

It is time for New York to make higher education attainable for all of its foster care youth by increasing funding for the Foster Youth College Success Initiative. By so doing, New York will strengthen its commitment to children in the foster care system and create realistic opportunities for youth in care to obtain a college education.

Why Foster College Success?

- There are more than 18,000 children and youth in foster care in New York.ⁱ
- 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,ⁱⁱ and suffer from mental illness.ⁱⁱⁱ Fifty percent of New York youth who had been in foster care are unemployed at the age of 24.^{iv}

The best way to ensure that a youth will secure and retain good-paying employment in adulthood is a college education.^v Currently only 2–7% of foster youth complete a two or four year degree.^{vi} Youth who graduate from college have a higher chance of securing and retaining employment in adulthood. Part of the State's responsibility to the youth entrusted to its care is to ensure they have the resources to succeed after foster care. New York should renew and increase its investment in the Foster College Success Initiative to support youth pursuing higher education who either are or had been in foster care.

How does this program help Foster Youth?

- Covers financial aid gaps so that costs do not deter youth from attending and succeeding in college.
- Provides on-campus support to ensure that youth have tools they need to succeed.
- Connects students to year-round housing, helping to avoid holiday-related gaps in housing that are often a barrier for foster youth.
- Offers a summer transition program to help youth prepare for college.

By making college a realistic possibility for youth who are or had been in foster care, the State's Foster Youth College Success Initiative helps to ensure that more foster youth become independent, successful, and self-sufficient adults.

RECOMMENDATION FOR 2016-2017

The Governor's proposed budget maintains \$1.5 million for Foster College Success. The State should increase support with an additional \$2.7 million, for a total of \$4.2 million, to secure opportunities for all foster youth.

ⁱ Kids' Well-being Indicators Clearinghouse. *Indicator: Foster Care Children In Care – Children/Youth 0-21 years*. 2014 data. Available: http://www.nyskwic.org/get_data/indicator_profile.cfm?subIndicatorID=51

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

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

^{iv} Fostering Youth Success Alliance. Policy Initiatives. Available: <http://www.fysany.org/policy-initiatives>

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

^{vi} 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.