

For the *LOVE* of Success:

An Educational Toolkit for
Philadelphia Foster Youth



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About this Toolkit

This toolkit was created **by foster youth for foster youth** to help them graduate from high school and get into college. Educational planning is very important for foster youth because we are not always told of the opportunities we have to succeed in education. In order to be successful, youth need a **thorough and well thought out plan**.

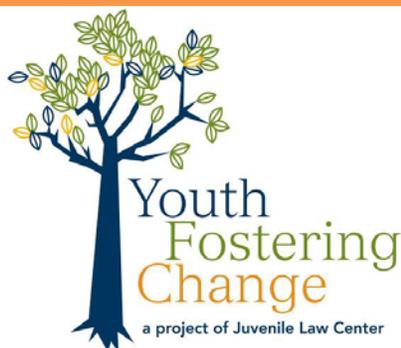
Youth should work with a **supportive adult** to go through this toolkit together. It is designed to be helpful for any youth in high school. This toolkit should be **reviewed every semester** to make sure the youth is on track.

The first section, “Getting to Know You,” will identify the youth’s needs, strengths, skills, and interests. It will also help youth create **short and long term goals** to map out a plan for success. Before meeting to complete this, youth should bring in their school schedule, report cards, transcripts, and any educational records including an IEP (Individualized Education Plan).

This guide was created by members of the 2013-2014 Youth Fostering Change Program: Ashley F., Breonia R., Bruce M., Christopher R., Hector G., Kaliyah H., Megan H., Tysharea M., and Qadira W.

Youth Fostering Change is a youth engagement program of the Juvenile Law Center. This program offers youth who are currently or formerly involved in the child welfare system the opportunity to evaluate the system and develop and implement a campaign that works toward reform. Youth Fostering Change receives support from the W. Clement & Jessie V. Stone Foundation, Stoneleigh Foundation, and YOUTHadelphia. Youth Fostering Change would like to thank the Philadelphia Department of Human Services for publishing this guide, and for their continued support of Juvenile Law Center’s youth engagement programs.

If you have any questions about this Guide or Youth Fostering Change, you can contact Juvenile Law Center at 215-625-0551 or email yfc@jlc.org.



Getting to Know You: Basic Information

Date:

Youth's Name:

Adult's Name:

Phone Number:

Email:

HIGH SCHOOL INFORMATION

1. Name of High School:

2. Name & Contact Information of Educational Decision Maker: ***If youth does not know, his/her Educational Decision Maker, contact the youth's child advocate attorney.***

3. Expected Graduation Year:
 - a. Do you feel that this grade is appropriate for your age?
If youth says no, refer the youth to the Education Support Center (see last page)

4. Cumulative GPA:

5. Semester GPA:

6. Classes this semester:

7. Have you had any issues with transferring credits to a new school?
If youth says yes, refer to Education Support Center (see last page)

8. Names and Contact Information for Supportive Adults at High School (Counselors, teachers, administrators, etc.)

Name:
Position:
Phone and E-mail:

Name:
Position:
Phone and E-mail:

Getting to Know You: Interests and Activities

1. What is your favorite subject in school? Why?
2. What is your least favorite subject in school? Why?
3. Are you involved in any other activities such as working, clubs, teams, or volunteering?
4. Are there any activities that you would like to become a part of? If so, do you know how to get involved with them?

If you are a high school girl in Philly, you can find help in paying for extracurricular activities and tutoring through The Ellis Trust. Learn more at www.ellistrust.org.

5. What are you interested in doing as a career? Do you know what the qualifications are for this career?

Youth can learn more about careers, salaries, and job qualifications at www.mypyn.org or www.careerinfonet.org.

Getting to Know You: Your Goals

Long Term Academic Goals

1. Do you want to go to college or trade school? Why?

a. If you do not want to go to college or trade school, what do you want to do to financially support yourself as an adult?

