

# Caseworker Guide to Transition Planning for Youth



Washington State Department of  
**CHILDREN, YOUTH & FAMILIES**





## Caseworker Guide to Transition Planning for Youth

### What do youth need from their caseworkers to succeed as they prepare for their transition from foster care?

Some quick answers are: Youth need a place to live, a job, money, medical and dental care, a postsecondary education plan, personal records, an adult or adults to turn to for help over time, information about how to accomplish their short and long-term goals for the future, and many other resources.

It's a long list and the train is almost out of the station by age 17.5. So, the sooner you begin working with the youth to develop their strong team of support, the more successful their transition will be.

### What's important for a caseworker to remember in transition planning?

A skilled caseworker starts on transition planning early. For foster youth to experience a successful transition to adulthood, caseworkers need to develop a good transition plan with each youth. They need to:

- Develop a good relationship with youth
- Work with the youth to set goals jointly
- Engage youth in meeting these goals
- Recognize youth's strengths, skills, and successes
- Work with the youth and community partners to identify a strong team of support

*Preparing foster youth to shape a future comes in building blocks.  
DCYF policy approaches this in four basic steps.*





## STEP 1: Assessment and Planning

Transition planning begins at age 14. Begin inviting the youth at age of 14 to their shared planning meetings. Ask the youth to identify at least two support persons who are not you or the caregiver to attend the meetings.

- One of the individuals selected may be designated to be the youth's advocate when discussing normal childhood activities under the reasonable prudent parenting standard.
- Any individual identified by the youth must be able to act in the youth's best interest.
- If you have good cause to believe your youth's identified support person is not acting in their best interest, they may be asked to leave the meeting.



Helping youth identify the life skills they need to become self-sufficient will pay dividends in the long run. During the shared planning meeting, discuss services and activities needed to support the youth in their transition to adulthood for the following topics:

- Education
- Employment
- Housing
- Health insurance
- Mentors and continuing supports

Youth age 15 and older are eligible for the Independent Living (IL) program. The IL program helps youth get ready to live on their own by providing information and assistance on budgeting, job search, daily life skills, preparing for postsecondary education or training, healthy relationships, housing, etc. To access the program, complete an IL referral in FamLink and send it to the local IL provider or IL regional lead.

Beginning at age 15 and annually thereafter, every youth on your caseload needs to have a completed assessment and learning plan. The assessment outlines areas of strength and areas needing further development. The learning plan provides the tasks the youth will work on to develop their skills, the identified persons who will assist them in completing these tasks, and the timeframe for completing the plan.



Tools: Assessment and Learning Plan policy requires caseworkers to utilize the free online Casey Life Skills Assessment tool located at [caseylifeskills.org](http://caseylifeskills.org) when working with youth to develop their learning plan. If the youth is involved with a contracted IL provider, the provider can assist with this task. There are contracted IL providers at various locations around the state. Check with your regional IL coordinator to find the providers in your area.

If the youth is currently working with an IL provider and you want to see what services are being provided, you can find this information on the IL page in FamLink. To access the IL page:

1. Go to **“Planning”**
2. Click the **“Independent Living tab”**
3. Click the **“Independent Living”** hyperlink for that youth, or
4. You may access the IL page by going to the **“Utilities”** drop down menu on the FamLink home page, click **Independent Living**, and search for your youth

Youth 16 to 16.5 years of age and older who may be eligible for Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA) services need to have a shared planning meeting following the guidelines below.

This meeting must include participants as outlined in the publication *Guide to Shared Planning Meetings* (CWP\_0070) available online at [www.dcyf.wa.gov/sites/default/files/pubs/CWP\\_0070.pdf](http://www.dcyf.wa.gov/sites/default/files/pubs/CWP_0070.pdf) to assess the youth:

1. Functional eligibility for developmental disability waiver services.
2. Identify services that the youth wants or needs upon the youth’s exit from dependency.
3. Conduct advanced planning for residential services provided by the DDA of the Department of Social and Health Services.
4. Conduct advanced planning for housing options available from entities other than DDA that include what the youth wants or needs upon their exit from a dependency.
5. Develop an action plan so that the services the youth wants or needs will be provided following the youth’s exit from a dependency.

## STEP 2: The 17.5 Transition Staffing and Transition Plan

Transition Planning and services provide youth an opportunity to have a smooth and successful transition into adulthood. It is important that youth have a safe and viable transition plan identified before they reach 17.5 years of age. A youth's transition plan is meant to help the youth prepare for the everyday life tasks that they will have to accomplish once they leave foster care. You should engage the youth in the planning process – especially before conducting the 17.5 Transition Staffing. Be sure to give them ample notice of the staffing and accommodate their school schedule.

The Transition Plan (for dependent youth, 17 through 20) policy requires each youth to have a shared planning meeting (17.5 Transition Staffing) between the ages of 17 and 17.5 to discuss and develop a personalized, youth-directed transition plan. Ask the youth who they view as important people in their life that should be at this meeting, and extend an invitation to these important people. You should also invite any youth allies such as foster parents, family members, IL providers, community partners, and other youth to support this youth-driven process. You may arrange phone access for those not able to attend in person.

The Transition Plan includes all of the vital topics that need to be covered in the 17.5 Staffing. The transition plan document can be found on the IL page in FamLink.

