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## **Illinois DCFS offers college scholarships to current and former youth in care** ***DCFS Scholarship Program applications accepted until March 31***

CHICAGO – The Illinois Department of Children and Family Services is currently accepting applications for the 2022 DCFS Scholarship Program. Through the program, a minimum of 53 academic scholarships will be awarded to current and former youth in care for the upcoming school year, with four awards reserved for the children of veterans.

Scholarship recipients receive up to five consecutive years of tuition and academic fee waivers to be used at participating Illinois state community colleges and public universities, a monthly grant of \$1,273 to offset other expenses and a medical card. On average, the department receives 200 application packets each year, and has awarded over 1,500 scholarships since the program began in 1971.

“Our youth have faced many obstacles and uncertainties in their lives and paying for college should not be one of them, said Illinois DCFS Director Marc D. Smith. “Our mission is to ensure the well-being of every youth in our care, and these scholarships help open the door to the world of possibilities a college education provides.”

The DCFS Scholarship Program is available to youth who have an open DCFS case, whose cases were closed through adoption or guardianship or who aged out of care at 18 or older. Youth who are at least 16 years old and not yet 21 on March 31 may apply.

“The DCFS scholarship changed my life in a good way,” said Holiness, a current youth in care and 2021 scholarship recipient. “If I didn’t get the scholarship, I wasn’t planning on going to college because I would not be able to pay for school by myself. Now I can live in the dorm, get the books I need and afford other necessities. I am so thankful for this scholarship.”



Scholarship recipients are selected based on their scholastic record and aptitude, community and extracurricular activities, three letters of recommendation from non-relatives and a personal essay illustrating their purpose for higher education.

Applications are available at any DCFS regional office and on the DCFS website: [www2.illinois.gov/dcfs](http://www2.illinois.gov/dcfs) (Form CFS 438 under DCFS Features on the homepage). Students or caregivers may call the DCFS Office of Education and Transition Services at 217-557-2689 or email [DCFS.OfficeofEducationandTransitionServices@illinois.gov](mailto:DCFS.OfficeofEducationandTransitionServices@illinois.gov) with questions about the application process or for more information.

*About the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) Founded in 1964, DCFS is responsible for protecting children from abuse or neglect by responding to calls received on the Child Abuse Hotline, 1-800-25-ABUSE (1-800-252-2873). With the goal of keeping children safe, DCFS strengthens and supports families with a wide range of services. When keeping a child safe means removing them from the home, DCFS makes every effort to reunite them with their family. When the best interest of the child makes this impossible, DCFS is committed to pursuing adoption by loving families to provide children with a safe and permanent home. DCFS is also responsible for licensing and monitoring of all Illinois child welfare agencies.*

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