


Policy Subject:	<p>Maryland Tuition Waiver</p> <p>Section §15-106.1 of the Maryland Annotated Code Education Article was amended to expand the Maryland Tuition Waiver for foster care recipients so that it is now available to an individual who enters an out-of-home placement, remains in out-of-home placement for at least one year on or after the individual’s 13th birthday and were reunited with at least one of their parents. The Maryland Tuition Waiver continues to be available to individuals who are in out-of-home placement on their 18th birthdays or when they graduate from high school or successfully complete a GED. Additionally, the new law extends the period of time during which an eligible foster care recipient may utilize the waiver from five years to 10 years.</p> <p>Maryland Education and Training Voucher</p> <p>In 2018, the Families First Prevention Services Act amended the Education and Training Voucher Program (ETV), as outlined in the John H. Chafee Foster Care Program for Successful Transition to Adulthood (42 U.S.C. § 677), to expand an individual’s eligibility for ETV up to age 26, provided that certain criteria are met, and to increase the time during which an eligible individual may utilize ETV funds to a maximum of five years.</p>
Effective Date:	<p>July 1, 2018</p>
Approved By:	<p>Rebecca Jones Gaston, MSW Executive Director Social Services Administration</p> 
Policy Number:	<p>SSA/CW #18-18</p>
Last Revision Date(s):	<p>July, 2017 September, 2013 October, 2012</p>
Originating Office:	<p>Office of Child and Family Well-Being</p>
Supersedes:	<p>SSA CW#17-20</p>
Program Affected:	<p>In-Home Services & Out-of-Home Placement</p>



Purpose

This policy is being reissued to comply with amendments to section § 15-106.1 of the Education Article of the Maryland Code regarding the Maryland Tuition Waiver and the Federal Families First Prevention Services Act as it pertains to the Education and Training Voucher Program (ETV).

This policy provides updated guidance to assist each Local Department of Social Services (LDSS) regarding how to:

- Determine the eligibility requirements for each program and how each program can be utilized;
- Assist current and former foster care recipients, including individuals who may be parents receiving family preservation services, in accessing the Maryland Tuition Waiver and the ETV;
- Ensure that foster care recipients are aware of the Maryland Tuition Waiver and ETV programs, including eligible foster care recipients who are no longer in the care of a LDSS;
- Ensure that foster care recipients who are eligible for the Maryland Tuition Waiver or ETV apply to these programs so that they do not incur unnecessary debt associated with the cost of post-secondary education;
- Ensure that Maryland's public institutions of higher education apply the Maryland Tuition Waiver in accordance with State statute, prior to application of any scholarships or grants the individual may receive;
- Assist those individuals who may not be legal permanent residents in the United States and are seeking enrollment at a post-secondary institution.

A. MARYLAND TUITION WAIVER FOR FOSTER CARE RECIPIENTS:**Legal Information**

During the 2018 Legislative Session, the General Assembly passed a bill amending § 15.601.1 of the Maryland Education Article, which the Governor signed into law.

Pursuant to the amended § 15-106.1 of the Education Article of the Maryland Code and COMAR 07.02.11.12(K)(1-8), current and former foster care recipients, as defined in the statute, are eligible, upon enrollment at any Maryland public institution of higher education for the waiver of the cost of their tuition and any mandatory fees. An eligible foster care recipient is exempt from paying tuition at a Maryland public institution of higher education (see "Related Information" for list of Maryland institutions), regardless of the receipt of any scholarship or grant if the foster care recipient: (1) is enrolled at the institution on or before the date that the foster care recipient reaches the age of 25 years; (2) is enrolled as a candidate for a vocational certificate, an associate's degree, or a bachelor's degree; and has filed for federal and State financial aid. A foster care recipient who is eligible for the Maryland Tuition Waiver remains eligible for the Maryland Tuition Waiver until 10 years after first enrolling as a candidate for an associate's degree or a bachelor's degree at a public institution of higher education in the State; or the date that the foster care recipient is awarded a bachelor's degree, whichever date is earlier.

