



The Decision to Leave DCFS Care: Are You Ready?

Available programs to assist with attaining self-sufficiency

DCFS will provide the following programs to aid in the transitioning process.

YOUTH IN COLLEGE (YIC)/VOCATIONAL TRAINING PROGRAM

- Ages 16-21 AND youth in care only
- Monthly grant
- Books (not covered by financial aid)
- Possible assistance with tutoring

YOUTH IN SCHOLARSHIP (YIS)

- Ages 16-21; youth in care, aged out at 18+, adopted or in guardianship placement
- 53 merit-based awards per year
- Medical card & monthly grant
- Books (not covered by financial aid)
- Possible assistance with tutoring for youth in care

EMPLOYMENT/JOB TRAINING/APPRENTICESHIP INCENTIVE PROGRAM

- Ages 17-21; youth in care only
- \$158 monthly grant with documentation of Employment, Job Training Program, Apprenticeship
- Benefits available also to youth who aged out of care at age 18+, adopted or in guardianship placement, for approved Apprenticeships only

EDUCATION & TRAINING VOUCHER (ETV)

(Maximum \$5,000 annual award to youth meeting eligibility)

- Possible uses of vouchers: tuition payment, books, housing, uniforms, supplies, transportation, and trade school
- School must be listed as accredited at www.ope.ed.gov/accreditation/Search.aspx

TUITION AND FEE WAIVER

- Youth in care, aged out at 18+, adopted or in guardianship placement.
- Tuition and fee waiver at an Illinois community college or public university

Caseworkers assist all eligible youth in care with preparation for the following programs:

- Transitional Living Program (TLP)
- Independent Living Options (ILO)
- YIC, Scholarship Program, EIP, ETV

For more info call DCFS Office of Education and Transition Services at 217-557-2689





Annual High School Academic Plan Meeting

WHAT: The **Annual High School Academic Plan (CFS 407 HS)** is completed by the caseworker during the Annual High School Academic Plan Meeting at the start of each school year, August through October. Caseworkers are to convene a meeting where the student’s academic progress is reviewed, problems/issues are discussed, and post-secondary planning is begun. The form is to be brought to the youth’s next Administrative Case Review.

WHY: To ensure that all DCFS youth are prepared for post-secondary education, vocational training, or employment, and that they learn about the department’s programs that support their plans. Academic problems or issues that are identified during this meeting will be addressed, and communication with school counselors, other relevant school staff is encouraged.

WHO: Caseworkers, youth, caregivers, school counselors and other relevant school staff should be included in order to fully address each youth’s individual situation and plans. If youth has an IEP, is lacking credits, or has other specific educational issues, a NIU education advisor may be invited to participate in the meeting.

THE ANNUAL HIGH SCHOOL ACADEMIC PLAN • YEAR BY YEAR

<p style="text-align: center;">Freshman Year</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review academic progress from elementary school/middle school & identify strengths Identify possible future goals related to career options and/or academic interests Review DCFS transitional services for youth 14 and older Use the Casey Life Skill Assessment in the discussion Discuss study habits, and any study/support groups or other supports/resources that may be needed, i.e. tutoring Identify possible extra-curricular activities Complete the Education Profile (CFS 407-4) Complete the AHSAP, including goals for current year, and distribute copies to student, caregiver, counselor, and education advisor 	<p style="text-align: center;">Sophomore Year</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review progress from freshman year: is this youth on track academically? Acknowledge accomplishments Identify any educational problems or issues Review discussion from Freshman year regarding academic and/or vocational interests Student visit www.careercounseling.com if needed to clarify career interests Discuss opportunities for internships, dual credit programs, mentors, volunteer experiences as appropriate Begin to explore possible post-secondary colleges and vocational programs Register for PSAT if appropriate Communicate with school counselor as needed Complete the AHSAP, including goals for current year, and distribute copies to student, caregiver, counselor, and education advisor
<p style="text-align: center;">Junior Year</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review progress from sophomore year: is this youth on track academically? Acknowledge accomplishments Discuss graduation requirements Identify any educational problems or issues Focus on post-secondary goals Involve the school counselor to identify colleges, universities, or vocational programs of interest; take tours Notify youth re: www.collegezone.com to gather information related to school options, financial aid, college costs, scholarships Arrange for youth to register and prepare for ACT/SAT Complete the AHSAP, including goals for current year, and distribute copies to student, caregiver, counselor, and education advisor 	<p style="text-align: center;">Senior Year</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review academic progress, graduation requirements and post secondary options Discuss graduation requirements Review post-secondary options available to DCFS youth, decide which apply for their situation Outline youth’s responsibilities in applying for DCFS programs Finalize list of colleges, universities, or vocational training options and note application deadlines List out tasks for youth related to college or vocational program admission Assist youth in completing FAFSA in October of the graduation year Apply for DCFS Scholarship in January Complete the AHSAP, including goals for current year, and distribute copies to student, caregiver, counselor, and education advisor



