

## Education Support Resources

### Free Nutritional Food Access

By law (Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010, Public Law 111-296), youth in foster care are eligible for free school meals without completing an application. The Children's Division needs to provide the school documentation indicating you are a youth in foster care whose placement is the responsibility of the State.

### Foster Care Education Bill of Rights

The "Foster Care Education Bill of Rights" requires public school districts and child-placing agencies to ensure youth in foster care do not fall through the cracks when it comes to receiving an education because of situations that they experience while in care.

The Foster Care Education Bill of Rights:

- Requires school districts to designate a staff person as the educational liaison for foster children. The liaison shall do the following in an advisory capacity:
  - Ensure and facilitate the proper educational placement, enrollment in school and checkout from school of foster children;
  - Assist foster care pupils when transferring schools by ensuring proper transfer of credits, records and grades;
  - Request school records within two business days of a foster child in a school; and
  - Submit records of a foster child within three business days of receiving a request for school records.
- Requires child-placing agencies to promote educational stability by considering the child's school attendance when making placement decisions. The foster care pupil shall have the right to remain enrolled in and attend his or her school of origin pending resolution of school placement disputes (HB154) or return to a previously attended school in an adjacent district (SB291).
- Provides that each school district shall accept for full or partial credit course work satisfactorily completed by a pupil attending public school or nonsectarian school according to district policy.
- Provides that if a pupil completes graduation requirements while under juvenile court jurisdiction the district shall issue the pupil a diploma from the school the pupil last attended.
- Prohibits the school district from lowering the grade of a foster child if the child is absent from school due to a change in placement or due to a court appearance, (which would include PPRT and FST meetings). Grades and credits shall be calculated as of the date the pupil left school.
- Gives school districts the authority to authorize access of a pupil's school records to any child placing agency to fulfill educational case management requirements.

Additional information can be found at this link:

<http://www.house.mo.gov/billtracking/bills091/billpdf/truly/HB0154T.PDF>

### Educational Stability

Educational stability should be a priority when assessing the child's placement needs and making placement decisions. The *Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008* and the *Child and Family Services Improvement and Innovation Act (2011)* require state child welfare agencies to coordinate with schools to improve educational stability for children in

foster care. The companion federal education law, the *Every Student Succeeds Act* (ESSA, 2015), requires educational agencies to collaborate with child welfare agencies to ensure the educational stability of children in foster care. Child welfare and educational agencies now have shared responsibility to work together to ensure children in foster care remain in their school of origin, if remaining in the same educational setting is determined to be in the child's best interest.

The **Individual Career & Academic Plan** (ICAP) is a plan of study to guide students through the coursework and activities for achieving personal career goals, post-secondary planning and providing individual pathway options. An **ICAP** is a multi-year process, beginning no later than the eighth grade, that intentionally guides students and families in the exploration of career, academic and multiple post-secondary opportunities to include \*direct access to the workforce \*military \*tech school/area career center \*vocational training (apprenticeship), \*2 year college and \*4 year college. An ICAP is a "roadmap" to help students develop the awareness, knowledge, attitudes, and skills to create their own meaningful pathways to be success ready graduates: <https://dese.mo.gov/college-career-readiness/school-counseling#mini-panel-school-counseling7>

### **Students with Disabilities**

The Missouri Interagency Transition Team (MITT) was formed in 2007 by the Office of Special Education at the Missouri Department of Elementary & Secondary Education to increase interagency collaboration at the state, regional, and local levels and has developed a resource website for those individuals with disabilities who are looking for any level of independent living from school age to adulthood. It could be partial independence such as finding a job, or going to school, to full independent living, living on your own and taking care of yourself with limited or no assistance: <http://disability.mo.gov/MITT.htm>

### **Individualized Education Plan**

Youth with special needs may be entitled to an Individualized Education Plan in their school. This is based on an identified need and evaluation. The Individual with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) ensures youth with disabilities receive individualized supports and services to successfully complete high school and transition to post-secondary education, employment, and adult life. The Individualized Education Plan (IEP) establishes formation of concrete goals with measurable outcomes based on each individual's future plans. At age 14 the plan must address what instruction will assist the youth to prepare for transition. By age 16 the IEP must state what transition services the child needs, and specify interagency responsibilities or necessary connections. For more information: <http://dese.mo.gov/special-education/compliance/individualized-education-program-iep>

### **Post-Secondary Visit**

Youth who are age 15 or older are entitled to a visit to a state university, community or technical college, or an armed services recruiter before being adopted or exiting to independence. The visit should include an entry application process, financial support application and availability, career options with academic or technical training, a campus tour, and other information and experience desired by you. The visit can be waived by your Family Support Team.