Click the “Transition Plan” hyperlink under “Documents” in the “Options Pane” (left -hand side of screen) to open the Word document. Once the transition plan is completed in FamLink, print it for both you and the youth to sign. Remember to provide the youth with a copy for reference to see what will be happening over the course of the next few months.





Per federal legislation, the transition plan must be youth-focused, youth-driven, and address the specific areas below. We have provided some examples for each.

- **Education** – high school equivalency program; high school diploma; postsecondary goals as articulated in a student’s IEP Transition Plan or High School and Beyond Plan; scholarships, and Passport for Foster Youth Program Scholarship
- **Employment** – vocational skills, job search and experience, and career goals
- **Housing** – foster care, their own or shared living, residence hall, with relatives, and homeless assessment
- **Health insurance** – Medicaid to 26 and local medical resources
- **Local opportunities for mentors and continuing support** – mentors, interest groups, faith community, and advocacy resources
- **Work force supports and employment services** – Work Force Councils and Division of Vocational Rehabilitation

Youth must also be informed of their option to remain in foster care beyond age 18 through Extended Foster Care (EFC).

The purpose of the 17.5 Transition Staffing is to work with the youth and help them develop an individualized transition plan. You may also use this meeting to provide the youth with all necessary documents kept in their DCYF record and information about community resources or referrals to services they can access to make their transition more successful (e.g., health care summary, educational opportunities, housing options, Identicard, Medicaid to 26, etc.)

Your knowledge of the youth’s background and status, combined with information from the Casey Life Skills Assessment and Learning Plan, can be used to encourage dialogue with youth about their short- and long-term goals as they transition out of the system.



The more involved the youth is in planning their transition, the more likely they will be successful. Oftentimes youth will become overwhelmed about what life will be like as they prepare to transition from foster care. You may notice that their grades slip, they may sabotage their foster home placement, they may have poor hygiene and health issues, or they may become depressed and withdraw from social interactions. This is their way of dealing with separation and the fact that they will now be living on their own. A strong transition plan can help the youth with this by identifying all the important resources that are available and securing needed supports youth need to know that they will not be abandoned and left alone. Therefore, it is vital that we link youth to external support systems in the community.

*Knowing how to access these resources is a life skill that everyone needs!*

## STEP 3: Monthly Visit Discussions

After the 17.5 Transition Staffing is complete, you need to follow up on the transition plan monthly, track and document any changes, and continue to offer appropriate resources. You can do this during the monthly health and safety visits in the months that follow until such time as the youth transitions into adulthood or exits EFC.

- During these monthly face-to-face visits, answer any questions the youth may have about their transition, provide guidance and support, and help identify needed services. Update the transition plan in FamLink based on any changes made.
- Document these visits in case notes under “monthly health and safety visits.”
- In the last 90 days before the youth turns 18 or exits EFC, you will need to document in FamLink that you discussed each of the six federally required areas identified above.

### **Remember there are additional available resources that can aid in the youth’s transition:**

- Prior to age 18, one-time IL funds up to \$500 may be available to help youth attain a goal that has been identified as part of their transition. Check with your regional IL coordinator to access these funds.
- Once a youth turns 18, they can access Transitional Living (TL) funds to cover costs associated with housing, employment, food, utilities, transportation, etc. Check with your regional IL coordinator to access these funds.
- The website [www.independence.wa.gov](http://www.independence.wa.gov) provides information on jobs, education, financial aid, housing, and budgeting. This resource is especially useful for youth in rural areas that do not have access to an IL program or youth who choose not to participate in an IL program with a contracted provider.

Remember that youth may elect to remain in foster care beyond age 18 through EFC if they are dependent when they turn 18 and meet at least one of the following criteria:

- Enrolled in high school or high school equivalency program.
- Enrolled in, applied for, or can demonstrate that they intend to timely enroll in a college or vocational education program.
- Participating in a program or activity designed to promote employment.
- Employed 80 hours or more a month.
- Have a documented medical condition that prevents participation in one of the other activities.

If a youth meets the criteria and is hesitant about remaining in EFC, have a conversation about how they will meet their basic needs. These conversations should happen as soon as possible so that the youth can be thinking about their options. EFC is available until a youth turns 21, provided they continue to meet eligibility criteria. A youth may switch between categories while participating in EFC. Eligible youth who opt to leave care on their 18th birthday have until their 21st birthday to make a request to participate in EFC. The youth should contact Intake at 1-800-end-harm to request EFC.

Visit [independence.wa.gov](http://www.independence.wa.gov) for information about jobs, education, housing, and more.