DCFS Office of Education and Transition Services

Life Skills Program

The Life Skills Program is designed to enhance youth independent living skills while promoting economic and social self-sufficiency. Caseworkers utilize the Casey Life Skills Assessment to establish an individual base line for the life skills needs of each youth. Individualized transition plans, goals and timelines are developed to include youth, caregiver and caseworker involvement. Life skills training can consist of group and/or individual instructions, and may include hands-on training. Youth will receive a \$150 stipend for completing the entire life skills course.

- DCFS must have a legal relationship with the youth.
- Youth must be ages 14 through 20.
- Youth must reside in substitute care where placement includes, but is not limited to, situations such as Foster Home Private (FHP), Home of Relative (HMR), Foster Home Adoptive (FHA), Foster Home Boarding (FHB), or Youth in College (YIC), etc.

Referral Process:

DCFS or POS Child Welfare Specialist send referral packets to the OETS. Referral packets should include a completed CFS 912 (Life Skills Referral) form and all required documentation listed.

- Child portion of the Integrated Assessment report.
- Face sheet and child specific section of current SACWIS service plan.
- A completed and scored Casey Life Skills Assessment and the Life Skills Individual Plan.
- Consent for Release of Information (CFS 600-3) that allows OETS to share youth's information with the life skills provider.

For more information, contact:

Cook Region
Transition Manager
6201 S. Emerald Dr.
Chicago, Illinois 60621
773-371-6134

Northern Region
Transition Manager
8 E. Galena Blvd., 3rd Fl.
Aurora, Illinois 60506
630-801-3446

Central & Southern Regions
Transition Manager
2309 W. Main St.
Marion, Illinois 62959
618-993-7100





Education & Training Vouchers

Resource for Lifetime Achievement

The Education and Training Voucher (ETV) program assists youth with Cost of Attendance* post-secondary education related expenses not covered by financial aid grants or the DCFS Tuition & Fee Waiver.

Eligibility:

- Youth for whom DCFS is legally responsible or who aged out of care at age 18 or older
- OR**
- Achieved permanency at age 16 or older through either guardianship or adoption

Benefits:

- Payment of up to \$5000 annually of education related expenses such as tuition, fees, books, supplies, uniforms, equipment and/or transportation not covered by other grants or scholarships
- Youth remain eligible until they attain age 26, but may not participate in the ETV program for more than 5 years (whether or not consecutive).

Requirements:

- Attend post-secondary school listed as accredited by US Department of Education and make satisfactory academic progress
- File FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) annually
- Complete any additional financial paperwork required by the school
- Submit completed application with requested documentation each term

Approval decisions and actual voucher award amounts are determined by the Office of Education and Transition Services (OETS).