Short Term Academic Goals

1. What are your education goals for this semester?

This could include getting a certain GPA, completing tests or requirements, identifying and applying to colleges, identifying and applying to scholarships, etc.

GOAL	DATE OF COMPLETION

Getting to Know You: How You Learn

Note: This section is designed to determine whether or not the youth's learning needs are being met. If youth's needs are not being met, inform his or her Educational Decision Maker (EDM) to contact the school. If youth does not know Educational Decision Maker, contact the DHS Social Worker and ask him or her to take action to get an EDM appointed. .

1. Do you have an IEP (Individualized Education Plan)? Yes No

1a. If yes, do you feel like your needs are being met?

If youth answers no, contact Educational Decision Maker.

1b. If yes, do you have a transition plan that helps you achieve your high school and post-secondary goals? (SAT prep, a work experience, and job coaching are examples of things that can be in a transition plan.)

If youth answers no, contact Educational Decision Maker.

2. Do you have trouble...

Hearing in the classroom? Yes No

Seeing in the classroom? Yes No

Focusing in the classroom? Yes No

If youth answers yes to any of these, contact Educational Decision Maker.

3. Is there anything going on in your personal life that prevents you from learning or reaching your educational goals? (For example: a recent traumatic event, a health event, being scared in your school, or having a lot on your mind and needing someone to talk to.)

Getting to Know You: Mentors and Support System

Mentorship and Support

1. Do you have a mentor or support system that guides you when you need assistance?
Who are they?

a. If not, are you interested in finding one?

Youth who are interested in finding a mentor, can find one through programs like AIC , www.philadelphiafutures.org, www.zoeza.org, and www.gathered-dreamz.org.

2. Is there any other support you need in order to succeed in your education? (Supports could include: tutoring, help with making up credits, counseling about college or a career, help pursuing an extracurricular activity, hobby or interest.)

Juvenile Law Center and **Education Law Center** also have additional fact sheets and publications for students in foster homes, juvenile justice, or other placements.

You can contact **Juvenile Law Center** at 215-625-0551 or visit www.jlc.org for more information.

You can contact the **Education Law Center** at 215-238-6970 or visit www.elc-pa.org.

Advice from Former and Current Foster Youth on How to Succeed in High School

Do not wait until your last year of high school to think about college like I did. I would have had more opportunities if I would have started college planning earlier in my career. –Breonia R.



Your performance throughout high school reflect on you later on in life. So think ahead before acting out. Make it to school every day, make it to class on time. Do your best and see to it that you complete all assignments and don't be afraid to ask for help. You want your G.P.A to be as high as possible for a better chance at scholarships. Participate as much as possible in extra-curricular activities. –Bruce M.

Stay focused. I know when I was in the foster care system, school was a rough obstacle and a challenge. All of the problems I was having were a distraction, but it is still important to focus on school and get help at school if you need it.

–Hector G.



If you switch schools, talk to your new counselor to make sure your credits transferred. If you don't, you might have to take classes you've already taken or be behind in school.

–Tysharea M.



First, stay in school—stick it out. The streets have nothing good to offer you. Chasing money and girls isn't going to get you anywhere. You can find success in books. The classroom is where I feel like everyone belongs. The things you want out of life start and finish in the classroom. Any goal you have can be achieved through knowledge which is the key to success and happiness. –Chris R.



Planning It Out: Introduction

This second section of the toolkit, “Planning It Out,” will help foster youth understand exactly what they have to do to **get into college**. It includes information on **finding colleges, what you need to apply for college, and financial aid**.

It also has **insightful advice** from foster youth who have been through the process and **bountiful resources** for you to plan successful college experience. There is also a **checklist** at the end to make sure youth are on track with all the tasks they need to get into college.

Youth should remember to **plan for college** early so that they aren’t overwhelmed in the 12th grade! Youth should write out their goals in the “**Next Steps for Success**” box of each section and review them **every semester**.