Additionally, the amendments to § 15-106.1 of the Education Article of the Maryland Code expanded eligibility for the Maryland Tuition Waiver to also include individuals who have resided in out-of-home placement for at least one year on or after their 13th birthdays who are then adopted, enter a guardianship, or are reunited with at least one parent. Younger siblings of such foster care recipients are also eligible for the Maryland Tuition Waiver if concurrently they were adopted by the same adoptive parents or entered guardianship with the same guardian.

Policy

LDSS staff shall ensure that foster care recipients (including those currently in out-of-home placements and those previously placed in out-of-home placements), parents, prospective guardians, adoptive and foster parents are aware of how to access the Maryland Tuition Waiver and the eligibility requirements. LDSS staff are to assist foster care recipients with accessing the waiver and are to ensure that the Maryland Tuition Waiver is included as part of on-going education planning and transition from care for those foster care recipients currently in the care and custody of a LDSS.

The Maryland Tuition Waiver provides a waiver for tuition costs for both credit bearing and non-credit bearing courses, as well as a waiver of mandatory fees at any Maryland public institution of higher education. The Maryland Tuition Waiver may be applied to certificate or non-credit vocational programs at a public Maryland institution of higher education (private colleges and universities, and all vocational schools are excluded). Any scholarships or grants that the foster care recipient receives should not be applied to the cost of tuition or to mandatory fees.

An eligible foster care recipient continues to be exempt from paying tuition and fees for up to 10 years after first enrolling at a Maryland public institution of higher education as long as enrollment occurred before the foster care recipient reached the age of 25, or until the date that the foster care recipient is awarded a bachelor's degree, whichever date comes first. To remain eligible for the Maryland Tuition Waiver, the individual must continue to meet the institution's academic eligibility for financial aid. The Maryland Tuition Waiver can be used towards both full time and part time enrollment in fall, winter, spring and summer terms. The Maryland Tuition Waiver does not apply to room, board, books or transportation and may not be applied retroactively.

For those individuals who are in an out-of-home placement at the time of utilization of the Maryland Tuition Waiver, the LDSS is responsible for providing necessary referrals for academic tutoring and any guided support needed to achieve their goals. The LDSS must also make all reasonable efforts to monitor regularly an individual's educational progress through Family Involvement Meetings (FIM), Youth Transitional Plans, Case Plans, etc., to ensure the individual has access to any needed support or services.

Individuals who are not legal residents of the United States will not be able to complete the FAFSA and will not be able to utilize the Maryland Tuition Waiver until they become legal residents. Therefore, it is especially important for the LDSS to make all reasonable efforts to assist such individuals in taking the appropriate steps to obtain legal residency upon entry into care. (Refer to SSA-CW#15-11 Unaccompanied Refugee Minors)

For those individuals who have exited care, and may have an opened child welfare case with Family Preservation, or Child Protective Services, the worker involved with the family should offer potentially eligible foster care recipients information regarding the Maryland Tuition Waiver.

Procedural Guidance

1. Eligibility Criteria: To be eligible for the Maryland Tuition Waiver as a “foster care recipient,” an individual must have:
 - a. Been placed in out-of-home placement by the Maryland Department of Human Services; and
 - b. Resided in an out-of-home placement on the individual’s 18th birthday or at the time of graduation from high school or upon successful completion of the General Education Development (GED) examination; OR
 - c. Resided in an out-of-home placement for at least one year on or after the individual’s 13th birthday and entered into guardianship, been adopted, or reunited with at least one of the individual’s parents;
 - d. Been the younger sibling of an individual who met the qualifications outlined in section (a) and (b) above, and was concurrently placed into the same guardianship by the same parent, or was adopted by the same adoptive family with the older sibling.

