



TAY Pandemic Funding Maximization Matrix Leveraging COVID-19 Aid for Transition-Aged Youth

Transition-aged youth continue to face challenges during the pandemic and recovery. The Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021 and the American Rescue Plan have provided an array of funds and benefits; however, many young people and their advocates are not aware of all that is available for transition-aged youth and young adults. This matrix provides an inventory of some of the key funds, benefits, and programs from which transition-aged youth may benefit. This list includes benefits for young people with experience in foster care as well as those who are not system-involved. We hope that it will help you access concrete resources for individual young people and advocate for the development of programs and services for transition-aged youth. This document provides information on federal benefits and programs. Please check to see if your state offers additional benefits and funds that young people are eligible for.

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<p>Moratorium on aging out of foster care</p> <p>Until September 30, 2021.</p>	<p>Child welfare agencies must provide continued services and placement to youth even if they reach age 21. This is referred to as the federal moratorium on aging out that was put in place by Supporting Foster Youth and Families Through the Pandemic by the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021.</p>	<p>Youth who would have aged out of foster care in any state, territory or tribe between December 20, 2020 and September 30, 2021.</p>	<p>Child welfare agencies should be informing youth of their ability to remain in care during the pandemic. You can also talk to the child welfare agency through which a young person was in foster care if needed. Here is a template letter to ask for continued services.</p>
<p>Re-entry into foster care</p> <p>Until September 30, 2021.</p>	<p>Youth who aged out during the pandemic can return to foster care while the law is in place.</p>	<p>Youth who aged out or discharged from foster from January 27, 2020 until September 30, 2021.</p>	<p>Talk to the youth’s lawyer or GAL. You can also talk to the youth’s child welfare agency through which a young person was in foster care if needed. Here is a template letter to ask for re-entry.</p>
<p>Increased Chafee Funds</p> <p>States have until September 30, 2022 to spend their Chafee increase, however, they can only serve youth between ages 21 and 27 or 23 and 27 (depending on how long they provide aftercare) until September 30, 2021.</p>	<p>States have been provided a \$400 million increase in Chafee funds, with \$50 million for Education and Training Vouchers, through the Consolidated Appropriations Act. Here is the list of state allocations.</p> <p>States, territories and tribes can use this increased funding for all Chafee purposes, including direct stimulus-style financial assistance, providing housing and other supports. See pages 9-13 of this Program Instruction from the Children’s Bureau to read more about how these funds can be used by child welfare agencies.</p>	<p>Chafee-eligible young people include youth who are currently in or have had experience in foster care at age 14 or older. Youth who left foster care to adoption or kinship guardianship at age 16 or older are eligible. Chafee-eligible youth temporarily include youth up to age 27.</p>	<p>Youth and young adults must apply or make requests for funds and supports from the state, territory, or tribe. In most cases, youth who are in care should seek assistance from the state in which they are in foster care, and youth who are no longer in foster care should seek assistance from the state in which they currently live.</p> <p>Youth can check out this website as well as contacting the Independent Living Coordinator for their state. Youth can also sign up for assistance through the Check for Us Campaign here.</p>