## STEP 4: Exit Wrap Up

When youth on your caseload exit care, you need to ensure they transition to a safe, productive, and stable situation. The Transition Plan policy requires youth to receive the following documents prior to age 18:

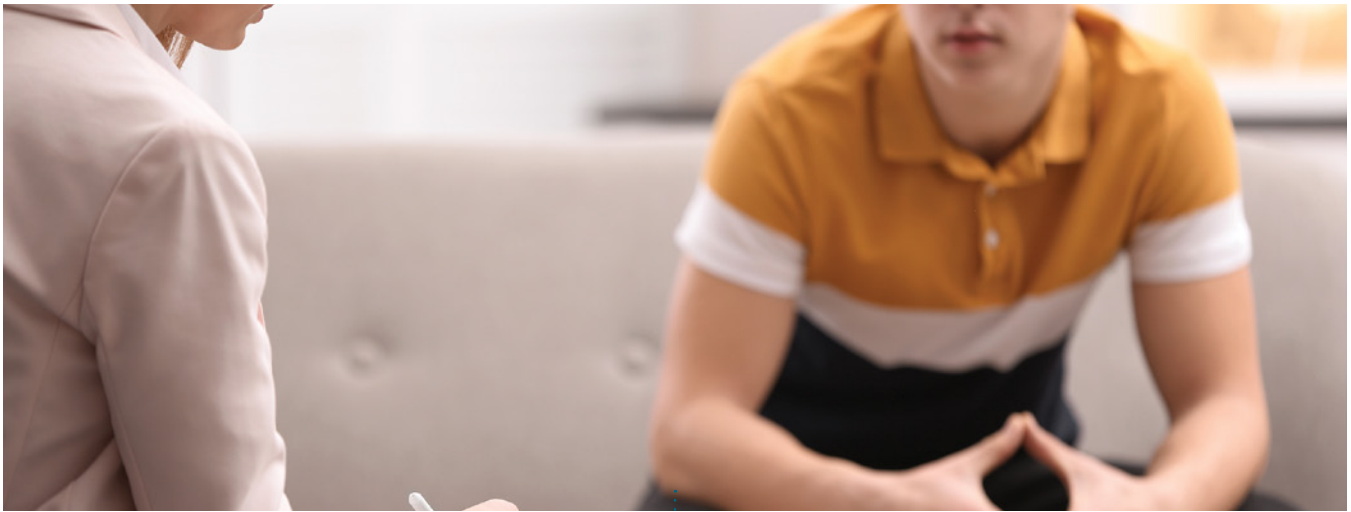
- Official or certified copy of birth certificate
- Social security card
- Medical records
- Education records
- State photo identification
- Health insurance information

Remind youth about the local IL program's transitional living services, which are available for them when they turn 18 through their 23rd birthday. You can also direct youth pursuing postsecondary education to apply for ETV, Passport, and the Governor's or other financial aid scholarships.

### **What does the caseworker need to do prior to the youth exiting care?**

The Transition Plan policy requires you to:

- Inform the youth of the length of time DCYF keeps a youth's record and how to access these records once out of care. Records are typically requested by going to any DCYF office and completing the form *Request for DCYF Records* (17-041A) available online at [www.dcyf.wa.gov/forms?field\\_number\\_value=17-041&title=](http://www.dcyf.wa.gov/forms?field_number_value=17-041&title=).
- Complete the form *DCYF Dependent/Ward of the Court Verification* form available online at [www.dcyf.wa.gov/forms?field\\_number\\_value=09-056&title=](http://www.dcyf.wa.gov/forms?field_number_value=09-056&title=).
- Gather all the documents and information indicated on the Transition Plan document that are available from the case record and/or the IL provider and provide them to the youth prior to their exit from care. Be sure to obtain and provide the required documents.
- Review the plan one last time and answer any questions the youth may have.
- If the youth has opted not to participate in EFC, this is another time to talk about the program and to remind youth they have up until their 21st birthday to make a request to participate in the EFC program.



## The Role of Education in Preparing Youth for Their Future

Youth in foster care need a solid educational foundation for a successful future. Only 50% of foster youth graduate by the age of 18. Research has shown that when youth in foster care do not complete some type of postsecondary degree, they are more likely than the general population to be homeless, on public assistance, in prison, and earn less over their lifetime. For all youth in out-of-home care, completion of a high school education and access to a postsecondary education such as college or vocational training are critical to their success as adults.

Youth in foster care need support and encouragement from their caseworker, teachers, caregivers, IL case managers, school counselors, and other caring adults. They also need information and assistance in obtaining and accessing the necessary funds and financial aid to pay for postsecondary education and training. Foster youth should be encouraged to work closely with their school counselor and their IL case manager while they are in middle and high school.

Every school district is required to designate a foster care liaison to support the rights of students in foster care. District foster care liaisons collaborate and communicate with DCYF to remove barriers to success. Liaison contact information can be found at: [www.k12.wa.us/student-success/access-opportunity-education/foster-care/foster-care-liaisonsdcyf-contacts](http://www.k12.wa.us/student-success/access-opportunity-education/foster-care/foster-care-liaisonsdcyf-contacts).

Students in foster care have certain rights under federal and state law:

- The right to remain enrolled in school of origin, even when placed in a foster home outside of the school/district boundaries. If the student's foster care placement changes, the student must remain enrolled in school of origin until a best interest determination is made ([www.k12.wa.us/sites/default/files/public/fostercare/pubdocs/Best\\_Practices\\_School\\_Selection\\_for\\_Children\\_and\\_Youth\\_in\\_Foster\\_Care.pdf](http://www.k12.wa.us/sites/default/files/public/fostercare/pubdocs/Best_Practices_School_Selection_for_Children_and_Youth_in_Foster_Care.pdf)). School districts and DCYF will work together to ensure the student has transportation if needed.
- The right to immediate enrollment. If a determination is made that remaining in the school of origin is not in a student's best interest, the student must be immediately enrolled in their new school. Enrollment must not be denied or delayed because documents normally required for enrollment have not been provided. See: [www.k12.wa.us/sites/default/files/public/fostercare/pubdocs/Best\\_Practices\\_Immediate\\_Enrollment\\_for\\_Children\\_Youth\\_Foster\\_Care.pdf](http://www.k12.wa.us/sites/default/files/public/fostercare/pubdocs/Best_Practices_Immediate_Enrollment_for_Children_Youth_Foster_Care.pdf).