Applications and Questions:

DCFS • Office of Education and Transition Services • 2001 NE Jefferson Ave., Peoria, IL 61603
Phone: 309-671-7969 • Fax: 309-671-7946

* The cost of attendance (COA) is not the bill that you may get from your college; it is the total amount it will cost you to go to college each year. The COA includes tuition and fees; on-campus room and board (or a housing and food allowance for off-campus students); and allowances for books, supplies, transportation, loan fees, and, if applicable, dependent care. It can also include other expenses like an allowance for the rental or purchase of a personal computer, costs related to a disability, or costs for eligible study-abroad programs.





Employment/Job Training/Apprenticeship Incentive Program

The Employment/Job Training/Apprenticeship Incentive Program (EJTAIP) is designed to provide financial and supplemental services to help youth gain marketable skills through on-the-job work experience, job training programs, or approved apprenticeships.

Eligibility Requirements:

- Youth for whom DCFS is legally responsible, between the ages of 17 and 21. Youth age 16 participating in a Job Corps program are also eligible.
- Have a high school diploma or a General Education Development (GED) certificate
- Complete Casey Life Skills Assessment
- Be involved in job training through a certified job skills training program (e.g., Job Corps, internship), be employed for at least one month prior to applying for the EJTAIP and working a minimum of 20 hours per week or 80 hours a month, or be participating in an apprenticeship training program approved or recognized by the Illinois Department of Employment Security or by the United States Department of Labor.

Youth enrolled in an approved apprenticeship are eligible if in care of the Department, aged out of care of the Department at age 18 or older, or achieved adoption or guardianship directly from the Department's care. Youth must be under the age of 26 before enrolling in a qualified apprenticeship program and must document active participation.

Benefits:

- Monthly payment of \$158.00 with documentation
- Start-up funding for work-related items (e.g., tools, work clothing, etc.). Funding is need-based and limited to a one-time disbursement of up to \$210.00 with required documentation. Requests for larger amounts may be approved by exception.

Referral Information Requirements:

- EJTAIP Application (Form CFS 449-2)
- Current Client Service Plan (Form CFS 497) (youth in care only)
- Service Agreement signed by youth and caseworker (if applicable)
- Verification of employment, job training program participation, or approved apprenticeship.

For more information, contact: 217-557-2689





Youth Housing Assistance Program

DCFS may provide Youth Housing Assistance to help attain or maintain housing stability for youth that the department currently has or previously had legal responsibility. There are two parts to Youth Housing Assistance: *Housing Advocacy* and *Cash Assistance*, each of which is explained below.

Housing Advocacy

Housing advocacy services assist clients in obtaining and/or maintaining stable housing. Services include:

- Assistance in securing affordable housing
- Consumer education
- Budget counseling
- Linkages to community based resources (i.e. assistance with utilities, clothing and food)
- Follow-up services for a minimum of three months after the client secures appropriate housing

Note: Housing Advocacy does not include any money.

Eligibility:

Youth receiving housing advocacy services must meet all three of the following criteria:

1. Be at least 17 ½ and less than 21 years of age; (Youth referred for a Family Unification Program or Fostering Youth Initiative housing subsidy can receive services after they turn 21.)
2. Be legally the responsibility of DCFS within six months of case closure, **or** have aged out of DCFS care; (Note: Youth that entered adoption or subsidized guardianship after their 14th birthday are also eligible.); **and**
3. Have an income that is sufficient to meet rent and utility costs; **or** be working on obtaining that income. (While housing advocacy can begin before income is in place, it is extremely unlikely that youth will be able to secure housing without sufficient income. Housing advocates can often help with employment.)