*Individuals who are or were placed in the care of an LDSS and were then placed out of the State are eligible for Maryland Tuition Waiver.
2. To receive the Tuition Waiver, eligible individuals need to complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) each year between October 1st and June 30th so that their tuition is waived for the following school year.
 - a. The application is available at www.fafsa.gov.
 - i. Applicants should accurately respond “Yes” to the question on the FAFSA, which asks applicants if both parents are deceased, if, after reaching the age of 13, applicants were ever in foster care, or if they were ever wards of the court.
 - ii. By responding “yes” to this question, applicants should not be required to submit certain “family income” verification information.
 - b. The individual must be accepted to a public Maryland institution of higher education, for credit, non-credit coursework including certificate vocational programs offered at a Maryland public institution of higher education.
 - c. Individuals who are accepted by and choose to attend private colleges and universities, or independent vocational schools are not eligible to receive the Maryland Tuition Waiver.
3. Responsibilities of the LDSS on behalf of the youth applicant currently in the custody of the LDSS:
 - a. Ensure that all staff, including both out-of-home and in-home, are

knowledgeable about:

- i. The Maryland Tuition Waiver program;
 - ii. Eligibility requirements as outlined above (Section 1, 2); and
 - iii. The process to activate a waiver after acceptance to a public college or university in Maryland and upon enrollment in credit, non-credit, or vocational certificate programs.
- b. Ensure the eligible youth has an out-of-home program assignment in the state child welfare data management information system upon entry into out-of-home placement.
 - c. Ensure the youth has the financial aid office (at the school that they were accepted at) contact information to seek the tuition waiver.
 - d. Assist the youth with contacting the financial aid office to notify of their eligibility for the Maryland Tuition Waiver in order for the school to activate their waiver based on a tuition waiver list provided by the state.
 - e. The case worker or resource parent is to contact the Independent Living Coordinator if the financial aid office requests additional verification or does not grant the youth a tuition waiver.
 - f. If the tuition waiver is stalled (by requests for additional verification) or mistakenly denied, the LDSS Independent Living Coordinator (or Education Coordinator, where applicable) shall make the request to the DHS/SSA Education Specialist and include the student's name, date of birth, and last four digits of the social security number (or their Case ID).
 - g. Confirm regularly with the youth that there is no balance on their account regarding tuition and fees.

4. Responsibilities of DHS/SSA staff:

- a. DHS/SSA shall send the Maryland Tuition Waiver List of eligible individuals to Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC) in June and December of each year.
- b. MHEC distributes the list to all Maryland public colleges and universities.
- c. The List is generated by DHS/SSA using the child welfare data management information system.
- d. The List includes instructions, including the contact information for the DHS/SSA Education Specialist, to the public Maryland universities and colleges regarding how to use the List, what to do for eligible students, and what to do if students who request the tuition waiver are not on the List.
- e. For individuals who do not appear on the List, the institutions are instructed to contact the DHS/SSA Education Specialist for verification of the student's eligibility.
- f. The DHS/SSA Education Specialist will reference the child welfare data management information system to ensure the youth is eligible for the Maryland Tuition Waiver.
- g. If a student is found to be eligible, the DHS/SSA Education Specialist will provide a certification letter indicating the student's eligibility for the Maryland Tuition Waiver.

- h. The certification letter will be provided to the appropriate financial aid office at the Maryland public university or college, and a copy will be provided to the LDSS Independent Living Coordinator for dissemination to the individual in care, the case manager and the resource/foster parent.

*For those foster care recipients who have exited foster care, the letter will be provided directly to the foster care recipient and a copy will be sent to the financial aid office of the appropriate Maryland public institution of higher education.

B. MARYLAND'S EDUCATION AND TRAINING VOUCHER PROGRAM

Legal Information

To provide further support to individuals who have experienced foster care, the federal government makes additional funds available for post-secondary educational opportunities available through the *John H. Chafee Foster Care Program for Successful Transition to Adulthood* (42 U.S.C. § 677). This program is known as the Education and Training Voucher Program (ETV). In 2018, the Families First Prevention Services Act amended the ETV program to extend eligibility to include individuals who were placed in an out-of-home placement between the ages of 14 up to their 26th birthday. Eligible individuals may receive funding for qualified educational expenses for five years total as long as they are continuously enrolled in a post-secondary institution and making satisfactory progress towards completion of the program.

