CALIFORNIA COLLEGE PATHWAYS

Helping California's Foster Youth Access Higher Education and Reach Their Educational Goals

FOSTER YOUTH

EDUCATIONAL PLANNING GUIDE

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This list is a compilation of programs and resources that can assist foster youth and their caregivers prepare to enter higher education. This guide was designed as an optional tool with recommendations that may be beneficial to foster youth and their caregivers during the transition into college.

GET ORGANIZED:

- ☐ Start a binder to place all information related to college.
- ☐ Keep copies of test scores and/or write down dates of tests taken.
- ☐ Save your log-in name and passwords for online registration, etc.

6TH & 7TH GRADE

- ☐ Talk to your school counselor about courses that will prepare you for college and create an academic plan to take college preparatory courses.
- ☐ Have guardians attend the education planning night at the middle school where local high school counselors present their programs and schedules.
- ☐ Obtain the College Preparatory (a-g) course list at **www.csumentor.edu** or **www.ucop.edu**.
- ☐ Complete a college prep English course.
- ☐ Take mathematics, such as pre-Algebra.
- ☐ Participate in career awareness activities.
- ☐ Take a career interest and aptitude assessment.

8TH GRADE

- ☐ Using the College Preparatory (a-g) course list and a list of Career Technical Education course lists for high schools in your area, develop a tentative schedule of specific courses for all four years.
- ☐ Take Pre-Algebra or Algebra I.
- ☐ Take a language other than English.
- ☐ Take the EXPLORE Test from ACT (American College Test).
- ☐ Begin your Student Planner at **www.csumentor.edu** or at **www.californiacolleges.edu**.

- ❑ Participate in career awareness and career exploration activities.
- ❑ Update your career interest and aptitude assessment.
- ❑ Find out about career-related programs at high schools in your area, visit those that interest you, and apply to attend if it makes sense.

9TH GRADE

- ❑ Attend an orientation session at your new school.
- ❑ Meet with your high school counselor.
- ❑ Take the required college preparatory coursework also known as "a-g."
  - ❑ Take required courses to meet the college admission standards: Algebra I or Geometry, college prep English, and a foreign language.
  - ❑ Take elective courses that meet the college admission standards: history, English, mathematics, science, visual and performing arts, and a foreign language.
- ❑ Optional: Take the EXPLORE Test from ACT (American College Test).
- ❑ Create a file to keep copies of report cards, records of honors and awards, and lists of extracurricular activities, clubs or sports involvement at school, volunteer work, community service, and paid employment.
- ❑ Begin or update your Student Planner at **www.csumentor.edu** or **www.californiacolleges.edu**. The planner has information on courses and grades required for college admission.
- ❑ Participate in career awareness and career exploration activities.
- ❑ Update your career interest and aptitude assessment.
- ❑ Find out about career-related programs at your high school and sign up for those that interest you.
- ❑ Participate in a community project.

There are three segments of public higher education in California—the University of California (UC), the California State University (CSU), and the California Community Colleges (CCC). In addition, there is a wide range of independent colleges in the state. To learn more about these options, visit **www.californiacolleges.edu**.

10TH GRADE

- ❑ Talk with your guardians about your educational choices and review your course load. Make sure you are satisfying high school graduation and college entrance requirements.
- ❑ Take Geometry or Algebra II.
- ❑ Take college prep English.
- ❑ Visit college campuses and attend college fairs.
- ❑ October: Register for the PSAT (Preliminary Scholastic Aptitude Test), a practice exam for the SAT. Ask your counselor for a fee waiver code when registering online for the PSAT.
- ❑ Take the PLAN test from ACT (American College Test). Ask your counselor about a fee waiver.
- ❑ If you are interested in attending a selective college, register for the AP (Advance Placement) test, honors, and advanced courses for 11th grade, if available.
- ❑ Take part in enrichment programs and summer workshops and camps in subjects like music, science, engineering, writing, filmmaking, and others.
- ❑ Participate in career awareness, career exploration and career preparation activities.
- ❑ Update your career interest and aptitude assessment.
- ❑ Find out about career-related and occupational programs at your high school and sign up for those that interest you.
- ❑ Participate in a community project.
- ❑ Explore educational requirements of careers that interest you.
- ❑ Prepare for and participate in a summer internship.