Cash Assistance

Assistance will vary depending on a client's situation. Cash assistance may be authorized for the following reasons:

- Housing security deposit
- Rent (limited circumstances)
- Beds for the client and the client's children
- Current utility bills or utility deposits
- Appliances
- Partial housing subsidy for a period of one year following case closure (housing costs must exceed 30% of income and assistance cannot continue past the client's 21st birthday)
- Other items required by the client to avoid or manage a crisis

Eligibility:

Youth receiving Cash Assistance must meet all four of the following criteria:

1. Be at least 18 and less than 21 years of age; (Youth referred for a Family Unification Program or Fostering Youth Initiative housing subsidy can receive services after they turn 21.)
2. Be legally the responsibility of DCFS and ready for case closure **or** have aged out of DCFS care. (Note: Youth that moved to adoption or subsidized guardianship **after age 16 may be** eligible for cash assistance);
3. Have completed a budget statement (Form CFS 370-5C) that demonstrates that with any subsidy and all other income they will be able to cover all remaining living expenses (e.g. housing, utilities, clothing, food); and
4. Need cash assistance in order to attain or maintain stable housing

Referral Process or Questions

For more information, contact
the Youth Housing Assistance Coordinator at 312-328-2159 (Phone) or 312-328-2166 (Fax).



Youth Housing Assistance Program Frequently Asked Questions

Q. Am I entitled to this money?

A. No. This program is based on need, not entitlement.

Q. Will you pay for my housing?

A. No, the idea of housing advocacy is to help you find housing that you can afford. For those eligible for cash assistance, we can also help with certain housing start-up expenses, such as a security deposit.

Q. I need a job. What can I do?

A. Any education and transition coordinator can assist you in attaining employment by referring you to employment and training programs and services.

Q. I was adopted or entered subsidized guardianship. Am I eligible for housing advocacy?

A. Yes, you are eligible for housing advocacy if you were adopted or moved to subsidized guardianship after your 14th birthday. (Note: Housing Advocacy does not entitle you to money.)

Q. I was adopted or entered subsidized guardianship. Am I eligible for cash assistance?

A. Yes, you may be eligible if you were adopted or moved to subsidized guardianship after age 16.

Q. Can my husband/wife/boyfriend/girlfriend/partner live with me? What about children?

A. If anyone in your household is eligible for services, we can serve your household, however you define it. We will look at your household income to determine if housing you find is affordable for you.

Q. What about roommates?

A. Sometimes having one or more roommates is the best way to make your housing affordable. You may want to consider this option. We will ask some questions about your roommates' income to make sure this housing situation is affordable for all of you.

Q. Do you have an apartment I can move into right now?

A. No, we do not have any apartments. Our housing advocates will provide assistance with finding housing on the open market, anywhere in Illinois.

Q. What if I don't live in Illinois?

A. First, call your local child welfare office (where you are) and ask for Chafee services. Tell them you aged out of the Illinois child welfare system. If you need help accessing these services, call the number below and we will try to help. If you still need help, but can find your own housing and can afford the monthly rent, we may be able to help you by mailing a check for the security deposit to your landlord. Call to see if this is possible.

Referral Process or Questions

For more information, contact
the Youth Housing Assistance Coordinator at 312-328-2159 (Phone) or 312-328-2166 (Fax).





Scholarship Program

Eligibility Requirements:

- The department must have court-ordered legal guardianship for the applicant, the applicant must have aged out of DCFS care at age 18 or older, or the department must have had legal guardianship for the applicant immediately prior to an adoption or guardianship being finalized.
- The applicant must be at least 16 years old, but not yet 21, on the scholarship application deadline of March 31 each year
- Successfully compete for a DCFS college scholarship (submit complete scholarship application packet, CFS 438, by 3/31 of respective year)
- Maintain at least a "C" average each semester
- Maintain full-time status (12 hours Fall & Spring, 6 hours or an approved internship in Summer). Enrollment will be verified through the National Student Clearinghouse.
- Submit class schedule at the start of each semester and grades at the end of the semester.
- Report changes to any contact information promptly to the DCFS scholarship administrator

Benefits:

- A monthly board payment in the amount of \$1,235. These funds are to assist the student with campus based room and board costs or off campus rent and utilities, and personal expenses. Direct deposit is strongly recommended.
- Medicaid card provided to Illinois students.
- Tuition and mandatory fee waiver to an Illinois public university or in-district community college.
- Reimbursement of the cost of books not covered by financial aid
- Benefits available for up to five consecutive years.