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<p>Education and Training Voucher (ETV) increase and flexibilities</p> <p>The increase in the maximum award to \$12,000 lasts until September 30, 2022. The other ETV flexibilities last until September 30, 2021.</p>	<p>Currently, ETV provides up to \$5000 per year for the cost of higher education and training for eligible youth who are or were in foster care. The Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021 raised the maximum amount of the ETV grant per youth from \$5000 to \$12,000. It also waives the satisfactory academic progress requirement and the enrollment requirement and allows ETV to be used for costs outside cost of attendance.</p>	<p>Chafee-eligible youth are also eligible for ETV. Youth who are under age 27 are eligible until September 30, 2021.</p>	<p>Youth and young adults must apply or make requests for funds and supports from the state, territory, or tribe. In most cases, youth who are in care should seek assistance from the state in which they are in foster care and youth who are no longer in foster care should seek assistance from the state in which they currently live. You can check out this website as well as contacting the Independent Living Coordinator for your state.</p>
<p>Stimulus Funds (Economic Impact Payments or EIPs)</p> <p>It is not too late to file your taxes, but you should do so right away, and no later than October 15th, 2021.</p>	<p>These are funds from the last three federal COVID-19 Relief Bills to help individuals and families meet their needs during the pandemic. There have been three EIP payments. The first EIP was up to \$1200, the second was up to \$600, and the third payment is up to \$1400—this is up to a total of \$3200 per individual. If you have children, you may be eligible for additional payments beyond the \$3200. If you have not received any of the EIPs, you may be eligible to receive all three payments when you file your taxes.</p>	<p>You are eligible for the third EIP if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> You cannot be properly claimed on someone else's tax return as a dependent; You have a Social Security number (SSN); and Are making under \$80,000 a year in income. <p>Many youth in foster care are eligible for all three EIPs. Please check out this fact sheet to learn more.</p>	<p>You access the stimulus payment by filing taxes. File here: https://www.irs.gov/credits-deductions/child-tax-credit-non-filer-sign-up-tool. You should use this link if you have not filed taxes and do not need to. You will need the following information to use the non-filer portal: full name; current mailing address; email address; date of birth; valid Social Security numbers (or other taxpayer IDs) for you and your dependents; bank account number, type, and routing number (if you have one); and an IRS-issued PIN, if you have one from earlier filings with the IRS.</p> <p>Free help on filing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Free Tax Filing page for free resources to file. Visit Code for America's Get Your Refund website to connect with an IRS-certified volunteer who can help you file your taxes for free. Contact your local Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) site to get free tax help from an IRS-certified volunteer.

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<p>Child Tax Credit</p> <p>It is not too late to file, but you should do so right away, and no later than October 15th, 2021.</p>	<p>The child tax credit is money that families can get to help them meet their needs. It is a payment you will receive if you have a child and meet the requirements listed below. If you have a child, you can receive up to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$3,600 per year (\$300 a month) per child for children ages 0 to 5. • \$3,000 per year (\$250 a month) per child for children ages 6 to 17. <p>The IRS will start paying these benefits monthly in July 2021. Most families will receive \$250 to \$300 a month per child from July through December 2021. Families will get the remaining \$1500 to \$1800 per child when they file their 2021 taxes in Spring 2022.</p>	<p>You must have a child who:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has a Social Security number; • Lives with you for at least half of the year; and • Is under age 18 as of December 31, 2021. <p>Children are eligible if they are your children, adopted children, stepchildren, half-siblings, foster children, grandchildren, nieces or nephews, or certain other relatives. The adult who is filing taxes must have a Social Security number or an Individual Taxpayer Identification Number.</p> <p>If you make \$75,000 or less as an individual, you will receive the full credit. If you make more than that amount, you will receive less than the maximum credit.</p>	<p>You access the child tax credit by filing your taxes. You can file your taxes by clicking here: https://www.irs.gov/credits-deductions/child-tax-credit-non-filer-sign-up-tool.</p> <p>This is a link to the non-filers tool that makes filing taxes much easier. You should use this link if you have not filed taxes and do not need to because of the amount of money you make. You will need the following information to use the non-filer portal: full name; current mailing address; email address; date of birth; valid Social Security numbers (or other taxpayer IDs) for you and your dependents; bank account number, type, and routing number, if you have one; and a PIN, if you have one from earlier filings with the IRS.</p> <p>See the section above on EIPs for more information on how to find free help to file your taxes.</p>