## High School Graduation Requirements

Requirements to graduate from high school are set by the Washington State Board of Education. Students are assigned an expected graduation year at the time they enter ninth grade. See: <http://apps.leg.wa.gov/wac/default.aspx?cite=180-51-035> WAC 180-51-035. They are held to the graduation requirements of that graduation year regardless of the year they actually complete high school. For the class of 2019 and beyond, students must meet specific credit requirements, complete one or more Graduation Pathways and complete a High School and Beyond Plan. Local school districts have the authority to set graduation requirements in addition to state minimums.

Contact the individual school district where the youth attends school to see if there are additional graduation requirements, or visit State Board of Education: [www.sbe.wa.gov/graduation.php](http://www.sbe.wa.gov/graduation.php)

OSPI: [www.k12.wa.us/student-success/graduation/graduation-requirements](http://www.k12.wa.us/student-success/graduation/graduation-requirements)

OSPI Graduation Pathways Toolkit:  
[www.k12.wa.us/student-success/graduation/graduation-requirements/graduation-pathways/graduation-pathways-toolkit](http://www.k12.wa.us/student-success/graduation/graduation-requirements/graduation-pathways/graduation-pathways-toolkit)

## High School and Beyond Plan

The High School and Beyond Plan is a graduation requirement. It's a guidance framework designed to help students think about their future and choose coursework that prepares them for their career aspirations after high school. Starting in middle school, students work with their families and school staff to create their High School and Beyond Plan based on their own career and educational goals. They continue to revise their plan each year throughout high school as their interests or goals change.

While there are specific components that are required as part of each student's High School and Beyond Plan, each school district determines the implementation process and provides access to an online platform, so contact your local school district to find out what guidelines and resources have been established for your school.

The school's counseling or career center staff should be able to support students in accessing the online High School and Beyond Plan. This electronic plan should be included in a student's academic record if they transfer to another high school in the state.

Templates and guidance lessons for the High School and Beyond Plan can be downloaded at: [www.k12.wa.us/Graduation-Requirements/Requirement-HighSchoolBeyond.aspx](http://www.k12.wa.us/Graduation-Requirements/Requirement-HighSchoolBeyond.aspx)

A complete set of 30 lessons per grade level (6-12) in Career Guidance WA can be accessed at: [www.k12.wa.us/SecondaryEducation/CareerCollegeReadiness/default.aspx](http://www.k12.wa.us/SecondaryEducation/CareerCollegeReadiness/default.aspx)

Additional resources for the High School and Beyond Plan are at: State Board of Education: <https://sbe.wa.gov/our-work/high-school-and-beyond-plan> or OSPI: [www.k12.wa.us/student-success/graduation/graduation-requirements/high-school-beyond-plan](http://www.k12.wa.us/student-success/graduation/graduation-requirements/high-school-beyond-plan) and and ReadyWA: <https://readywa.org/beyond/en/>.

If a youth on your caseload is not on track to graduate you may make a referral to the Treehouse Educational Advocacy Program to explore alternate graduation options, which may include the high school equivalency test, certificate of academic achievement, or accessing a skill center or alternative learning experience. For more information, visit [www.treehouseforkids.org/our-services/eligibility/](http://www.treehouseforkids.org/our-services/eligibility/).

Other resources may include the Supplemental Educational Transition Planning (SETuP) program, GRAD Success program, Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate program (GEAR UP), Open Doors Reengagement Programs, or the IL program.





## Graduation Pathway

Legislation passed in the 2019 session HB 1599 removed the statewide assessment as a graduation requirement and instead established multiple graduation pathway options: <https://app.leg.wa.gov/billsummary?BillNumber=1599&Year=2019&Initiative=false>

View the SBE one-pager on graduation pathway options and other changes from new graduation laws: [www.sbe.wa.gov/sites/default/files/public/0000%20Graduation%20Pathway%20Options%20One%20PAGER.pdf](http://www.sbe.wa.gov/sites/default/files/public/0000%20Graduation%20Pathway%20Options%20One%20PAGER.pdf)

Beginning with the Class of 2020, students must meet at least one of these pathway options to graduate:

- State Assessment: Meet or exceed the graduation scores in the Smarter Balanced Assessments (SBA) in English language arts (ELA) and mathematics or in WA-AIM (Washington Access to Instruction & Measurement).
- Dual Credit: Earn at least one high school credit in ELA and at least one high school credit in math in dual credit courses (Running Start, College in the High School, and/or Career and Technical Education dual credit courses).
- AP/IB/Cambridge: For both ELA and math, earn a 3 or higher on certain Advanced Placement (AP) exams or a 4 or higher on certain International Baccalaureate (IB) exams or an E on certain Cambridge International exams, or pass the course with at least a C+.

