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 Challenging Minds, Leading Change,
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About The Brief

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Increasing College Access and Retention of Foster Care Youth: A Review of Tuition Waiver Programs

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ABSTRACT This policy brief examines the similarities and differences of various state-funded tuition waiver programs across the United States to increase college access and retention rates of foster care youth. Recommendations for policy and practice reform are offered to maximize participation and success of these programs.

The issue: Foster care youth have faced great educational disparities in terms of college access, retention, and graduation over the years. Although 70% of foster care youth report a desire to pursue a post-secondary credential¹, only 18% ever enroll², and of those, only between 3% and 5% will graduate³. In order to address these postsecondary education deficits, 23 states have created their own unique tuition waiver programs that target current and former foster care youth⁴. This brief is designed to provide some understanding of the common components of state tuition waiver programs and determine recommendations for further policy and practice reform.

It was compiled using information collected through online research and direct interviewing of the representatives responsible for program implementation. Information on each program was then compared to determine general patterns of legislative language adopted by states with tuition waivers and how each state's administrative policies govern their implementation.

Summary of Key Findings

Information on similarities observed across various state tuition waiver programs and notable strengths of certain programs are depicted in the Table below.

Recommendations for Policy and Practice Reform

- Encourage the US Department of Health and Human Services and the US Department of Education to collaborate to develop guidelines for best practice statutes that include clear, standardized language that states can adopt that would allow for easier implementation and outcome tracking.
- Increase time limits and flexibility related to tuition waiver use. Researchers have found that time to graduation for foster care youth differs from their non-foster care peers⁵; time limits that are connected to waiver use should be informed by this research.
- Expand eligibility criteria for tuition waiver use. Broadening age and placement requirements would allow more foster care youth to access these programs.
- Allocate federal dollars to fund tuition waivers allowing states to serve more youth.
- Require child welfare caseworkers to attend training and educational programs on various post-secondary education funding resources and referral practices. It is critical that youth have assistance with accessing all the funding resources they are eligible for, which would reduce student debt as well as financial burdens on waiver programs.



State	Tuition Waiver Name	Policy & Legislation
Alaska	University of Alaska Presidential Foster Youth Tuition Waiver	http://dhss.alaska.gov/ocs/Pages/independentliving/etv.aspx HB 300Z/SB27 http://www.legis.state.ak.us/PDF/26/BILLS/HB0300Z.pdf
Arizona	Tuition waiver for persons formerly in foster care; pilot program; report; definition	http://www.fc2sprograms.org/arizona/ SB 1208 http://www.azleg.gov/FormatDocument.asp?inDoc=/legtext/51leg/1r/bills/sb1208h.htm&Session_ID=110
Connecticut	<u>Post-Secondary Education Program</u>	DCF: 48-20-2 http://www.ct.gov/dcf/cwp/view.asp?a=2639&Q=379242 DCF 2097- Application for Financial Assistance for Post Secondary Education
Florida	Tuition and Fee Exemption	http://www.myflfamilies.com/service-programs/independent-living/tuition--fee-exemptions 240.235(5) http://www.leg.state.fl.us/statutes/index.cfm?App_Mode=Display_Statute&URL=Ch0240/Sec235.htm&StatuteYear=2000
Kansas	Kansas Tuition Waiver Program or Foster Child Education Assistance Program	http://www.kansasregents.org/resources/PDF/641-2010FosterCareWaiverApp8AFCEdassistanceapplication.pdf K.S.A. 75-53,112, K.S.A. 74-3201b http://www.ksrevisor.org/statutes/chapters/ch75/075_053_0112.html
Kentucky	Waiver of tuition and mandatory student fees for Kentucky foster or adopted children	http://chfs.ky.gov/dCBS/dpp/IndLivingEducationAssistance.htm KRS164.2847(5) http://www.lrc.ky.gov/statutes/statute.aspx?id=42283
Maine	Tuition Waiver Program (Foster Care)	http://www.famemaine.com/maine_grants_loans/tuition-waiver-program/ http://www.maine.gov/dhhs/ocfs/cw/post.htm Title 20: Part 5: Chapter 429: http://legislature.maine.gov/legis/statutes/20-A/title20-Asec12572.html
Maryland	Tuition Waiver for Foster Care Recipients	http://www.mhec.state.md.us/financialAid/ProgramDescriptions/program_fostercare.asp Section 15-106.1 of the Education Article of the Maryland Annotated Code http://law.justia.com/codes/maryland/2005/ged/15-106.1.html
Massachusetts	Foster Child Tuition Waiver and Fee Assistance Program	http://www.mass.edu/osfa/programs/dcffoster.asp Part I Administration of the Government, Title II Executive and administrative officers of the commonwealth, Chapter 15 A Section 19 Public Education Title 2 https://malegislature.gov/Laws/GeneralLaws/PartI/TitleII/Chapter15A/Section19
Minnesota	Tuition Waiver for Persons Under Guardianship	http://www.hr.mnscu.edu/tuitionwaiver_websys.html Minnesota State Colleges and Universities System Procedures, Chapter 5, Administration Procedures associated with board policy 5.12 http://www.mnscu.edu/board/procedure/512p2.html

