

# Reference Sheet - Benefits for Youth

## Transitioning from Foster Care to Adult Living

*This assistance is coordinated through the Preparation for Adult Living (PAL) Program of Child Protective Services.*

### 1) Tuition and Fee Waiver (for Higher Education)

*(a provision of Texas State Law, Section 54.211 of the Texas Education Code. While U.S. citizenship or qualified alien status is not required, it is strongly encouraged as young adults without such status will have difficulty obtaining any federal financial assistance at college.)*

To be exempt from the payment of tuition and fees at a Texas state supported institution of higher education, the youth must:

1. Have been in DFPS Conservatorship in foster or other residential care on or after:
  - the day preceding the 18<sup>th</sup> birthday;
  - the day the youth graduated from high school or received the equivalent of a high school diploma; or
  - the day of the youth's 14<sup>th</sup> birthday, if the youth was eligible for adoption (parental rights being terminated) on or after that day ; and
2. Enroll as an undergraduate by their 21<sup>st</sup> birthday or not later than whichever of the following dates occurs first;
  - three years after the date the youth was discharged from foster or other residential care, or
  - three years after the date of high school graduation or completion of an equivalency of a high school diploma (GED).

Note: Youth who meet requirements and are adopted are eligible.

### 2) Education and Training Voucher - up to 5 yrs

*(Eligible youth may receive up to \$5,000 per student, per year to cover the cost of attendance as that term is defined in section 472 of the Higher Education Act; Tuition/fees for non state-supported institution or if youth is not eligible for the state tuition and fee waiver for former foster care youth) visit our website at [www.texasyouthconnection.org](http://www.texasyouthconnection.org) under the education tab*

The Education and Training Voucher Program will allow Texas to help youth make a smoother transition to self-sufficiency and independence by providing funding that will help youth receive education, training and services not covered by another funding source.

### BENEFITS

The ETV Program can help with:

- Residential housing\*\*three months in advance (now 4)
- Room and board costs/food
- Tuition/fees (for non state-supported institution or if youth is not eligible for the state tuition and fee waiver for former foster care youth)
- Personal items
- Books/supplies
- Child care
- Transportation needs
- Computer or other required equipment
- Costs for attendance at an institution of higher education that do not exceed the lesser of \$5,000 per year or the total cost of attendance as defined in section 472 of the Higher Education Act.

- If you are 21 and your Medicare benefits have been terminated, you may request the Education and Training Voucher Program to pay for your health insurance through the school you are attending.
- If you wish to attend a Proprietary School or better known as Career Schools and Colleges, ETV may assist with the cost of attendance even if the program is less than 12 months. For a list of these schools, log on to <http://www.twc.state.tx.us/svcs/propschools/prophp.html>

### **ETV Eligibility Requirements:**

Those who are eligible to participate are:

- Youth in DFPS foster care who are at least 16 and who are likely to remain in foster care until turning 18, or
- Youth who age out of DFPS foster care but have not yet turned 21, or
- Youth who are adopted from DFPS foster care after turning 16 years old who are not yet 21, or
- Youth participating in the education/training voucher program on their 21<sup>st</sup> birthday can remain eligible until 23 as long as they are enrolled and making satisfactory progress toward completing their postsecondary education or training program

### **ETV Qualifications:**

- Youth between 16 and 21 who have a high school diploma or equivalent and who **are enrolled** at least part-time (6 hours) in an accredited or pre-accredited public or non-profit program that provides a bachelor's degree or not less than a 2 year program that provides credit towards a degree or certification, or
- Youth who are beyond the age of compulsory school attendance (age 18) and who **are enrolled** at least part-time (6 hours) in an accredited or pre-accredited program that provides training toward gainful employment
- Online/Correspondence/Distance Students PLEASE Contact ETV to seek approval for your program

**In addition, the assistance provided under the ETV Program cannot duplicate other benefits from DFPS to assist with the same costs.**

**3) Aftercare Room and Board Assistance** *(based on need, up to \$500 per month with a total cap of \$3000 of accumulated payments per young adult – variances may be considered in emergency or special circumstances.)*

- Must be between 18 and 21 years of age;
- Must be a U.S. citizen or qualified alien;
- Must have aged out of foster care at age 18 or older (PRS conservatorship and control must have been maintained until age 18);
- \*Must be in an educational program, employed or actively seeking employment (for those who are able to work), or be receiving pre-vocational or vocational training services; and
- Must prove financial need.

\* Note: Some time-limited exceptions may be made in special medical or emergency situations.

**4) Transitional Medicaid** [a provision of federal (Chafee Foster Care Independence Act) and Texas State Law]

- Must be a current Texas resident between 18 and 21 years of age;
- Must be a U.S. citizen or qualified alien.
- Must have aged out of foster care at age 18 or older (PRS conservatorship and control must have been maintained until at least age 18);
- Must have no other medical coverage (private insurance or other category of Medicaid);
- Must not have resources valued at more than \$10,000; and
- Must meet the Texas Department of Human Services (DHS) income guidelines for this category of Medicaid.

\* Must call Jordan Young, DHS Centralized Benefits Section at 1-800-248-1078, ext. 8126 or 512-908-8131 or 8145 for annual re-certification and to report change of address.

**5) Transitional Living Allowance** (up to \$1,000 to be distributed in increments not to exceed \$500 per month)

- Must have been in DFPS paid foster or other residential care within the 24 months prior to initiating the allowance;
- Must be a U.S. citizen or qualified alien;
- Must have completed at least 5 hours of training in each of 5 of the 6 PAL life skills core elements (Any substitution of training hours or variance must be approved by the regional PAL supervisor);
- Must be making or have made a planned move into an independent living arrangement, or a supervised or semi-supervised setting;
- Must not be living with a designated perpetrator while receiving assistance;
- Must be employed, be actively seeking employment (for those youth who are able to work), be enrolled and attending school or college, or be receiving pre-vocational or vocational training services; and
- Must provide all information required by regional CPS staff.

Note: All payments must be made by the young adult's 21<sup>st</sup> birthday.

The **Texas Youth Hotline** is a resource for youth who are under 21 years of age, including those who have aged out of the foster care system. Youth may contact the statewide hotline at **1-800-210-2278** for telephone counseling and information and referrals. The hotline can help young adults locate services available in their communities

The **Texas Youth Connection** website, designed with input from youth is a resource for youth in the Texas Foster Care system, alumni of foster care or for youth seeking general tips and information. This website offers information and resources in education, finances, records, diversity, health, contacts, job links, food, housing, books, stories, hotlines and other hot stuff. Check this resource out at: [www.texasyouthconnection.org](http://www.texasyouthconnection.org)

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