- SAT/ACT: Meet or exceed the graduation scores set by SBE in the math and ELA portions of the SAT or ACT.
- Transition Course: Pass a transition course in ELA and math (for example, a Bridge to College course) which allows a student to place directly into a credit-bearing college level course.
- Combination: Meet any combination of at least one ELA and one math option of those options listed in 1-5.
- ASVAB: Meet standard on the ASVAB (Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery) by scoring at least the minimum established by the military for eligibility to serve in a branch of the armed services.\*: [www.sbe.wa.gov/our-work/graduation-requirements/graduation-pathway-options/asvab](http://www.sbe.wa.gov/our-work/graduation-requirements/graduation-pathway-options/asvab)
- CTE Sequence: Complete a sequence of Career and Technical Education (CTE) courses.\*

*\*Note: Students who pursue these pathways (ASVAB or CTE) do not need to meet English and math requirements separately. English and math content are embedded in both pathways—and a student who meets either the ASVAB standard or the CTE pathway requirements has met the graduation pathway requirement.*

Additional information, FAQ's and resources related to Graduation Pathways can be found online at [www.sbe.wa.gov/our-work/graduation-pathway-options](http://www.sbe.wa.gov/our-work/graduation-pathway-options)

## Credit Requirements

The 24-credit framework outlined as part of the graduation requirement updates in House Bill 1599 was designed to be both rigorous and flexible. By completing these credit requirements, most students will keep all postsecondary options open, including meeting the college admission requirements for entry into a public four-year institution or pursuing a program of study in a two-year institution or apprenticeship. The 24-credit framework is also flexible enough to build into a student's course planning one or more CTE program of study that can lead to a professional or technical certificate or degree through a skills center or Career and Technical Education program.

Additional information for credit requirements specific to students in the Classes of 2017 – 2024 can be found on the State Board of Education's website at [www.sbe.wa.gov/our-work/graduation-requirements](http://www.sbe.wa.gov/our-work/graduation-requirements).

For a one-page flyer that visually represents the different credit requirements, a FAQ and multiple resources to support students, families and staff in better understanding Washington's current credit requirements go to [www.sbe.wa.gov/sites/default/files/public/documents/GradRequirements/joes\\_WSBE-Infographic-r601-LOGO-FNL\\_UPDATE\\_ada.pdf](http://www.sbe.wa.gov/sites/default/files/public/documents/GradRequirements/joes_WSBE-Infographic-r601-LOGO-FNL_UPDATE_ada.pdf).

## Youth with Disabilities

While the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) does not apply to youth after they earn a high school diploma or turn age 21, they still have the right to accommodations to support them when they go onto most postsecondary programs. 504 plans do not end in high school, so this law and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) provide legal protection for youth in postsecondary education settings.

Upon graduation, schools must provide the youth with their Individualized Education Program (IEP) and Summary of Performance, which describes their performance and recommendations to assist the youth in meeting their postsecondary goals. The IEP or 504 Plan can be provided to the postsecondary school so staff can set up a plan to meet the youth's needs and accommodations to be successful. Each school has a different contact person, but usually they can be found in the Student Services Department.



## Transitioning from High School to College for Students with Disabilities

There are several differences between high school and college. In college, the student is responsible for their own self-management and advocacy. Additionally, the laws that affect students with disabilities are different. Below is a chart that highlights the differences in services for students between high school and college.

<b>SECONDARY EDUCATION</b> High school	<b>POST SECONDARY EDUCATION</b> Any college after completion of high school
<b>WHAT IS THE LAW?</b>	
Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA)	Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act particular references in
Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (504)	Subpart E (504)
Americans with Disabilities Act of 1992 (ADA)	
<b>WHAT IS THE INTENT OF THE LAW?</b>	
504/ADA: To ensure that no otherwise qualified person with a disability will be denied access to, or the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination by any program or activity at any public institution or entity.	
IDEA: To provide a free, appropriate, public education in the least restrictive environment to eligible students with disabilities, including special education and relative services.	
<b>WHO IS COVERED UNDER THE LAW?</b>	
All infants, children and youth requiring special education services until the youth graduates from high school or up to age 21.	All qualified persons with disabilities who meet the entry criteria of the college or program and who can document the existence of a disability as defined by the ADA.
<b>WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR IDENTIFYING AND DOCUMENTING THE NEED?</b>	
School districts are responsible for identifying, evaluating, and planning educational services at no expense to the parent or individual.	Students are responsible for self-identification and for obtaining disability documentation from a professional who is qualified to assess their disability. The student is responsible for the cost.
<b>WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR INITIATING THE SERVICE DELIVERY?</b>	
School districts are responsible for identifying students with disabilities and providing special instruction, individualized educational plans (IEP), and accommodations.	Students are responsible for notifying staff at the college of their disability and their need for accommodations.



## Dual Credit Programs

### Running Start

Running Start allows students in grades 11 and 12 to take college courses at Washington's community and technical colleges, and at Central Washington University, Eastern Washington University, Washington State University, and Northwest Indian College. Running Start students and their families do not pay tuition; but, they do pay college fees, buy their own books, and provide their own transportation. Students receive both high school and college credit for these classes, therefore, accelerating their progress through the education system.