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<p>Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC)</p> <p>It is not too late, but you should file right away, and not later than October 15th, 2021.</p>	<p>Money that you receive from the IRS if you are working. For this past tax year (2020), depending on whether you are filing your taxes on your own or jointly and how many children you have, you may be eligible for between \$538 and \$6,660. This is not a new tax benefit, but recent changes in the law make more transition-aged youth eligible.</p>	<p>An individual who has made any money from work may be eligible for the EITC. You may be eligible if you have made income from work and:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> You are age 18 or older and have a child, or You are age 25 or older and do not have a child. <p>Note that there is expanded eligibility for the 2021 tax year, including young people age 18 and older who do not have children and have experience in foster care or are homeless.</p>	<p>You access the Earned Income Tax Credit by filing your taxes. You can file your taxes by clicking here: https://www.irs.gov/credits-deductions/child-tax-credit-non-filer-sign-up-tool. This is a link to the non-filers tool that makes filing taxes much easier. You should use this link if you have not filed taxes and do not need to because of the amount of money you make. You will need the following information to use the non-filer portal: full name; current mailing address; email address; date of birth; valid Social Security numbers (or other taxpayer IDs) for you and your dependents; bank account number, type, and routing number, if you have one; and a PIN, if you have one from earlier filings with the IRS. See the section above on EIPs for more information on how to find free help to file your taxes.</p>
<p><u>Foster Youth to Independence (FYI) Program</u></p> <p>FYI vouchers last for three years.</p>	<p>FYI is a program that provides youth who are in or have aged out of foster care a Housing Choice Voucher in a streamlined, expedited way. Like all Housing Choice Vouchers, FYI provides tenant-based rental assistance that individuals can use to pay rent at apartments in the private market. FYI is not a new program, but became a permanent program through the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021.</p>	<p>A young person is eligible to receive an FYI voucher if they meet the following criteria:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Have attained at least 18 years and not more than 24 years of age; Left foster care, or will leave foster care within 90 days, in accordance with a transition plan described in section 475(5)(H) of the Social Security Act; and Are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless at age 16 or older. 	<p>All Public Housing Authorities (PHAs) in the US that administer Housing Choice Vouchers can request vouchers for youth under the FYI Program. In order to do so, they must receive a referral from a local public child welfare agency. Youth interested in FYI should discuss FYI and request a referral from the local public child welfare agency in their county or city. Working together, PHAs and their child welfare partners can order FYI vouchers in increments as small as one at a time or up to 25 at a time.</p>

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<p><u>Emergency Housing Vouchers (EHVs)</u></p> <p>EHVs should be distributed and individuals in leased apartments by September 30, 2023. However, these are permanent vouchers that are not time limited.</p>	<p>These are Housing Choice Vouchers (tenant based rental assistance) that are being distributed to local Public Housing Authorities (PHAs) as part of the American Rescue Plan. Not all PHAs got Emergency Housing Vouchers (EHVs). You can find out which PHAs got Emergency Housing Vouchers here. To review the funding notice see this document.</p>	<p>Individuals who are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homeless; • At risk of homelessness; • Fleeing, or attempting to flee, domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, stalking, or human trafficking; or • Were recently homeless or have a high risk of housing instability. 	<p>While the PHAs that are allocated the EHVs will distribute the vouchers, the local Continuum of Care will decide which populations are prioritized and who is referred. Advocates should get involved in their local Continuum of Care and ask that Transition Aged Youth be prioritized for EHVs. Advocates should also identify individual transition aged youth who need housing and ensure that they are referred to the PHA through the Continuum of Care.</p>

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<p>Emergency Rental Assistance (ERA)</p> <p>ERA1 funds generally expire on September 30, 2022. ERA2 funds generally expire on September 30, 2025.</p>	<p>These are funds that are being provided as a result of the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021 (ERA1) and the Emergency Rescue Plan (ERA2) to help individuals and families maintain housing stability and avoid eviction during the pandemic and recovery. Most of these funds should be used for direct financial assistance, including rent, rental arrears, utilities and home energy costs, utilities and home energy costs arrears, and other expenses related to housing.</p>	<p>Individuals are eligible for ERA1 if 1 or more individuals within the household:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has qualified for unemployment benefits or experienced a reduction in household income, incurred significant costs, or experienced other financial hardship due, directly or indirectly, to the COVID-19 outbreak; • One or more can demonstrate a risk of experiencing homelessness or housing instability; and • The household has a household income at or below 80% of area median income. <p>Individuals are eligible for ERA2 if 1 or more individuals within the household:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has qualified for unemployment benefits or experienced a reduction in household income, incurred significant costs, or experienced other financial hardship during or due, directly or indirectly, to the coronavirus pandemic; • One or more can demonstrate a risk of experiencing homelessness or housing instability; and • The household is a low-income family (as such term is defined in section 3(b) of the United States Housing Act of 1937 (42 U.S.C. 1437a(b))). 	<p>The funds have been distributed to the states, which must create rental assistance programs. You can find the rental assistance program in your state, tribe or territory here along with information about how to apply.</p>