11TH GRADE

- ❑ Review with your school counselor the classes you need to take for college admissions, including Algebra II or advanced mathematics and English with emphasis on writing and critical reading.
- ❑ Review with your counselor your academic record and strengthen any weakness or problem areas.
- ❑ Take the CSU's Early Assessment Program (EAP) at **www.calstate.edu/eap** to determine if you are ready for college-level mathematics and English/language arts courses.
- ❑ Enroll in honors, AP and advanced courses if possible.
- ❑ Students taking Advanced Placement (AP) classes: Register to take the AP exam in the spring. You can earn college credit for AP courses if you score well on the test(s). Ask your counselor about a fee waiver.
- ❑ Register for the ACT or the SAT two months before the exam. If you take the exam in the spring or summer, you will get the results in time to see if you need to retake it in the fall. Some CSU campuses require you to take the ACT or SAT by October of your senior year. Acquire fee waiver code from the high school counseling office.
- ❑ Attend college fairs and college planning sessions with your guardian.
- ❑ Attend financial aid information sessions at your high school, Independent Living Program or local colleges.
- ❑ Select courses for your senior year that strengthen your academic record and ensure that you meet the a-g requirements.
- ❑ Check your transcript at the end of the year to make sure it is correct.
- ❑ Use spring break or summer vacation to tour college campuses. Have questions prepared in advance and take notes on your visits.
- ❑ Explore careers by taking a summer job or job shadowing in your field of interest.
- ❑ Participate in career awareness, career exploration and career preparation activities.
- ❑ Update your career interest and aptitude assessment.
- ❑ Participate in a community project.
- ❑ Explore educational requirements of careers that interest you.
- ❑ Identify educational goals and schools consistent with your career interests.
- ❑ Prepare for and participate in a summer internship or work experience.

12TH GRADE | FALL SEMESTER

- ❑ Review courses with your school counselor to make sure you are meeting high school graduation and entrance requirements for the colleges that interest you.
- ❑ Take English and other courses required for college admission. Advanced math courses such as Trigonometry or Analytic Geometry/Calculus are also recommended.
- ❑ Early September: Register for the October ACT (American College Test) or SAT (Scholastic Assessment Test).
- ❑ Early November: Register for the December ACT or SAT if you are retaking the exam.
- ❑ Identify three individuals who can write a strong recommendation letter for you and get the letters by November 15.
- ❑ Finish your personal essay for college admission. Include information about your foster care experience in your personal statement. The personal essay will be used to complete the EOP application, UC application and scholarship applications.
- ❑ Search for scholarship money using the scholarship search function at **www.californiacolleges.edu**.
- ❑ Attend ILP workshops, college fairs, college planning sessions, and financial aid information sessions.
- ❑ Visit college campuses that are a good match with your credentials and career interests.
- ❑ Narrow your choices of colleges. Many students select three to five schools to apply to—their "dream" school, their "safety" school, and two to three other choices.
- ❑ Get a common e-mail address for yourself that is strictly for college application information.
- ❑ October-November: Apply for the CSU (**www.csumentor.edu**) and/or UC (**www.universityofcalifornia.edu/admissions**). If you regularly updated your "Student Planner," your course information will be automatically transferred to your application. Application deadline is November 30, unless otherwise noted.
- ❑ Don't forget to press the submit button on your college application and ALWAYS print out copies of applications submitted online.
- ❑ Double check your transcript to make sure all the information is correct.
- ❑ Have your transcripts sent to requesting colleges. You might have to request more than one.
- ❑ Apply for on-campus housing for each college campus that you are applying to and place your name on the waitlist, if needed. Some colleges call their campus housing "dorms," while others call them "residence halls."