Students needing more than four years to graduate and who have been enrolled in Running Start during their 11th or 12th grade years, may continue to access Running Start after the completion of their senior year. However, only specific courses needed for graduation may be taken and the student must be working toward a high school diploma, not an Associate's Degree.

### Education and Training Running Start Program

Youth who are Running Start students are eligible to apply for the ETV Running Start Program to help offset the cost of the student and the foster family for the books and supplies, fees and transportation costs. To apply for the ETV Running Start Program go to: <http://independence.wa.gov/programs/etv-program/>

### Career and Technical Education (CTE)

#### Dual Credit

CTE Dual Credit helps students transition from high school into college community and technical colleges and professional technical programs. CTE Dual Credit is a cooperative effort between K–12 schools, community and technical colleges, and technical programs that can lead to an industry-recognized credential, certificate, or degree.

## College in the High School

College in the High School is an opportunity for students to be concurrently enrolled in high school and college and to potentially earn high school and college credit in the same course offered on the high school campus. Students may also choose to take a College in the High School course and not pay to earn the actual college credit, but still get the exposure and benefit of a rigorous college-level class experience. Costs to students vary with each institution. Students can check with their teachers or school counseling team to learn more about what options are available.

## Programs Allowing Dual Credit Through Standardized Examinations While in High School

### Advanced Placement (AP)

Allows students to take rigorous college preparatory courses while still in high school. Students may earn college credit and advanced placement into upper-level college courses by taking AP exams. Many colleges and universities recognize AP courses when making admissions decisions.

### International Baccalaureate and Cambridge International

Offers high-quality programs of international education to a worldwide community of schools. These programs can lead to examinations in the same manner as AP, and may lead to college credit.

For a complete list and more information about dual credit programs, go to the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI): [www.k12.wa.us/student-success/support-programs/dual-credit-programs](http://www.k12.wa.us/student-success/support-programs/dual-credit-programs)

# Smarter Balanced State Assessment



All Washington students take Smarter Balanced math and English Language Arts (ELA) tests in grades three through eight and in grade 10. Students in grades five, eight, and 11 take the Washington Comprehensive Assessment of Science (WCAS). All students took Smarter Balanced tests statewide for the first time in 2015. These tests replaced some pre-existing state assessments. While passing these state assessments or an approved alternative is no longer required for graduation, it is still important for all students to do their best on these exams. The results provide schools with valuable information about their instruction and students with a moment-in-time look at how their skills are developing in the assessed subject areas. More information about these tests is available on the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction's (OSPI) website. [www.k12.wa.us/assessment/default.aspx](http://www.k12.wa.us/assessment/default.aspx)

## High School Test Scores Are Used for Postsecondary Planning

High school students can use their Smarter Balanced test scores to guide them in preparing for college or career training. Educators use Smarter Balanced test scores to ensure students have the support they need during their last year of high school to be successful in their postsecondary pathway of choice. As part of their High School and Beyond Plan, students are expected to use their Smarter Balanced test scores to help them decide which courses to take in their 11th grade year:

- Score three or four: Students are prepared and on track for college. Students should be encouraged to enroll in dual credit or the next most rigorous advanced course offered by their high school.
- Score two: Students are not quite on track for college. Students should be encouraged to enroll in a Bridge to College course or another senior year course in math or English Language Arts designed to give students an intense, year-long learning experience that leads to college readiness. These transition courses can also meet the student's Graduation Pathway requirement.
- Score one: Students are not yet on track for college. They will need additional, personalized support in high school to develop their postsecondary pathway. Students may need to take pre-college (remedial) courses when they enter college.

## Colleges Use High School Test Scores to Place Students in College-Level Courses

Over 200 colleges are using Smarter Balanced test scores as evidence that students are ready for college-level work. All 34 of Washington's public community and technical colleges, all six public baccalaureate institutions, and nine private independent colleges have agreed to consider Smarter Balanced test scores when deciding whether or not students need to take pre-college (remedial) courses. High school graduates who meet the following requirements can skip pre-college (remedial) courses and place directly into entry-level college courses.

- Score a three or four on the high school Smarter Balanced test. Note: the community and technical colleges have extended this agreement to students who enroll in dual-credit courses as high school seniors.
- Take appropriate senior-year English and quantitative (math) coursework.
- Enroll in college in the academic year immediately following high school graduation.

Additional placement testing may be necessary to enroll in higher-level college courses.

## Bridge Courses Create More Opportunities for Students Who Score at a Two

Some high schools are offering Bridge to College or other locally approved transition courses in math and English Language Arts. The one-year Bridge courses were specifically designed in collaboration with higher education partners to get students college- and career-ready by the time they graduate from high school. High school graduates who meet the following requirements can still skip pre-college (remedial) courses and place directly into entry-level college courses at all 34 of Washington's public and community technical colleges.

- Score a level 3 or 4 on the Smarter Balanced test.
- Complete a Bridge to College course with a "B" grade or better.

These courses may not be offered yet at all high schools. A list of participating high schools is on OSPI's website.

