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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 2021 DCFS Scholarship Program. Through the program, 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 universities, a monthly grant of \$1,235 to offset other expenses and a medical card. On average, the department receives 200 application packets each year, and has awarded over 1,400 scholarships since the program began in 1971.

“It is imperative that every youth in our care has the tools they need to succeed,” said Illinois DCFS Acting Director Marc D. Smith. “These scholarships give our youth the ability to concentrate on their studies and prepare for their futures without the stress of worrying about how they are going to pay for school.”

The DCFS Scholarship Program is open 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 information I received from the DCFS Scholarship Program about buying books, school contacts and job opportunities made my transition to college life much easier,” said Maya, a 2020 scholarship recipient. “I am very grateful to have been selected as a recipient of the scholarship award. With this scholarship I don’t have to worry about trying to manage a lot of work hours and my school schedule. The scholarship allows me to focus on my classes and study time and has made me more financially responsible. I review my expenses, pay my bills on time and balance my monthly budget.”

Scholarship recipients are selected based on their scholastic record and aptitude, community and extracurricular activities, three letters of recommendation from non-relatives and a written statement illustrating their purpose for higher education. Due to pandemic-related limited availability of ACT and SAT testing sites, ACT and SAT test scores will not be considered for any applicants in the 2021 selection process.

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 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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