Important Plans To Consider:

- Arranging transportation to the school location
- Planning for housing when school is closed for breaks and holidays
- Devising a backup plan for finances if your monthly board payment is lost or stolen.
- Seeking tutorial assistance through the school, and meeting with OETS staff if your grades are low, if you are having problems in a particular course, or if you must withdraw from any classes
- Youth who withdraw from classes must notify the OETS scholarship administrator
- Apply for financial aid annually.

What the Scholarship DOES NOT Cover:

- Orientation fees
- Computers or Internet services
- Room/board costs
- Repayment of student loans
- Tuition to private or out-of-state schools
- Study abroad
- Phone bills
- Dorm room damages
- Laboratory fees
- Transportation to and from school
- Study enhancement programs
- Supplies
- Library fines

See reverse side for more details.



Important Dates

Please send the following documents to the Office of Education and Transition Services by the following dates:

August 15	Schedule, Summer Grades, Address Changes
January 15	Schedule, Fall Grades, Address Changes
June 15	Schedule, Spring Grades, Address Changes

Pay Run Dates

MONTH	MAILING
JANUARY	1/21/20
FEBRUARY	2/21/20
MARCH	3/17/20
APRIL	4/16/20
MAY	5/18/20
JUNE	6/16/20
JULY	7/20/20
AUGUST	8/18/20
SEPTEMBER	9/17/20
OCTOBER	10/20/20
NOVEMBER	11/19/20
DECEMBER	12/16/20

NOTE: All mailing dates are estimated.

Important Phone Numbers

Central Payment Unit	800-525-0499	Chicago Office	312-814-6800
Direct Deposit	217-557-0930	Springfield Business Office	217-557-2689
Medical Card Hotline	800-228-6533		
Youth Hotline	866-459-6884		





Youth In College/Vocational Training Program

Eligibility Requirements:

- DCFS must have court ordered legal responsibility for youth.
- Youth must be enrolled as a full-time student in an accredited university, college, or a vocational training program.
- Must complete the CFS 449 (Youth in College/Vocational Training Program application).
- Must be at least 16 years old and not yet 21, at time of application.
- Maintain at least “C” average each semester.
- Maintain full-time status (12 hours Fall & Spring, 6 hours in Summer, or an approved summer internship). Enrollment will be verified through the National Student Clearinghouse.
- Submit class schedule at the start of each semester and grades at the end of each semester
- Report any change of address promptly to your YIC Coordinator.
- Apply for financial aid every year to cover tuition or room and board costs.
- Youth transitioning to the YIC program at age 21 must have completed at least one semester of a post secondary program at full time status with a 2.0 GPA or higher.

Benefits:

- Youth may choose to attend an accredited vocational school, four-year college or community college.
- A monthly board payment in the amount of \$1,235. These funds are to assist the student with campus based room and board costs or off campus rent and utilities, and personal expenses. Direct deposit is strongly recommended.
- Reimbursement available for books not covered by financial aid.
- OETS Post-Secondary Education Specialists are available for assistance.
- Benefits available for 5 consecutive years or through age 25 whichever occurs first.
- Youth are eligible for a one-time \$210 start-up payment to be used for initial living expenses
- If attending an eligible school, a tuition and fee waiver letter will be sent on the student’s behalf.

Important Plans To Consider:

- Arranging transportation to the school location
- Planning for housing when school is closed for breaks and holidays
- Devising a backup plan for finances if your monthly board payment is lost or stolen.
- Seeking tutorial assistance through the school, and meeting with OETS staff if your grades are low, if you are having problems in a particular course, or if you must withdraw from any classes.
- Education and Training Voucher Program for expenses not covered by YIC/VT Program.