## **School District Contact Information**

<https://dese.mo.gov/school-directory>

## **High School Equivalency (HiSET)**

In 2014, Missouri stopped using the GED® test for its high school equivalency testing program. The *HiSET*® exam can help youth achieve this important state-issued high school equivalency credential. The cost of the test is \$95, which includes a \$60 registration fee for the cost of the test and \$7 for each of the five test sections to cover the costs of administering the test. Only 16-year-olds who have successfully completed 16 units of credit toward high school graduation and have written permission from the superintendent or principal of the school last attended reflecting compliance are eligible to test. Seventeen year-olds who have dropped out of school may take the test. Youth must be a Missouri resident and must present identification on test day at the HiSET test center. A valid permanent or temporary Missouri license (Driver, Nondriver, Intermediate, Commercial or Instruction (learners) permit), U.S. passport, or U.S. military ID. Outdated or expired identification will not be accepted. For more information about obtaining a high school equivalency certificate, call 573-751-3504 or visit

<http://dese.mo.gov/adult-learning-rehabilitation-services/high-school-equivalency>

## **Adult Education and Literacy Program**

<http://dese.mo.gov/adult-learning-rehabilitation-services/adult-education-literacy>

## **Post-Secondary Education Resources**

### **ACT**

The ACT is a national college admissions exam that tests in English, math, reading, and science. The ACT results are accepted by all 4-year colleges and universities in the United States. Most colleges and universities require this prior to admission and a youth's score can be used for some scholarships as well as determining acceptance into the school of the youth's choice. Youth in foster care are eligible to take the ACT for free. Information can be found at this link: <http://www.actstudent.org/faq/answers/feewaiver.html>

### **FAFSA**

If a youth is a senior in high school or already graduated and wants to go to college, the youth can apply for federal financial aid by completing the Free Application for Student Financial Aid (FAFSA). Since the youth is in foster care, the youth can mark his or her self-down as a one-person family which will help the youth receive the most financial aid available. You can find more information at this link: <http://www.fafsa.ed.gov/>

### **Definition of Independent Student**

The College Cost Reduction and Access Act of 2007 (P.L. 110-84) and Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2008 (P.L. 110-315) changed the definition of independent student to include any student who "is an orphan, in foster care, or a ward of the court, or was an orphan, in foster care, or a ward of the court at any time when the individual was 13 years of age or older." This is important to know to guide youth and adoptive families in completing the FAFSA.

### **Education and Training Voucher Program**

The Education and Training Voucher (ETV) Program allows the Children's Division to provide post-secondary education and training funds to help eligible youth interested in pursuing a higher education to reach their goals. For more information:

<http://dss.mo.gov/cd/chafee/education.htm>

### **Missouri Reach Tuition Waiver**

During the 2009 legislative session, the general assembly placed tuition and fee waivers into statute for certain foster care students per 173.270, RSMo. In recent legislative sessions, money has been provided to support the legislation. Missouri Reach tuition waivers and fees are available to eligible youth on a tiered priority basis. For more information:

<https://dss.mo.gov/cd/older-youth-program/missouri-reach-program.htm>

### **Missouri CCE**

Missouri Reach Credential Completion and Employment Financial Assistance Program is a short-term, targeted assistance program to help youth earn a recognized certificate and/or specialized training that leads to employment. For more information:

<https://dss.mo.gov/cd/older-youth-program/credential-completion-assistance.htm>

### **Foster Care to Success**

A national organization which administers Missouri's ETV and Missouri Reach Program in addition to providing scholarships, internships, mentoring, and care packages:

<http://www.fc2success.org/>

Help youth choose the right school: [www.technical-vocational-schools.com](http://www.technical-vocational-schools.com);  
<http://nces.ed.gov/collegenavigator/>

Help youth look for scholarships: <https://www.fastweb.com/>  
<https://nfpaonline.org/> (search scholarship as this site changes each year)

Help youth plan, apply and pay for college: <https://dhe.mo.gov/ppc/>

AmeriCorps: <http://www.americorps.gov/about/ac/index.asp>