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<p>Low Cost Internet Service through the Federal Communications Commission</p> <p>The program will end once the program funds are exhausted, or six months after the Department of Health and Human Services declares an end to the pandemic, whichever comes first. Your participating provider must give you notice about the last date or billing cycle to which the full benefit will apply and the date or billing cycle that a partial benefit will apply to your bill, in addition to information about the cost of your broadband service after the program ends.</p>	<p>The Emergency Broadband Benefit Program provides up to \$50 per month towards broadband service and up to \$75 per month for households on qualifying Tribal lands.</p> <p>Eligible households can also receive a one-time discount of up to \$100 to purchase a laptop, desktop computer, or tablet from participating providers if they contribute more than \$10 and less than \$50 toward the purchase price.</p>	<p>Individuals who are low income, including students who are eligible for Pell Grant, SNAP or Medicaid.</p>	<p>Go to GetEmergencyBroadband.org to apply online and to find participating providers near you.</p>

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<p>K-12 Educational Assistance</p> <p>ESSER III funds must be disbursed by September 30, 2023. ARP Homeless Children and Youth funds must be spent by January 31, 2025.</p>	<p>Congress provided billions of dollars in funds to elementary and secondary educational institutions through the three relief packages passed in the last year and half. These funds are referred to as Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER I, II, and III"). Among other things, these funds must be used to address learning loss through the implementation of evidence-based interventions and to ensure that those interventions respond to students' social, emotional, and academic needs. In addition, these funds should address the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on underrepresented student subgroups (each major racial and ethnic group, children from low-income families, children with disabilities, English learners, gender, migrant students, students experiencing homelessness, and children and youth in foster care). In addition to ESSER, Congress provided \$800 million (American Rescue Plan: Homeless Children and Youth) to support efforts to identify homeless children and youth, and to provide them with comprehensive, wrap-around services that address needs arising from the COVID-19 pandemic and allow them to attend school and participate fully in all school activities.</p>	<p>The majority of these funds go directly to school districts so they can serve their students. All students are eligible for the services that can be provided with these funds. The ARP Homeless funds are for children and youth who meet the definition of homelessness under the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (which includes staying with others temporarily due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason).</p>	<p>Advocates for transition aged youth should advocate in their state and local school districts to ensure that ESSER funds are used to provide targeted supports to students, including those with experience in foster care, the juvenile justice system, and youth who are homeless.</p> <p>Advocates and supporters of individual young people can make requests for services from their school, including tutoring, technology support, counseling, participation in a summer program, transportation, and other supports that will help counteract learning loss and mention that ESSER funds are available for these purposes.</p>

