

## Foster Care College Tuition Waiver

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The West Virginia Legislature in 2000 enacted the Foster Care Tuition Waiver through House Bill 4784. This piece of legislation paved the way for youth who graduated high school or obtained their GED while in a Foster Care Placement to enter a West Virginia Public college. Both four-year universities and two-year community and technical colleges make this waiver available.

Each academic year, former foster youth would request a letter from their local Department of Health and Human Resources Office to verify the custody period, which coincides with the date of their High School Diploma or GED Certificate. The university or college financial aid office then applies the waiver to the youth's tuition. This waiver does not cover room and board or books. Each institution applies the waiver a bit differently, and youth should work with their financial aid office to ensure they have also applied for all available financial aid via [the FAFSA \(Free Application for Federal Student Aid\)](#).

Other eligibility requirements include:

- The student is enrolled and progressing in undergraduate courses at state institutions of higher education.
- The student must be in foster care or other residential care for at least one year prior to the waiver award.
- Waiver renewal is contingent upon the student continuing to meet the academic progress standards established by the institution.
- The waiver may be used for no more than four years of undergraduate study.
- The initial waiver must be granted within two years of graduation from high school or passing the GED examination.
- The waiver may only be used after other sources of financial aid that are dedicated solely to tuition and fees are exhausted.

Youth may complete their FAFSA using the Independent Status option if they aged out of Foster Care at 18 or were adopted after age 13. For federal student aid purposes, youth in these two categories are considered to be an independent student and will not provide information about parents' income on the FAFSA. Full PELL grants and some other aid may then be available to the youth. Along with the Foster Care Tuition Waiver, many students are able to afford college and most do not take out additional student loans.

All youth who are likely to graduate high school or obtain their GED while in a foster care placement should be encouraged to apply and enroll at a West Virginia institution of higher education. Youth do not need to complete any additional paperwork with the Department of Health and Human Resources to obtain the Foster Care Tuition Waiver. Should youth have any questions about the waiver, they may contact the State Office of the Department of Health and Human Resources at 304-558-7980.