Resources at: WA Student Achievement Council [www.wsac.wa.gov/college-readiness](http://www.wsac.wa.gov/college-readiness) and State Board for Community and Technical Colleges [www.sbctc.edu/search/?query=SMARTER+BALANCED+ASSESSMENT](http://www.sbctc.edu/search/?query=SMARTER+BALANCED+ASSESSMENT)

## Remember

Students should:

- Meet with their highschool/college counselors to review their four-year academic plan. Request to be placed in challenging courses to expand their knowledge and stretch their mind and that satisfy college admission requirements.
- Choose elective courses that interest them such as theater, CTE, or world language.
- Focus on their class work, homework, assignments, and other school projects. Continue to build upon and enhance their skills, especially those techniques learned in middle school.
- Participate in school orientation to learn about the different activities available at their high school. Academics should be the focus, but it is important to have a balanced high school experience.
- Get involved in extracurricular activities within their academic community by participating in student organizations, athletics, and community service events.



# College Admission

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College admission decisions are made by individual colleges, and vary depending on the type of institution, available college programs, and other factors. While high school graduation (or equivalent) is typically needed to ensure adequate preparation for college-level coursework, simply meeting high school graduation requirements may not as adequately prepare all students for meeting the more selective four-year colleges' admissions standards.

## Community and Technical Colleges – Two-Year College

Washington offers broad access to students through its 34 community and technical colleges, whose open admissions policies are designed to eliminate barriers between students and postsecondary education. However, some admission standards do apply, especially for more competitive or high need programs. Specific information can be obtained from the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges.

## Baccalaureate Institutions – Four-Year College

Students who aspire to attend a baccalaureate institution in Washington must apply for admission. Some of the factors influencing admission include high school course choices, grade point averages, test scores, and extra-curricular activities. Required high school courses are known as the College Academic Distribution Requirements (CADR). Completing CADR courses does not guarantee admission to one of the state's six public baccalaureate institutions. Institutions consider a number of criteria when making admission decisions. Minimum college admission standards for public baccalaureate institutions include:

- 2.0 GPA
- Taking the SAT or ACT and having the scores sent directly to the college or university
- More recently, impacts from the COVID pandemic have resulted in all of Washington's public baccalaureates adopting a test blind, test neutral or no test approach to college admissions, at least in the short term as many college admissions exams were not accessible.
- Completing courses that meet the CADR requirements.

For additional information and a list of the CADR, visit [www.wsac.wa.gov/college-admissions](http://www.wsac.wa.gov/college-admissions).

# High School Senior Year Timeline for College Preparation



## September and October

When working with high school seniors on your caseload remind the youth to:

- Review their June SAT/ACT scores and decide if they will retake one or both; and help them register for the next exam if necessary.
- Apply for a for an FSA ID for filing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). [www.studentaid.gov/fsaid](http://www.studentaid.gov/fsaid).
- Obtain all the necessary applications for college admission and double check the deadlines for the schools to which they intend to apply (also refer to FAFSA/financial aid deadlines for specific schools at the same time).

- The FAFSA (<https://fafsa.ed.gov/>) and WASFA (<http://readyssetgrad.org/wasfa>) open on October 1st. In preparation, students will need to collect information and documents:
  - Social Security Number or Alien Registration Number.
  - Most recent federal income tax returns, W-2s, and other records of money earned – they may also be able to transfer their federal tax return information directly into the FAFSA using the IRS Data Retrieval Tool.
  - Bank statements and records of investments, if applicable.
  - Records of untaxed income, if applicable.
- Students should file their FAFSA or WASFA before the priority filing date on November 1st. They can find more resources at <https://wsac.wa.gov/passport-to-careers>.
- Begin writing their application essays for their college applications.
- Stay in contact with the representatives of the colleges to which they would like to apply. For the designated staff support for foster youth on Washington's campuses, see: <https://legacy.collegesuccessfoundation.org/wa/supports/college/navigator>.
- Schedule an appointment with their school counselor to review their educational plans and goals and to discuss their four- year plan.
- Request letters of recommendation for their college applications.
- Save for college housing and enrollment deposits (from \$200-\$400, depending on the school).
- Research and apply for additional scholarships.

## November

- Attend a financial aid workshop with their caregiver/guardians/IL provider.
- Continue filling out college and scholarship applications (be sure to remind them to keep copies of everything they send out).

## December

- Attend a financial aid information session at their high school if they did not attend one in November or if they have additional questions.
- Meet with their school counselor to go over their final college choices.

## January

Ask their school counselor to send their first semester transcript to the colleges to which they applied (if the colleges requested them).

## February, March, and April

- Keep track of all of their applications. They can call or email the college admission office to inquire if their application file is complete.
- They should receive their Student Aid Report (SAR) within four weeks after they have submitted the FAFSA.
- Meet with their school counselor to discuss their college admissions and financial aid progress.
- Once they begin receiving offers of admission, begin contacting the housing offices at the schools about housing options.

- They will begin to receive initial financial aid offers from the schools to which they have been admitted. Read their mail/email promptly!
- Take advantage of the college's Spring Preview Days that are available at the schools to which they have been admitted.

## May

- Make their college decision by May 1, the National Candidates Reply Date (or earlier if they know), and send in any enrollment/tuition deposit the college has requested. Find out when tuition, room and board, meal plans, etc. are due.
- Look for information in their mailbox from their college about housing, orientation, course selection and registration.

## June, July, and August

- Request their final high school transcript be sent to the college of their choice and any other scholarship programs that require one.
- Attend their college's orientation.

