

Youth in Foster Care *can* go to college – There *is* money for you!

What do you need to know to pay for college? The tips listed below can help increase your chances of getting money to help you pay for college and reach your long-term career goals.

TIP #1 Complete the FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) at www.fafsa.ed.gov

- It's the first step in getting financial aid — grants, scholarships, work-study and loans. Apply NOW and every year you are in college. Submit a new application after January 1st each year.
 - ◆ Pell Grant is awarded up to **\$5,550 for 2010-11**
 - ◆ Oregon Opportunity Grant is up to **\$1,950** at 4-yr schools and **\$1,800** for 2-yr schools for 2010-11
- Get a FAFSA PIN# (This will allow you to sign the FAFSA electronically and to access grant and loan records online. You can apply for a PIN while completing the FAFSA online or you can go to the Federal Student Aid PIN Web site at www.pin.ed.gov to apply.)
- Figure out what Dependent/Independent Status means for you. In most cases, once you provide the documentation requested by the financial aid office you will be considered independent and eligibility will be based on your income and personal information.
- You may be asked whether you are a ward of the court, an emancipated minor, or homeless; whether both parents are deceased; or whether you are in a foster care home or a legal guardianship. If you are not sure how to answer, ask the financial aid advisor. Bring documentation of your status to your college's financial aid office. Here are some additional hints to complete your FAFSA form.

TIP #2 Complete the Chafee Application on the GetCollegeFunds.org website – you could receive up to \$3,000

- This is government money to help former foster care youth pay for education and training after high school.
- It is in addition to the grants listed in Tip #1.

TIP #3 Submit the OSAC eApp and apply for all other scholarships

- Complete one online form to apply for numerous Oregon scholarships.
- Watch for deadlines. Apply to OSAC by the Early Bird deadline of February 16, 2011 to ensure your application is reviewed and you have time to correct errors. Your application will be saved for you to update and reapply each year you attend college
- Use a scholarship search program to search for even more money. Check with colleges and organizations that have scholarships that you may be eligible to receive.

TIP #4 Evaluate Your Financial Aid Awards

- Going to college is expensive, so you'll want to evaluate financial aid offers from different colleges carefully. Use the [OSAC Tip Sheet # 4, "How to Analyze College Financial Aid Award Letters"](#) to compare.
- Take advantage of all the "gift aid" (i.e., grants and scholarships), you can and borrow as little as possible. Sometimes colleges will make it look like you do not have to pay much to attend, but offer only loans and no other aid like grants or scholarships.
- This is the beginning of your Financial Life, and all [student loans](#) must be repaid whether you complete college or not. Use Tip Sheet #2, "Paying for College – What You Need to Know about Student Loans" to plan.

TIP #5 Cost Saver Tips – Ask yourself these questions. The answers could save you money!

- **Should I stay in Foster Care a while longer?** If you have a foster care family (and if it is possible to stay with the family longer), you may want to stay as long as possible and save on living costs, maybe health care costs, transportation or more!
- **Live off-campus and commute to college?** Transportation can cost a lot; it may be cheaper to attend a community college, live with roommates and take the bus, bike or carpool.
- **Live on-campus?** Dorms often close during breaks or charge extra during breaks. If you live on-campus, you will want to think about where to stay during breaks, like summer and holidays.
- **Where can I get more answers?** Visit admissions, financial aid, student services, advising, and health care on the campus where you plan to enroll. Each office may know about a program to help you save money.
- **How much work?** A sensible number of hours will help you to pay as you go but too many hours of work will make it hard for you to keep up with the demands of college. Research shows 15 hours per week or less is best. Try to find a job on campus that will help you gain some experience while you earn money to help with expenses.

You *can* achieve a college education and live your dreams. Start planning now!



The Oregon Student Assistance Commission (OSAC) administers a variety of state, federal, and privately funded student financial aid programs, including grants and scholarships, for the benefit of Oregonians attending institutions of postsecondary education. The agency helps over 50,000 Oregon students work toward their educational goals each year.

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