



Supporting Youth in Foster Care to Attend College: Foster Youth College Success Initiative

The Schuyler Center is part of the leadership of the Fostering Youth Success Alliance (FYSA), a coalition of more than 15 organizations working to open pathways to higher education for youth in foster care. Specifically, we've shaped a new program to provide comprehensive supports to youth in foster care so that they can attend and succeed in college. **In 2015, FYSA successfully secured \$1.5 million to establish the Foster Youth College Success Initiative.** In its first year, the Initiative has enrolled more than 350 youth in foster care who are enrolled in colleges and universities across the state – from SUNYs and CUNYs to numerous independent colleges.

In 2016 FYSA worked to expand funding for the Foster Youth College Success Initiative, and **successfully secured a total of \$3 million.** With this funding, the program will continue support for the initial cohort of more than 350 students and will add a second, similarly-sized cohort.

The Foster Youth College Success Initiative goes beyond financial aid by providing holistic supports to help youth succeed in college. This includes: on-campus guidance and supports to ensure that youth have tools they need to succeed, connections to year-round housing, avoiding holiday-related gaps in housing that are often a barrier for foster youth, and assistance with essential expenses that may not be included in tuition costs – such as housing, transportation, and books.

[Why We Support Higher Education for Youth in Foster Care](#)

Research has shown that the best way to ensure that a youth will secure and retain good-paying employment in adulthood is through a college education.¹ However, at present only 2-7% of foster youth complete a two or four year degree.²

Furthermore, studies show that individuals who have been in foster care have lower levels of employment and earnings, high risk of becoming homeless, and are far more likely than their peers to rely on public assistance, be incarcerated, and suffer from mental illness.^{3,4} Fifty percent of New York youth who had been in foster care are unemployed at the age of 24.⁵

[Long-Term Benefits](#)

The projected benefits of this initiative are impressive. Not only does the program support youth in achieving their own academic success, but through that achievement, can yield extensive financial benefits for the general public:

“Each additional Associate Degree obtained would be responsible for an additional \$155,629 in tax revenues and public expenditure savings; each additional Bachelor’s degree would be responsible for \$387,255 in increased tax revenues and public expenditure savings over the lifetime of each participant.”⁶

While the State has a responsibility to ensure that the youth entrusted to its care have the resources to succeed after foster care, it is also clear that the State stands to benefit from an investment in supporting higher education opportunities for these youth. New York has taken a significant and commendable step by creating the Foster Youth College Success Initiative. We look forward to helping this initiative grow.

¹ This is true of all young adults. See national Center for Education Statistics: <http://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=77>

² From *Fostering Independence*: According to a 2010 Chapin Hall Study, only 6.2 percent of study participants attained an Associate's or Bachelor's degree. Other national statistics suggest only 2 percent of foster youth complete a Bachelor's degree.

³ http://www.chapinhall.org/sites/default/files/Midwest_Study_ES_Age_23_24.pdf

⁴ Read more: <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3061347/>

⁵ Fostering Youth Success Alliance. Policy Initiatives. Available: <http://www.fysany.org/policy-initiatives>

⁶ *Community Service Society*. (2015). Bridging the Gap: From Foster Care to College Success in New York. Report commissioned by Fostering Youth Success Alliance. http://b3cdn.net/nycss/f24f754325dc590588_ytm6y93qf.pdf