- ❑ Check with your social worker or caregivers about the payments and deposits for college. Some colleges require an upfront deposit for on-campus housing and only accept checks or credit cards.
- ❑ Apply for the Educational Opportunity Program (EOP), **www.csumentor.edu/planning/eop**.
- ❑ Apply for scholarships and campus support programs like the Guardian Scholars and Renaissance Scholars. Visit **www.cacollegepathways.org** for a complete list of programs.

12TH GRADE | SPRING SEMESTER

- ❑ January-March: Apply for financial aid and complete the FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) at **www.fafsa.ed.gov** by March 2.
- ❑ Get a FAFSA PIN (Personal Identification Number) at **www.fafsa.ed.gov**.
- ❑ Check to see that your school sent your Cal Grant GPA Verification form.
- ❑ March-May: If you are planning to attend a CSU, register for the CSU's placement exam (unless you are exempt), which is required prior to enrollment in the CSU.
- ❑ If you are planning to attend a community college, take any placement tests required by the school you will attend.
- ❑ Late Spring: Students taking Advanced Placement (AP) classes should take the AP exams. You can earn early college credit for AP courses if you score well on the test(s). Have the scores sent to the schools where you are applying.
- ❑ Pay a nonrefundable deposit for freshmen tuition to the college you plan to attend, if required, to hold your spot.
- ❑ Apply online for the Chafee Grant at **www.chafee.csac.ca.gov**. Grants are for eligible foster youth ages 16-21 for up to $5,000 to assist with job training and college tuition.
- ❑ Ask your school counselor to send your final high school transcript to the college you will attend.
- ❑ Obtain a copy of your ward of the court letter from your social worker.

WHAT ARE THE "a-g" REQUIREMENTS?

The California State University and the University of California require the college preparatory pattern of classes referred to as the "a-g" courses for admission.

- English: 4 years of college preparatory English composition and literature (take one each year)
- Math: 3 years (4 years are recommended), including Algebra I, Geometry, Algebra II, or higher mathematics (take one each year)
- History and Social Science: 2 years, including 1 year of U.S. history (or 1 semester of U.S. history and 1 semester of civics or American government) and 1 year of social science
- Laboratory Science: 2 years with a lab class
- Language (other than English): 2 years of the same language (American Sign Language is applicable)
- Visual and Performing Arts: 1 year of dance, drama or theater, music, or visual arts
- College Preparatory Elective: 1 year of any college preparatory subject

Note: More than 6,500 high school career/technical classes are accepted as fulfilling one of the a-g course requirements. See "a-g course lists" at **www.ucop.edu/doorways** to find out which ones qualify.

MAKING THE GRADE

- If your grade point average or GPA in college preparatory courses taken in 10th through 12th grades is 3.0 or above, you automatically meet the minimum eligibility requirements for the CSU, UC and some private colleges. Visit **www.californiacolleges.edu**.
- If your GPA is between 2.0 and 3.0, your eligibility also depends on your ACT or SAT results in combination with your GPA.

TESTS YOU NEED TO TAKE

- California High School Exit Examination (CAHSEE)
- The PSAT (Preliminary Scholastic Assessment Test) and PLAN are optional practice tests designed to prepare for the mandatory college admissions tests—SAT (Scholastic Assessment Test), ACT (American College Test) and others.
- The Early Assessment Program (EAP) is an academic preparation program to help 11th grade students meet college readiness standards in English and mathematics before admission to a CSU campus.

APPLICATION CHECKLIST

- ❑ Allow for sufficient time to complete online application forms and paper application forms.
- ❑ Keep a record of your user ID and password for the online application.
- ❑ Identify yourself as a foster youth by marking yes on the question asking if you are a "orphan or ward of the court or foster youth" on the UC, CSU and California Community Colleges admissions application, EOP application, and the FAFSA.
- ❑ FAFSA: Questions 55–60 is where you will need to answer whether you are a orphan, ward of the court, an emancipated minor, or an unaccompanied youth who is homeless or at risk of homelessness.
- ❑ Use the same legal name on all applications.
- ❑ Have an official copy of your high school transcripts on hand. You will need them to enter your courses and grades in the online application.
- ❑ Have your SAT or ACT results on hand to submit with the application.
- ❑ Check for a fee waiver and submit it with your application.
- ❑ Keep a copy of all records that you send.
- ❑ Make a note of the people you speak with on a campus.
- ❑ Keep a copy of your Social Security number in a safe place.

