

Postsecondary Options for Youth and Young Adults with Disabilities in Foster, Kinship, or Adoptive Families in Florida



A WAZE To Adulthood Fact Sheet

Thank you to **Formed Families Forward** for their partnership in this resource

Graduation from high school can be a time of uncertainty, especially for youth and young adults in foster care, but it can also open a world of opportunities. There are some postsecondary options that might be helpful as youth and young adults in foster care plan for the transition from high school to college or employment. Here are some of the options and resources available in Florida.

Postsecondary Education Services and Support (PESS)

[Postsecondary Education Services and Support \(PESS\)](#) is a program available to former foster youth pursuing postsecondary education.

The PESS Program:

- Provides skills training, education, and financial planning
- Helps youth develop lifelong connections with supportive adults
- Provides a monthly payment of \$1,720 to youth to help with housing, utilities, and other living costs while attending an eligible educational program

To be eligible for the PESS Program, the youth/young adult must:

- Be between 18-23 years old
- Have turned 18 and spent at least 6 months in legal custody of the Florida Department of Children and Families (DCF) or been adopted from foster care after age 16, or been placed with a court-appointed guardian (such as a grandparent or other kin) after spending at least 6 months in licensed care
- Have taken at least 9 college credit hours or have a documented disability that prevents the student from attending full-time
- Complete and file the Free Application for Federal Student Aid ([FAFSA](#))
- Complete a [PESS application](#) with the necessary documentation

Tuition Waiver

[Postsecondary Tuition and Fee Exemptions](#) are provided to eligible young adults until age 28. These waivers can be used at public, in-state universities or colleges, and certain job training programs to cover the cost of tuition and fees (it does not cover room & board or other living expenses).

To be eligible for Postsecondary Tuition and Fee Exemptions, the youth/young adult must:

- Have turned 18 while in out-of-home care (foster, group home, relative or non-relative placement)
- Have been reunified with a parent after spending at least 18 months in out-of-home care after the age of 14
- Adopted from DCF after May 5, 1997

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Florida Vocational Rehabilitation Services

[Florida Vocational Rehabilitation \(VR\) Services](#) help youth and young adults with physical, sensory, mental, emotional, or learning disabilities overcome barriers to employment. VR services include but are not limited to Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) and Transition Youth Programs.

- Pre-ETS focus on exploring careers, developing work skills, practicing social skills, and acquiring a network of community supports for youth ages 14-21.
- Transition Youth Programs help students train for a job, continue their education, or find a job after high school.

Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA)

The [WIOA Youth Program](#) offers free services to in-school and out-of-school youth and young adults ages 14-24 who have experienced foster care. Services include assessment of current skills and interests, career guidance, assistance obtaining a high school diploma or high school equivalency diploma (GED), job readiness and occupational skills training, and job placement. For out-of-school youth ages 16 to 24, the youth has to meet the criteria of being a school dropout, homeless youth, runaway, in foster, or a youth with a disability. To apply for the program, youth should locate their local [CareerSource Center](#).

Check out these other resources:

[Apprentice Florida](#)

[Bright Future Scholarship Program](#)

[FLITE Center \(support for youth aging out of foster care in Broward County\)](#)

[Independent Living Benefits Chart](#)

[Job Corps](#)

[Positive Pathways Campus-Based Support](#)

[Tuition Exemption: Know Your Rights](#)



PEATC's mission is to build positive futures by empowering individuals with disabilities through education and training.



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