

College/Post-Secondary Education Assistance**3-2-1****Policy**

The Department of Children and Families (DCF) offers college/post-secondary education (PSE) financial assistance, within available appropriations, for students to attend an accredited college, university, or institution of higher learning, including a trade/vocational program.

Eligibility Criteria

To be eligible for PSE financial assistance, a student shall:

- be adopted through the DCF's foster care program prior to the child's eighteenth (18th) birthday and the adoption must have been finalized on or after January 1, 2005 or
- be committed to DCF or voluntarily remains in the DCF services post majority (SPM) program when the student enrolls into a PSE program and
 - o is accepted into PSE program prior to their twenty-first (21st) birthday and
 - o applies for appropriate (eligible) grants and/or scholarships.

PSE financial assistance will end at the student's twenty-first (21st) birthday. PSE financial assistance may be available for an eligible student until the student's twenty-fourth (24th) birthday in the Commissioner's sole discretion and within available appropriations due to unique and extenuating circumstances and must be pre-approved by the Commissioner.

This policy shall not preclude the use of funds from the federal government or a philanthropic organization to assist any student with post-secondary education costs, regardless of age.

Funding Amount

An eligible student may receive post-secondary education financial assistance equivalent to the cost of annual in-state tuition, fees, room and board after scholarships, grants and federal financial aid at the Central Connecticut State University (CCSU) campus (i.e., the CCSU rate). Books, summer and winter session courses, and off-campus housing may be included, provided the total amount does not exceed the CCSU rate.

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College/Post-Secondary Education Assistance**3-2-1****College
Financial
Assistance
Application
Elements**

In order to request funding, the following documents shall be submitted to the DCF subsidy unit:

- the application for financial assistance for Post-Secondary Education (DCF-632)
- copy of the college/program acceptance letter
- copy of cost of attendance (credits, room, board, and fees)
- copy of high school transcript or GED
- copy of the free application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) submission receipt and eligibility (if applicable)
- documentation of efforts to secure grants and scholarships.

For an adopted youth, the youth or the youth's adopted parents shall submit the above documentation.

For a committed or SPM youth, the youth or youth's social worker shall submit the above documentation.

Deadlines

Requests for funding must be submitted to the subsidy unit at least ninety (90) days prior to date the student plans to begin post-secondary education.

**Decision
Notification**

The student will receive a statement of Financial Assistance for Post-Secondary Education (DCF-632) from the DCF Subsidy Unit Coordinator approving or denying the application. (If the student is denied, see "Denial or Discontinuation of Financial Support " below.)

For students who have been adopted, the adoption subsidy unit shall forward a Confirmation of Financial Assistance directly to the academic institution.

**Working
with
Bursar/
Financial
Aid**

The DCF subsidy unit shall issue payments directly to the academic institution based on its payment schedule.

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College/Post-Secondary Education Assistance**3-2-1****Immediate Notification Required**

The student receiving funding shall notify the subsidy unit and the student's caseworker, if applicable, of any:

- changes to the enrollment status, such as no longer attending full-time or withdrawing from the school
- changes in FAFSA eligibility
- concerns impacting academic success

Requirements to Maintain Benefits

To maintain funding eligibility, the student shall:

- sign the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) release to permit the institution to release educational records to DCF
- attend full time - at least 12 credits per semester at an accredited college or attend full time, as required, by the vocational or technical program
- maintain a 2.0 minimum Grade Point Average (GPA)
- submit to the DCF subsidy unit coordinator:
 - grades each semester
 - proof of semester registration/enrollment before the start of each semester
 - FAFSA annually
 - copy of housing and meal expenses, if living off campus.

These requirements may be waived if the student has a disability or demonstrates a need. (Refer to "Post-secondary Education Financial Assistance Program Practice Guide")

Release of Information

With an appropriately completed FERPA waiver, the subsidy unit will share the student's academic status with the student's adoptive parents upon request.

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College/Post-Secondary Education Assistance**3-2-1****Denial or Discontinuation of Financial Support**

If the student is denied or becomes ineligible for financial support (e.g., by failing to maintain the minimum GPA or course load), the subsidy unit shall send the student a DCF-800, "Notice of Proposed Denial, Reduction, Suspension, or Discontinuance of DCF Benefits", advising them of DCF's proposed action to discontinue the funding and of their right to request an appeal.

Requesting an Administrative Hearing

If a student disagrees with the decision to deny the funding application or discontinue financial support, the student may appeal the decision to the Administrative Hearings Unit. The student has sixty (60) days from the date of notice to request a hearing.

If the student sends a request for a hearing postmarked or emailed within ten (10) days after the date the proposed action is mailed, the benefits shall continue while the hearing decision is pending.

If the hearing decision upholds the decision of DCF and the benefit has been continued beyond the eligibility date, the student may be asked to reimburse the state.

Requests for a hearing should be sent to:

The Department of Children and Families
Administrative Hearings Unit
505 Hudson Street
Hartford, Connecticut 06106

Or via email to:

Dcf.ahu@ct.gov