stepforward.cccco.edu/>

The Step:Forward campaign aims to help students understand priority registration and assist students who are completing a degree or certificate program or transferring to a four-year university get the courses they need to succeed.

United Friends of the Children- College Readiness Program

www.unitedfriends.org/youth-access/

United Friends offers an 11-year education support continuum that follows LA County foster youth from the seventh grade through the completion of a Bachelor's Degree.

University of California

<http://admission.universityofcalifornia.edu/>

The University of California system is made up of 10 campuses across the state of California. This website provides information about their campuses and how to apply.