Resources:

- College Board's Big Future <https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/>
- WA Student Achievement Council College Admissions [www.wsac.wa.gov/college-admissions](http://www.wsac.wa.gov/college-admissions)
- Financial Aid [www.wsac.wa.gov/sfa-overview](http://www.wsac.wa.gov/sfa-overview)

## Post Secondary Education and Training

Many youth in foster care think that pursuing education beyond high school or the high school equivalency test is not an option for them. They do not think there are funding opportunities to help pay for the costs. This is not true! In addition to the EFC program, which provides the opportunity for youth to remain in care up to their 21st birthday while pursuing their secondary or postsecondary education, there are many additional resources available to help foster youth with postsecondary education expenses. Remember, youth are responsible for the costs associated with their postsecondary education. Therefore, your role is vital in helping youth understand the resources available to support their education.





# Financial Aid

## State Financial Aid Programs: Washington Opportunity Pathways

The Washington Student Achievement Council administers the majority of the state's student financial aid programs, which are known collectively as Opportunity Pathways. These programs help tens of thousands of students annually earn college credits, certificates, and degrees. [www.wsac.wa.gov/sfa-overview](http://www.wsac.wa.gov/sfa-overview)

### FAFSA

The most important step a youth must take if they have obtained the high school equivalency test or High School Diploma and plan to attend a college, university, or vocational or technical college is to complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). The FAFSA must be completed each year, on or shortly after October 1, to ensure the student receives their financial aid in a timely manner. For information about the FAFSA and to complete the application, go to: [www.fafsa.ed.gov/](http://www.fafsa.ed.gov/).

After the FAFSA is submitted, the youth should contact each college they provided on the FAFSA to find out if additional information must be submitted. Documents the college may request from the youth include:

- The Financial Aid Data Sheet
- The Independent Verification Worksheet
- Proof of Dependency

It's very important that the youth submits all the required paper work by the college priority deadline.

## State Financial Aid for Undocumented Individuals and Other Select Applicants

Washington State offers financial aid programs to students who cannot file, or do not wish to file, a federal FAFSA financial aid application for various reasons:

- Immigration status/undocumented
- Defaulted federal loans
- Repayments owed on federal grants
- Unable to provide selective service confirmation
- U.S. citizen applicants with undocumented parents/family members who do not wish to file a FAFSA

Students can access the WASFA application at: <https://wsac.wa.gov/wasfa>.



## Types of Financial Aid

Financial aid is awarded by the college and is based on the youth's FAFSA information. Depending on the college the youth is attending, they may be eligible to receive federal, state, and institutional financial aid.

There are four types of financial aid:

- **Grants:** Do not have to be repaid unless the student withdraws from school and owes a refund
- **Scholarships:** Provided to scholars because of academic merit
- **Work Study:** Provides part-time employment while the youth is enrolled in college
- **Loans:** Youth must pay back to the Department of Education

Below are examples of federal and Washington state financial aid that a youth may be eligible to receive depending on the type of college they are attending.

## Federal Financial Aid

- Pell Grant
- Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant (FSEOG)
- Federal Work Study
- Subsidized Loans
- Unsubsidized Loans

## Washington State Financial Aid

- Washington College Grant
- Passport to Careers Program
- College Bound
- State Work Study

Foster youth who attend an eligible Washington State institution of higher education may receive priority funding for the State Work Study Program. For a list of eligible colleges and universities, go to: <https://wsac.wa.gov/sites/default/files/2020-participatinginstitutions.pdf>.

## Scholarships and Programs Available to Youth

### Passport to Career Program

Foster and unaccompanied homeless youth may be eligible to receive financial assistance to help with the cost of attending college, apprenticeship, or pre-apprenticeship. Eligible students may also receive specialized support services from college staff and the College Success Foundation. For more information about eligibility and how to apply, visit <https://wsac.wa.gov/passport/guide>. Or call 1-888-535-0747 option #3 or Passport Directly at 360-753-7793.

### Governors' Scholarship

The Washington State Governor's Scholarship for Foster Youth is a scholarship program that helps those who are currently in an open dependency court order in Washington State or Tribal Court, continue their education and earn a degree. For information about eligibility, how to apply, and to learn more about other scholarships that may be available, go to: [www.collegesuccessfoundation.org](http://www.collegesuccessfoundation.org).

### Education and Training Voucher (ETV) Program

The ETV Program is a national program available to eligible current and former foster youth. For information about eligibility and how to apply, go to: [www.independence.wa.gov/programs/etv.asp](http://www.independence.wa.gov/programs/etv.asp).

### TheWashboard.org

**TheWashBoard.org** is a free, web-based scholarship matching clearinghouse for Washington residents and students attending college in Washington. Students can register and are then matched to scholarships they may be eligible to apply for. For more information, go to: [www.thewashboard.org](http://www.thewashboard.org).

### The National Foster Parent Association (NFPA)

The NFPA offers scholarships for foster youth and adopted youth who wish to further their education beyond high school. For information about eligibility and how to apply, go to: [www.nfpainc.org](http://www.nfpainc.org)







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*If you would like copies of this document in an alternative format or language, please contact DCYF Constituent Relations (1-800-723-4831 | 360-902-8060, [ConstRelations@dcyf.wa.gov](mailto:ConstRelations@dcyf.wa.gov)).*

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