Planning It Out: How to Find the Right College for You

There are a lot of things to think about when finding a college for you. First you have to decide what you're interested in studying and **find colleges that have that major**. Distance is important to know: **Are you comfortable being far away from Philly? Where will you live on summer and holiday breaks?** Also think about the **size of the college** you want to go to and whether or not you want a **two-year or four-year program**. You also have to pick a college that **fits your finances**. Finalizing that right college plays a big part in determining your

You first need to identify your goals and what it is you really want to do as far as school. You may want to search based on career or location and being close to home. Me, personally I chose to go a school that was close to home. I was able to work, and since I wanted to be a teacher, I went to a school that had a great education program.

–Bruce M.



Before you pay for college, make sure it is something you like and feel good about doing.

–Ashley F.



I am currently an 11th grade student. Even though I'm not in 12th grade, I still research possible resources that will help me pay for college, or that will match me with a college.

–Kaliyah H.

Helpful Resources

www.CampusTours.com gives you the chance to view different colleges online without actually being there! You can see what a lot of different colleges look like on your computer screen.

www.EducationPlanner.org provides information that students can easily understand to help them prepare for important college decisions.

www.BigFuture.CollegeBoard.org/college-search lets you search for the right college and look at colleges based on location, major, type of school, and other important factors.

www.Petersons.com/college-search contains information about how to get into the college that you want to get into.

www.Nacanet.org/college-fairs/ helps you locate college fairs near you.

www.Pacac.org/college-fairs helps you locate college fairs around Pennsylvania.

Also take advantage of AIC's campus tours and college trips!

Next Steps for Success:

ACTIVITY	DUE DATE	COMPLETED? (Y/N)

Planning It Out: How to Apply for College

The application process is important because there are many rules when applying for college. Check the college website to make sure you **know all of the application requirements**, which could include the **SAT/ACT, personal essays, letters of recommendation, and required high school classes**. Ask your social worker or coach about getting waivers for the SAT/ACT and college applications so that you don't pay for them. Give yourself enough time to write a thorough personal essay, and make sure it is **edited and revised** before your college application deadline. **Deadlines** are important because if you miss your deadline your application will not be accepted until next year.

Helpful Resources

www.MyCollegeOptions.org is a good resource for applying to college because it matches you with college scholarships, has SAT/ACT prep and score improvement, and a monthly to-do list. Also these resources come at no cost to you!

www.CollegeBoard.org provides information on SATs and AP testing. You can take practice tests online.

www.ACTStudent.org provides information on ACT testing and practice questions.

www.PhillyGoes2College.org has good advice on applying to college and essay revision. It also has Philly specific information for students and parents.

Upward Bound provides educational support and services to low income students to prepare for college through tutoring and mentoring, cultural enrichment activities, SAT preparation, and college enrollment assistance. To find an Upward Bound program go to: www.independentlivingpa.org/trio.htm

Talent Search provides support through study skills instruction, SAT prep, financial aid planning, college/career planning, and leadership training. Talent Search provides guidance from high school to admittance into a post-secondary program. To find a Talent Search program go to: www.independentlivingpa.org/trio.htm

Also be sure to check out AIC's workshops on applying to colleges!

Applying for college is not an easy process. Write a good essay and have a teacher edit and proof read your essay. Make sure you use good, professional references. Last but not least, apply before the deadlines.

–Breonia R.



It may seem long and boring but the college application is your key to getting accepted into the college of your choice. Prep yourself for essays and other requirements. I like to look at college applications as the beginning of a tough contest. Try to be as professional as you can be from your email address to the usage of slang you use in your essay.

–Megan H.



Next Steps for Success:

ACTIVITY	DUE DATE	COMPLETED? (Y/N)

Planning It Out: How to Pay for College

Fill out your **FAFSA and PHEAA** in January of your senior year so you can see how much financial aid you qualify for. Remember, it's not just paying for your school but also your living expenses, food, books, transportation, and entertainment in college too.