Missouri	Foster care or residential care students, Waiver of tuition and fees	http://dss.mo.gov/cd/chafee/missouri-reach.htm Section 173.270.1 http://www.moga.mo.gov/mostatutes/stathtml/17300002701.html?&me=173.270
New Hampshire	Tuition Waiver for foster children	http://www.ccsnh.edu/tuition-waiver-foster-children Title XV, Section 187-A:20-b http://www.gencourt.state.nh.us/rsa/html/xv/187-A/187-A-20-b.htm
New Jersey	State Tuition Waiver	https://www.fafsonline.org/njfc-scholars-program/ Title 30. Chapter 4C. Article VIII. (New) Statewide Tuition Waiver Program. §§1-5 -C.30:4C-101 http://www.njleg.state.nj.us/2002/Bills/AL03/132 .PDF
New Mexico	Foster Care System Tuition Waiver	http://albuquerquefoundation.org/uploads/files/Tuition%20Waiver%20Brochure.pdf CS/SB 206 http://www.nmlegis.gov/Sessions/14%20regular/LESCAnalysis/SB0206.PDF
North Carolina	Tuition and Fee Waivers.	115B-2 http://www.ncleg.net/EnactedLegislation/Statutes/PDF/ByChapter/Chapter_115B.pdf
Oklahoma	Tuition Waivers	https://secure.okcollegestart.org/Financial_Aid_Planning/Scholarships/Miscellaneous_Scholarships/Independent_Living_Act.aspx 10A Oklahoma Children and Juvenile Code, Section 1-9-107 & 2010 http://www.oscn.net/applications/oscn/DeliverDocument.asp?CiteID=445839
Oregon	Waive Tuition and Fees for current or former foster child under 25 years of age.	https://testofyc.files.wordpress.com/2013/06/tuition-waiver-faqs1.pdf HB3471 https://olis.leg.state.or.us/liz/2011R1/Downloads/MeasureDocument/HB3471
Rhode Island	Department of Children, Youth and Families' Higher Education Opportunity Incentive Grant	TITLE 42 State Affairs and Government CHAPTER 42-72.8 Department of Children, Youth, and Families' Higher Education Opportunity Incentive Grant SECTION 42-72.8-2 http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/Statutes/title42/42-72.8/42-72.8-2.HTM
South Carolina	Need-Based Grants for Foster Youth	https://www.che.sc.gov/Students,FamiliesMilitary/PayingForCollege/WhatFinancialHelpIsAvailable/ScholarshipsGrantsforSCResidents/SCNeed-basedGrantProgram.aspx Part 1B section 11.9 H03-COMMISSION ON HIGHER EDUCATION http://www.scstatehouse.gov/query.php?search=DOC&searchtext=Federalist%20papers&category=BUDGET&year=2015&version_id=2&return_page=&version_title=As%20passed%20by%20the%20House&conid=7879701&result_pos=0&keyval=30683&numrows=50
Texas	Sec. 54.366. Tuition and Fees Exemptions for Students under Conservatorship of Department of Family and Protective Services	http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/Child_Protection/Youth_and_Young_Adults/Post_Secondary_Education/college_tuition_waiver.asp Texas Education Code §54.366-.367 http://www.statutes.legis.state.tx.us/Docs/ED/htm/ED.54.htm
Utah	Tuition Waivers for children in long-term foster care *State has no record of a waiver ever being used	53B-8d-101. Establishes procedures for Utah system of higher ed institutions to administer tuition waivers http://le.utah.gov/~2000/bills/hbillamd/HB0193.pdf

