



Foster Youth College Success Initiative (FYCSI) grant program

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) about Eligibility

Q1: Who is an eligible foster youth?

A: Students who are New York State residents and meet one of the following criteria are eligible:

- Students who were adopted from foster care on or after their 13th birthday;
- Students who lived with a relative or kin under a kinship foster care agreement (KinGAP) on or after their 13th birthday;
- Students who spent at least one night in foster care in NYS or in another state on or after their 13th birthday.

Foster care experience must be verified by the NYS Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) by emailing their completed [FYCSI Consent Form \(OCFS-3165\)](#) directly to OCFS at FCY4College@ocfs.ny.gov.

Students with foster care experience outside New York State must provide verification of that experience to OCFS to confer eligibility for FYCSI.

Q2: Are orphans eligible?

A: Yes, orphans are eligible if both parents were deceased before the student's 18th birthday and the student was not adopted prior to age 13. However, Financial Aid Administrators may use their professional judgment to determine dependency and override in unusual circumstances (e.g., one parent is deceased and the other parent is unknown). Orphan status is determined by the campus professionals at the college/university where the student is enrolled, and not by OCFS.

Q3: How does the FYCSI program define NYS residency?

A: The FYCSI grant program follows the Higher Education Services Corp. (HESC) definition of NYS residency, which is posted on the HESC web site here: <https://www.hesc.ny.gov/NYSTAP/tap-faqs>.

Q4: Are students living with a guardian eligible?

A: A student is NOT eligible if they live with a family member, kin, or friend under a documented guardianship agreement or an informal guardianship agreement without foster care history after their 13th birthday. For a student to be eligible for FYCSI, they would need to have entered a KinGAP agreement at age 13 or older. A student is also eligible if both parents were deceased on or after the student's 13th birthday and before the student's 18th birthday, and the student then entered into a legal guardianship agreement.

Q5: Are homeless students eligible?

A: No, unaccompanied or homeless students are not eligible **unless** they have foster care experience on or after their 13th birthday or are orphans (see above).

Q6: Can students who are refugees or who have undocumented immigration status receive FYCSI funding?

A: Yes, students who are without lawful immigration status or who fall within a category of individuals outlined in Section 661 of the NYS Education Law are eligible for consideration. See above for determination of eligibility based on either foster care or orphan status.

Q7: Which colleges and universities participate in the FYCSI program?

A: All SUNY and CUNY colleges participate in the FYCSI program, and can disburse FYCSI funding to their eligible, degree-seeking students. About 45 private/independent, degree-granting institutions in New York State also participate. The directory of private institutions that participate in FYCSI is listed on the NYSED Higher Ed. Opportunity Program (HEOP) web page: <http://www.nysed.gov/postsecondary-services/higher-education-opportunity-program-heop>

Q8: Do students need to be enrolled in an opportunity program (EOP, SEEK/CD, HEOP) to be eligible for FYCSI funding?

A: No. Students do not need to be enrolled in an opportunity program, but the institution they're attending must host a NYS-funded opportunity program in order for an eligible student to receive FYCSI funds.

Q9: Can a student's FYCSI funding be applied retroactively to a previous academic year, prior to when their institution received an eligibility determination?

A: No. A student can receive FYCSI funding only after:

- The student enrolls at a participating institution; and
- The student is deemed eligible for FYCSI funding either via OCFS (in the case of foster care experience) or via campus staff (in the case of orphan status); and
- The institution is informed that the student is seeking or has received an eligibility determination.

Q10: Are students pursuing a graduate degree eligible for funding? What about those pursuing a certificate or other credential?

A: No. FYCSI is an undergraduate funding program. Students pursuing their first associate degree and/or first bachelor's degree are eligible, provided that they meet one of the criteria above (i.e., foster care experience or orphan status).

Students pursuing a graduate degree, a second associate degree, a second bachelor's degree, or a certificate/vocational credential are not eligible to receive funding.

Q11: Where can I find more information?

A: You can visit the NYSED web page for FYCSI: <https://www.nysed.gov/postsecondary-services/foster-youth-college-success-initiative> or you can email your questions to the FYCSI program office at fosteryouth@nysed.gov.