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<p>Higher Education Funding Assistance</p> <p>Institutions have one year from the date their most recent grant obligation was processed by the Department of Education to spend all of their HEERF funds, including funds from prior rounds of funding (HEERF I and HEERF II).</p>	<p>Congress provided billions of dollars in COVID-19 relief funds for higher education institutions through the Consolidated Appropriations Act and the American Rescue Plan. A good portion of these funds, referred to as Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund (HEERF I, II, & III), have been dedicated for direct relief to students, but are distributed through individual schools. Schools should prioritize HEERF funds to the highest-needs students, and specifically homeless and foster youth. In addition, some of these funds may be available to undocumented youth. See new guidance from the Department of Education here. Students can use these funds for any component of student’s cost of attendance and for emergency costs that arise due to coronavirus, such as: tuition; food; housing; health care (including mental health care); and child care.</p> <p>Schools can also use some of the institutional aid to reimburse themselves for lost revenue while supporting students during the pandemic, including discharging unpaid institutional balances so students can resume their studies and subsidizing childcare services for student parents.</p>	<p>Any individual who is or was enrolled at an eligible institution on or after the date the national emergency was declared for COVID-19 (March 13, 2020) may qualify for assistance under the HEERF programs, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-degree seeking, non-credit, dual enrollment, and continuing education students • Students exclusively enrolled in distance education • Refugees, asylum seekers, Deferred Action for Childhood Arrival (DACA) recipients, other DREAMers, and similar undocumented students • Note that students do not need to be eligible for Title IV aid to receive financial assistance under the HEERF program. 	<p>If the school does not have an application on its website for assistance (which may be called HEERF, pandemic assistance or emergency assistance), students can ask the financial aid office.</p> <p>Support youth in making a request for funds by helping them identify their specific needs and putting requests in writing. Specific requests are likely to be more successful. For example: “I am requesting emergency funds in the amount of \$2,500 to meet my needs during the pandemic. I need \$1,500 to help pay my rent, \$500 for food, \$300 for child care, and \$200 for transportation.”</p>
<p>Student Loan Relief</p> <p>Until January 31, 2022.</p>	<p>Federal student loan borrowers will not have to make loan payments until January 31, 2022 if the U.S. Department of Education owns the loans. Interest rates on the loan are temporarily waived. Collection on federal student loans owned by the U.S. Department of Education that are in default are put on hold.</p>	<p>Individuals who have federal student loans that are owned by the U.S. Department of Education (rather than a private lender).</p>	<p>If you are eligible, this benefit should be in place automatically. Youth should check their financial aid accounts to make sure. If the student loan is not owned by the U.S. Department of Education, students should check to see if their own state is offering any additional relief.</p>

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<p>Medicaid for Former Foster Youth</p> <p>This is a permanent provision of the law, but sometimes it is overlooked or young people are dropped from coverage even though they are eligible. This Medicaid coverage lasts until a young person turns age 26. At that time, the Medicaid agency should determine if you meet any other eligibility categories for Medicaid before losing coverage at age 26.</p>	<p>Medicaid funds health insurance, and covers both physical and behavioral health care. This is not a pandemic program or benefit, but young people who have aged out of foster care may not be aware of their eligibility.</p>	<p>Youth who were in foster care at age 18 or older and were eligible for Medicaid at that time are categorically eligible for Medicaid coverage until age 26. That means that a young person who meets those criteria are eligible no matter what income or funds they have.</p>	<p>Apply at your state or local Medicaid agency. If you cannot find information on the state child welfare agency's website about Medicaid for Former Foster Youth, you can apply for Medicaid here: https://www.healthcare.gov/medicaid-chip/getting-medicaid-chip/#howtoapply</p>
<p>Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)</p> <p>The temporary increase in SNAP lasts until September 30, 2021. Pandemic SNAP for school aged youth lasts until the end of the summer of 2021. The new, temporary exemptions related to attending college will be in effect until 30 days after the COVID-19 public health emergency is lifted.</p>	<p>These are funds for food for low income individuals meeting certain requirements. This is not a new benefit, but the Consolidated Appropriations Act and American Rescue Plan provided the following expansions that may help transition aged youth: the SNAP benefit is increased by 15% (approximately \$28 per individual per month) until September 30, 2021. The Pandemic SNAP program, provides SNAP-like benefits for school aged young people who are otherwise eligible for free or reduced lunch, through the summer of 2021.</p>	<p>Individuals are eligible for SNAP based on income and other criteria. You can review SNAP eligibility requirements here. The Consolidated Appropriations Act and American Rescue Plan temporarily expanded eligibility to include students who either:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are eligible to participate in state or federally financed work study during the regular academic year, as determined by the institution of higher education; or • Have an expected family contribution (EFC) of \$0 in the current academic year. This includes students who are eligible for a maximum Pell Grant. <p>Beginning Jan. 16, 2021, students who meet one of the two criteria outlined above may receive SNAP benefits, if they meet all other financial and non-financial SNAP eligibility criteria. More information can be found on the SNAP benefits for students webpage and Q&A on student eligibility.</p>	<p>You can find out how to apply for SNAP in your state here.</p>