Virginia	<u>Grant for tuition and fees</u>	3-7.4:5. Grant for tuition and fees for certain individuals http://law.onecle.com/virginia/educational-institutions/23-7.4:5.html
West Virginia	Tuition waivers for high school graduates in foster care.	https://www.dss.virginia.gov/family/fc/independent.cgi §18B-10-7b. http://www.legis.state.wv.us/WVCODE/ChapterEntire.cfm?chap=18b&art=10

Summary of Findings		
Areas of Comparison	Similarities Observed	Notable State Programs
Requirements for foster care involvement	19 states have specific ages for when youth must have been in care ^a 9 states require youth to have spent a certain amount of time in care ^b	WV: Youth must be in foster care one year prior to application
Eligibility for adopted youth and youth in guardianship	18 states allow adopted youth to be eligible for waivers ^c 14 states allow for youth in guardianships to be eligible. Eligibility requirements vary by state ^d	CT: Youth not eligible if guardianship is transferred under a subsidized guardianship
Educational expenses covered	19 states specify only tuition and fees are covered ^e	NC- covers living expenses including transportation and child care in addition to tuition and fees CT- Can cover room and board, off campus housing, and books. RI- Covers “cost of attendance”, which can include room and board SC- Can cover room and board
Requirements for initial waiver application	19 states have age limits when youth can apply for a waiver ^f	FL- Youth becomes ineligible at age 28 KY- Youth must apply within four years of obtaining high school diploma or completing GED
Requirements for when waiver can be used	11 states require youth to use waivers before a specific age ^g 8 states have a set number of years a youth can use waiver ^h	TX- Once youth has enrolled in the program, there are no time limits on when tuition waivers can be used
Academic requirements	5 states require student to be enrolled full-time ⁱ 15 states require students to maintain a minimum GPA, good academic standing, and/or satisfactory progress ^j	MO- Priority is given to youth with 60 credit hours or more and have 2.5 GPA or higher
Nonacademic requirements	6 states require students to meet nonacademic requirements, such as community service ^k	CT- Adopted youth must contribute \$500 to education costs per year AZ, MO, OR- Youth must complete a number of community service hours

^a AK, AZ, CT, FL, KS, KY, MA, MN, MO, NH, NJ, NM, NC, OK, OR, RI, SC, TX, VA;

^b FL, MA, NH, NJ, OK, OR, UT, WV;

^c AK, AZ, CT, FL, KS, KY, ME, MD, MA, MO, NH, NJ, NM, NC, OR, RI, TX, VA;

^d AK, FL, KS, ME, MD, MA, MN, MO, NH, NM, OR, TX, VA, WV;

^e AK, AZ, FL, KS, KY, ME, MD, MA, MN, MO, NH, NJ, NM, OK, OR, TX, UT VA, WV;

^f. AK, AZ, CT, FL, MD, MA, MN, MO, NH, NJ, NM, NC, OK, OR, RI, SC, TX, UT, WV;

^g. AZ, CT, FL, KS, MA, MN, NH, NM, OK, RI, UT;

^h. AK, KY, ME, MD, MO, NJ, NC, OR;

ⁱ. AK, CT, NH, NJ, RI;

^j. AK, AZ, CT, KY, ME, MD, MA, MN, MO, NJ, NC, OK, RI, UT, WV;

^k. AZ, CT, MN, MO, NC, OR

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