If you take out loans you will have to pay it back plus interest (money that is charged for you borrowing). Avoid taking out loans and search for grants and scholarships instead. Grants and scholarships are **FREE MONEY!** When you receive a financial aid offer from a school, know exactly what you are paying for and get help understanding it if you don't.

DHS does not pay for college or trade school. However, because you have been in the child welfare system, you can get grants to pay for college and trade school. There are four big ways to help make college and trade school affordable for you:

1. **Identify yourself as independent on the FAFSA.** Question 52 on the FAFSA asks if at any time since you turned age 13, if you were you in foster care, or were you a dependent or ward of the court. Answer yes to this question if you were in care at age 13 or older even if you are now out of care, in a PLC arrangement or adopted. Students who are independent on the FAFSA are eligible for the maximum financial aid.
2. **Apply for the Chafee Grant** at www.pheaa.org/funding-opportunities/other-educational-aid/chafee-program.shtml. This grant is specifically for foster youth in Pennsylvania to use for tuition.
3. **Apply for scholarships for foster youth (see next page).**
4. **Stay in care past age 18.** If you are continuing your education or training, you can remain in care past age 18. When you remain in care, DHS pays for your living arrangements, food, clothing, etc. This can greatly reduce your expenses and help you have time to focus on your studies and training and save money. Remember that you can go away to college and stay in care. (You can stay in care past age 18 for other reasons in addition to going to continuing your education.)



Becoming successful is a little expensive. You should make it a duty to fill out scholarships and apply for grants. Start with FAFSA, then PHEAA. After that, go money hunting. Did you know you can get money just for being left handed, being from Philly, even having a personal experience based on a topic? -Megan H.

In order to pay for college make sure you know how much your college costs. Fill out your FAFSA and PHEAA because it's easy, free money. Loans aren't always the best thing to do because you will have to give that money back in the future, so apply for as many scholarships and grants as possible. -Qadira W.



Next Steps for Success:

ACTIVITY

DUE DATE

COMPLETED? (Y/N)

_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

Helpful Financial Aid Resources:

www.independentlivingpa.org/411.htm has lots of good information on how to pay for college as someone who has been in the child welfare system in Pennsylvania. It also has information on the Chafee grant, which is specifically for youth who have been in care. (Scroll down to the part of the webpage called "Your Education.")

www.ilp.pitt.edu provides a yearly guide on financial aid for young people in Pennsylvania in the child welfare system. To access the guide, go to the website provided and click the on **Educational Training Grant** to find the Financial Aid Brochure. The website also has waiver quests for the SAT and ACT. To find the waiver request letter, click on **Forms and Instructions**.

<http://www.unitedfriends.org/resources/links-resources/foster-youth-scholarships> lists different scholarships and grants worth thousands of dollars for young people who have been in the child welfare system.

www.FAFSA.ed.gov is the website where you can apply for your FAFSA, which is required if you plan to receive financial aid.

www.PHEAA.org has information on applying for aid from Pennsylvania.

www.YouCanDealWithIt.com teaches you how to budget your money. It explains the differences between grants, scholarships, and loans.

www.StudentAid.ed.gov tells you the type of aid available to you, how to apply for aid, and how to manage loans. It also has info on work study.

www.Scholarships.com has info about financial aid and paying for college.

www.FastWeb.com helps you search for different scholarships to apply for college and matches scholarships to your college.

PhillyGoes2College.org lists different places in Philly where you can get help filling out financial aid forms like FAFSA and PHEAA.

Also be sure to check out AIC's workshops on financial aid as well as the *Scholarship Guide for High School Seniors and Graduates!*

Graduation and College Prep Checklist!

Freshman Year of High School

- Join a club, try out for a sport, or become further involved in school activities.
- Find a tutor at AIC if you need help with schoolwork.
- Go to class and school every day.
- Meet your guidance counselor to make sure that you are in the right classes and that you have the right amount of credits.
- If you have an Individualized Education Plan (IEP), make sure that the services provided are available to you.