What the Youth In College/Vocational Training Program DOES NOT Cover:

- Orientation fees
- Computers or Internet services
- Room/board costs
- Laboratory fees
- Supplies
- Study abroad
- Study enhancement programs
- Phone bills
- Library fines
- Dorm room damages
- Repayment of student loans
- Transportation to and from school
- Tuition

See reverse side for more details.



Promoting Academic Excellence

- ✓ Get involved by attending school activities, parent/teacher conferences and parent board meetings
- ✓ Communicate often with youth's teacher(s) and counselor
- ✓ Assist youth with identifying academic interests, goals, strengths and areas needing improvement
- ✓ Show interest in your child's academic world by assisting him/her with getting organized, inquiring about his day and designating a distraction-free study area
- ✓ Assist with developing time management skills and prioritizing assignments
- ✓ Review completed assignments and assist with test preparation
- ✓ Encourage daily reading to assist with improving reading and comprehension skills
- ✓ Encourage youth to perform his/her best and congratulate all accomplishments
- ✓ Explain standardized exams, support and encourage youth's best performance
- ✓ During the month of March, 3rd, 4th, 5th, 7th, and 8th graders will take the Illinois Standardized Achievement Test (ISAT)
- ✓ Discuss high schools of interest during 5th grade, explain that 7th grade reading and math scores from the ISAT will determine high school eligibility
- ✓ During sophomore year of high school, encourage youth to begin identifying colleges or universities of interest
- ✓ During junior year of high school, encourage youth to attend college tours
- ✓ Ensure that students register to take the ACT during their junior year of high school
- ✓ All high school juniors must take the Prairie State Achievement Exam (PSAE) or its equivalent during the Spring
- ✓ During the months of October and November, 12th graders should begin sending out applications to college(s) of interest
- ✓ Ensure that seniors complete the Free Application For Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) form in October
- ✓ 12th grade students should apply for DCFS Scholarship January through March
- ✓ 12th grade students should apply for self-identified college scholarships, noting application deadlines
- ✓ Complete all financial aid paperwork at school
- ✓ Attend college orientations once accepted
- ✓ Enroll into the DCFS Youth in College placement at least 2 months prior to attending college of choice



Department of Children and Family Services Department of Healthcare and Family Services Medical Card

Qualifications and Procedures

- A child/youth who is in the legal custody of DCFS and placed in substitute care.
- A child/youth in the legal custody of DCFS, who is placed in certain living arrangements on the last day in substitute care may receive a medical extension for a year when returning to the home of parent or upon case closure of the child/youth case.
- Youth who are age 18 when returned to the home of a parent or upon case closure are eligible for a medical card extension up to age 26. Please discuss the details for enrollment with your case worker before case closure.
- Parenting youth in the legal custody of DCFS, and live in substitute care, will receive a medical card for their children who reside with them.
- The medical card is mailed to the same address as the financial assistance for the child/youth. Keep those addresses current.
- The medical card goes with the child/youth if a change in placement occurs.

HFS Medical Card Usage

- The medical card serves as a health insurance card for the child/youth. The card pays for many health care services, including medical and dental exams, immunizations, prescriptions, hospital care, etc. Keep it readily available at all times.
- The medical card can be used only with providers who are enrolled with the HFS and who **accept** the medical card and HFS payment as payment in full.
- **Out-of-state providers must be enrolled in HFS and accept the medical card and HFS payment as payment in full.**
- Some uses of the medical card may require prior approval. Examples are: prescriptions that are “non-preferred” drugs and some durable medical equipment and supplies (bath lifts, wheelchairs, oxygen, etc.). Contact your physician or pharmacist with questions.
- Non-emergency medical transportation requires prior approval and should be approved through the DCFS regional medical liaison. Service may only be furnished by providers enrolled with HFS who accept the medical card and HFS payment as payment in full.
- If the medical card is lost, immediately contact your caseworker to request a replacement card and/or Recipient Verification Letter.