Policy

LDSS staff shall ensure that foster care recipients, prospective guardians/adoptive parents, and foster parents are aware of the ETV program and the eligibility requirements. LDSS staff are to assist individuals with accessing ETV and to ensure that ETV is included as an available resource as part of a youth's education transition planning. The LDSS is to also ensure that all staff, including both in-home and out-of-home, are knowledgeable about the ETV program and its eligibility requirements in order to assist all those who receive services through a LDSS in utilizing this benefit, regardless of whether they are currently in out-of-home placement. Specifically, in-home staff may encounter eligible individuals in the context of Family Preservation services or Child Protective Services. Eligible individuals may qualify for both the MD Tuition Waiver and the MD ETV program depending on where they are enrolled, however if an individual who is receiving the MD Tuition Waiver at a Maryland public institution receives ETV, those funds cannot be used for tuition.

Individuals who are not legal residents of the United States are unable to complete the FAFSA and cannot utilize ETV until they become legal residents. Therefore, it is especially important for the LDSS to make all reasonable efforts to assist such individuals in taking the appropriate steps to obtain legal permanent residency. (Refer to SSA-CW#15-11 Unaccompanied Refugee Minors)

Maryland's ETV is administered by Foster Care to Success and provides up to \$5,000 per

federal fiscal year for college and accredited training programs for full-time students. Part-time students may receive no more than \$2,500 based on a student's need. ETV may not be used in connection with a graduate program.

To Access ETV:

- Individuals are eligible for ETV if they were placed in an out-of-home placement by the Maryland Department of Human Services when they were 14 years of age or older **and:**
 - Were adopted or entered kinship guardianship at 16 years of age or older; or
 - Were in an out-of-home placement on their 18th birthday.
- Qualified individuals must have completed a high school or General Education Diploma (GED); and be enrolled at a college, university, or an accredited vocational program.
- The initial application must be completed before the age of 21.
- Access is limited to no more than five years total or ten academic semesters, which may be consecutive or non-consecutive.
- ETV cannot be applied to tuition and fees associated with enrollment at a Maryland public institution of higher education; such costs should be waived pursuant to the Tuition Waiver if the individual is attending a Maryland public institution of higher education.

The ETV funds may be applied towards:

- (a) Tuition and school fees (at non-public institution);
- (b) Room and board;
- (c) Off-campus housing;
- (d) Books;
- (e) Rental or purchase of required equipment, materials, and supplies;
- (f) Childcare;
- (g) Tutoring costs related to attendance in the educational program; and
- (h) Transportation that is necessary for the student to attend school.

Procedural Guidance

Eligible Individuals' Responsibilities:

1. Eligible individuals must complete and file the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) by June 30th of each year at www.fafsa.gov. Students should note that each institution might have a set date for submitting the FAFSA.
2. Complete the ETV application online after July 1st, with Foster Care to Success at www.fc2sprograms.org/maryland.
3. The individual will then need to take the "Financial Aid Release Form" (Appendix III) of the application to the financial aid office of their institution and request that the Financial Aid Office complete and submit the documents to Foster Care to Success.
4. Students must maintain contact with the MD ETV coordinator with Foster Care to Success regarding services and must submit necessary documents requested.

5. **Students must maintain satisfactory academic progress with their institution of higher education in order to continue receiving funding.**
6. Students must apply for the ETV program every year to remain eligible for the program.