ADMITTED STUDENT CHECKLIST

- ❑ Activate your campus account if your campus requires it. Your campus account will help you track online student updates, missing documents, deadlines and appointments.
- ❑ Open and read carefully all mail and e-mails from your admitted school. Make sure your address and e-mail is always current. Most communication from your school will come via e-mail.
- ❑ Keep a copy of all correspondence.
- ❑ Return your "Intent to Register Form" and deposit ($50-$100) to the campus by the posted deadline.
- ❑ CSU: Take the ELM (Entry Level Mathematics) and/or EPT (English Placement Test) placement tests unless you were exempt via SAT, ACT, EAP, or AP. Contact your campus testing office.
- ❑ Submit final official transcripts to colleges that request it.
- ❑ Submit the application for student housing. Please note that students should submit housing applications during the admissions application time period. Submit lease agreements and/or deposits. If you are on financial aid, ask about waiving the deposit for low-income students.

- ❑ Follow up with financial aid at **www.fafsa.ed.gov** by the priority deadline of March 2. Make sure the SAR (Student Aid Report) forms are complete and submitted to the campus. The SAR will indicate any Expected Family Contribution (EFC). For most former foster youth, the EFC is zero.
- ❑ Meet immunization requirements. Contact the Student Health Center for campus-specific requirements.
- ❑ Register and pay for new student orientation.
- ❑ Attend the EOP orientation.
- ❑ Register for summer programs such as Summer Bridge through EOP.
- ❑ Meet with your EOP advisor to create an educational plan and select classes.
- ❑ Register for classes online.
- ❑ Submit final official transcripts from your high school.

RESOURCES AND PROGRAMS THAT HELP FOSTER YOUTH GET READY FOR AND SUCCEED IN COLLEGE

Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID)

- Designed to increase schoolwide learning and performance.
- Students are enrolled in an AVID elective class, take advanced classes with curriculum and tutorial support, and focus on qualifying for four-year college and university admission.
- AVID programs are available in many middle and high schools in California.

California CareerZone (www.CACareerZone.com)

- The California CareerZone is a FREE Web-based career exploration system that provides easy-to-use self-assessments tools. Students can learn about themselves and how they might match-up with 900 O*Net occupations that detail the job definition, interests, tasks, skills, and more. Approximately 300 of the occupations have videos showing a typical day in the life of someone in that occupation.

California Chafee Grant Program (www.chafee.csac.ca.gov)

- Gives up to $5,000 to eligible former foster youth to use for career and technical training or college courses at California Community Colleges, California State University campuses and University of California campuses, etc.
- Children who exit foster care from relative guardianship or adopted after age 16 are also eligible.

- Students must enroll in at least half-time as defined by the school.
- Complete a FAFSA and financial aid application at that school.

Gain Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP)

- Is a middle school model for creating a college-going culture.
- Program services support the adults who influence a student's education, specifically their teachers, administrators, counselors, and caregivers.

Mathematics, Engineering, Science Achievement (MESA)

- Offers academic enrichment service for educationally disadvantaged students so that they excel in math and science, go on to college, and attain degrees in math-based fields.
- MESA provides individualized academic plans, academic excellence workshops in math and science, study skills training, SAT and PSAT preparation, hands-on math and science competition, career and college exploration, interaction with industry representatives, and caregiver involvement.

PUENTE

- Is a national program to increase the number of students who enroll in colleges and universities, earn college degrees, and return to the community as mentors and leaders for future generations.
- PUENTE trains school and college faculty to provide rigorous instructions, focused academic counseling, and mentoring by members of the community.

Upward Bound

- Serves high school students from low-income families, families in which neither parent holds a bachelor's degree, and low-income, first-generation military veterans and foster youth who are preparing to enter postsecondary education.
- The goal of Upward Bound is to increase the rates at which participants enroll in, and graduate from, colleges and universities.
- The program offers instruction in math, laboratory science, composition, literature, and languages other than English.

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