DCFS Medical Card Hotline (1-800-228-6533: Monday through Friday - - 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.)

- You should contact the Medical Card Hotline directly if you do not receive a medical card for a child/youth in your care.
- You should contact the Medical Card Hotline directly regarding medical extension eligibility requirements.
- You should notify your caseworker to contact the Medical Card Hotline if the address on the medical card needs to be changed or the child/youth’s name and/or birth date is incorrect.
- Providers may call the Medical Card Hotline to verify the correct recipient number and periods of eligibility for a child/youth they are serving.
- A child/youth in DCFS custody should not be charged a co-pay. If this occurs, call the Medical Card Hotline for assistance.





Countdown to 21

The Countdown to 21 program is designed to support the successful transition of older youth to independence. The Program ensures that youth are involved in long term planning activities regarding their final living arrangement prior to leaving the Department's care, connections are established with family and community supports, realistic educational and vocational goals are established and in process, and participation in financial literacy training to promote financial stability.

Youth who successfully complete the eligibility criteria below can earn a one-time payment of \$1,200 in transition funds. The purpose of the transition funds is to provide financial support as they leave the child welfare system and become self-sufficient.

Eligibility Criteria:

1. Youth must be in a Department approved placement.
2. Youth must participate in a Discharge-Clinical Intervention for Placement Preservation (D-CIPP) at age 19 and develop a plan and are referred to Financial Literacy Course.
3. Youth must complete the CFS-2032-1 Youth Driven Transition Plan or CFS-375-2-ILO TLP Quarterly Discharge Transition Launch Plan.
4. Description and address of living situation upon exit from care.
5. Youth must identify a supportive resources person to work with the youth and participate in D-CIPP.
6. Successful completion of the Department approved Financial Literacy Course.
7. Youth must participate in a D-CIPP 90-days prior to 21 y/o, or case closure, to review plan, Transition Funds Application and Budget

**For more information or to schedule a D-CIPP,
please call 312-814-6800 and ask to speak to a D-CIPP intake staff member.**





Tuition and Fee Waiver

Eligibility Requirements:

- The department must have court-ordered legal guardianship for the applicant, the applicant must have aged out of DCFS guardianship at age 18 or older, or the department must have had legal guardianship for the applicant immediately prior to the adoption or guardianship being finalized.
- An applicant must have earned a high school diploma from an accredited institution or a high school equivalency certificate or have met the State criteria for high school graduation before the start of the school year for which the applicant is applying for the waiver.
- An applicant must be enrolled in a qualifying post-secondary education program before the applicant reaches the age of 26.
- An applicant must apply for federal and state grant assistance by completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA).

Benefits:

- Tuition and fee waiver available to Illinois public universities or in-district community college. If student is awarded the Illinois MAP grant and/or federal Pell grants, these funds may be applied first.
- Benefits available for up to 5 consecutive years.

Important Plans to Consider

- Seek tutorial assistance through the school and/or request assistance locating academic resources through OETS if your grades are low or if you are having problems in a course.
- Arranging transportation to school.
- Planning for housing, when school is closed for breaks and holidays.
- Submit the Free Application for Federal Financial Assistance (FAFSA) on October 1 each year.

What the Waiver DOES NOT Cover:

- Orientation fee
- Computers or Internet Services
- Room/board costs
- Repayment of Student Loans
- Tuition to private, out-of-state, or for-profit schools or programs
- Study abroad costs (other than for tuition)
- Phone bills
- Dorm room damages
- Laboratory fees
- Transportation to and from school
- Supplies
- Library fines

To Apply:

- Submit a complete DCFS Form 438A to DCFS.TuitionWaiver@illinois.gov
- https://www2.illinois.gov/dcf/aboutus/notices/Documents/CFS_438-A_Tuition_And_Mandatory_Fee_Waiver_Program_%28Fillable%29.pdf