Sophomore Year of High School

- Study for PSATS and take them.
- Take an AP class. If you pass the AP test, those credits can transfer to college and save you money.
- If you are 16 or older, begin visiting AIC for foster youth specific resources.
- Continue doing activities outside of school.
- Find a tutor at AIC if you need help with schoolwork.
- Go to class and school every day.
- Meet with your guidance counselor to make sure that you are in the right classes and that you have the right amount of credits.
- If you have an Individualized Education Plan (IEP), make sure that the services provided are available to you.

Junior Year of High School

- At the beginning of the first semester begin SAT/ACT prep.
- Complete SAT/ACT by the end of your junior year.
- Meet with guidance counselor about planning the college search process.
- Begin planning college visits.
- Take college prep classes at AIC
- Assume a leadership role in a club, organization, or sport.
- Find a tutor at AIC if you need help with schoolwork.
- Take an AP class. If you pass the AP test, those credits can transfer to college and save you money.
- Go to class and school every day.
- Meet your guidance counselor to make sure that you are in the right classes and that you have the right amount of credits.
- If you have an Individualized Education Plan, make sure that the services provided are available to you.

If you need help completing any of these tasks, make sure you speak to your high school guidance counselor or a member of AIC's Educational Support Team.

Senior Year of High School

First Semester:

- Meet with your counselor to talk about the application process for college.
 - *Early Action/Early Decision deadlines are generally in November and December.*
 - *Regular decision deadlines are sometimes rolling but usually should be sent in by January or February.*
MAKE SURE TO CHECK THE DEADLINE!
- Begin to plan your senior project.
- If you do not like your SAT/ACT score, re-take them by the end of the first semester.
- Apply to colleges: Remember to apply to reach schools and safety schools.
- Write personal essays for your applications and have them edited.
- Ask teachers for letters of recommendation for college (if the college requires it).
- Visit the colleges you are applying to.

Second Semester:

- Meet with counselor to help apply for financial aid (FAFSA and PHEAA).
- Apply for scholarships and grants, especially Chafee.
- Finish your senior project.

All Year:

- If you have an Individualized Education Plan, make sure that the services provided are available to you.
- Go to class and school every day.
- Meet your guidance counselor to make sure that you are in the right classes and that you have the right amount of credits.
- Take an AP class. If you pass the AP test, those credits can transfer to college and save you money.
- Find a tutor at AIC if you need help with schoolwork.
- If you have an IEP, make sure that the Summary of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance is completed and that you connect with the office of disabilities at the college or program you select to talk about any accommodations you might need to be successful. The form can be found at: http://pattan.net-website.s3.amazonaws.com/images/2012/05/30/Parents_SAAFP_0512.pdf

If you need help completing any of these tasks, make sure you speak to your high school guidance counselor or a member of AIC's Educational Support Team.

Are you in high school and need help getting into school or graduating on time?

Contact DHS's Education Support Center

215-683-4001

DHS.Education.Support@phila.gov

The Education Support Center (ESC) is designed to improve the educational stability and outcomes for children in DHS care. **If you are in high school, in DHS care, and are having difficulties enrolling in the proper educational program, staying in the same high school, or making sure you are on track to graduate on time, you can contact the Education Support Center directly.** The Education Support Center staff are liaisons between DHS, the School District of Philadelphia and other public and private schools, working in partnership to ensure that children in DHS care attend school every day and take advantage of all education opportunities offered by the school.

When you contact the Education Support Center, give them your name and date of birth, explain that you are in DHS care, and briefly explain the problems the education-related problems you are having.

This guide was developed by Youth Fostering Change.

To learn more, please visit: www.jlc.org/yfc

For questions regarding "For the LOVE of Success," please call Juvenile Law Center at 215-625-0551 and ask to speak to someone regarding Youth Fostering Change or email yfc@jlc.org.