Relevant Definitions

- *“Free Application for Federal Student Aid” (FAFSA)* - is a form that can be prepared annually by current and prospective college students to determine their eligibility for student financial aid.
- *“Foster Care Recipient”*- means an individual who was placed by the Maryland Department of Human Services in an out-of-home placement and who (1) resided in an out-of-home placement on the individual’s 18th birthday or at the time the individual graduated from high school or successfully completed a GED; or (2) resided in an out-of-home placement for at least 1 year on or after the individual’s 13th birthday and was placed into guardianship, adopted, or reunited with at least one of the individual’s parents.
- *“Qualified Education Expenses”*- means ETV funds are available for tuition and school fees (not at a public Maryland institution and thus not waived under the Maryland Tuition Waiver), room and board, off-campus housing, books, required materials and supplies, childcare, tutoring, and transportation necessary for the student to attend school.
- *“Concurrently”*- Occurring at the same time, i.e., the, adoption or guardianship occurred on the same date.

Alignment with SSA Practice Model.

This policy directive aligns with the SSA integrated practice model guiding principle of Transition. This policy directive is designed to ensure that youth have the supportive networks and resource linkages in place so that they can be successful and achieve self-sufficiency. The policy encompasses the need for educational planning with youth and family prior to exiting care. Utilization of these funds supports lasting relationships with youth and their communities through access to education, which can lead to sustainable employment and permanency in their communities.

Documentation Required

Consistent with SSA’s best practices, if the eligible individual is currently in the care of a LDSS, case managers are to document in the individual’s case record when the individual has utilized the Maryland Tuition Waiver or ETV and at which institution the funds were used. This information may be entered in the service log and case plans.

Related Information:

- COMAR 07.02.11.12 (K-L):
<http://www.dsd.state.md.us/comar/comarhtml/07/07.02.11.12.htm>
- House Bill 0085:
<http://mgaleg.maryland.gov/webmga/frmMain.aspx?id=sb0085&stab=01&pid=billpage&tab=subject3&ys=2018rs>

- SSW CW# 15-11-Unaccompanied Refugee Minors
- SSA CW#10-08-Family Involvement Meetings
- SSA CW#10-13-Transitional Planning for Youth
- SSA Ready By 21 Policy Manual
- List of Maryland Public Institutions:
http://www.mhec.state.md.us/institutions_training/Pages/collegeinfo.aspx

*APPENDIX I***Table for Reference for Maryland Tuition Waiver**

Eligible Individuals in Care	Eligible Individuals Out of Care
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Complete the FAFSA with assistance from the LDSS staff or resource parent. ● Indicate on the FAFSA the Maryland public institutions of higher education of choice. ● Upon enrollment at a public Maryland institution of higher education, inform the financial aid office of eligibility. ● The financial aid office should review the Maryland Tuition Waiver Eligibility List. If name does not appear on the list, student/caseworker/foster parent is to notify the Independent Living Coordinator (ILC). ● The ILC is to request the certificate of eligibility from the DHS Education Specialist. ● Caseworker documents in case plan that the individual is utilizing the Tuition Waiver. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Complete the FAFSA with assistance from the LDSS staff or resource parent. ● Indicate on the FAFSA the public Maryland institutions of higher education of choice. ● Upon enrollment at a public Maryland institution of higher education, inform the financial aid office of eligibility. ● The financial aid office should review the Maryland Tuition Waiver Eligibility List. If name does not appear on the List, the student or the financial aid officer needs to contact the DHS Education Specialist. ● The DHS/SSA Education Specialist is to provide certificate of eligibility to parties in the event that the eligible individual is on the List.

APPENDIX II

Table for Reference for MD Education Training Voucher Program

Eligible Individuals in Care	Eligible Individuals Out of Care
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● With assistance from the LDSS staff/parent/foster parent, complete the FAFSA. ● Indicate on the FAFSA a College/University or training Institute of choice. ● Once enrolled at a College/University or a training institution, complete the entire ETV application packet via http://www.fc2sprograms.org/maryland/ with the assistance of the LDSS Staff/Parent/Foster Parent by creating an account. ● Follow all of the instructions of the application packet. ● Request the financial aid office complete the “Financial Aid Release Form” (see Appendix III) and send back to md@statevoucher.org ● Maintain regular contact with the assigned ETV Coordinator. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Complete the FAFSA. ● Indicate on the FAFSA a College/University or training Institute of choice. ● Once enrolled at a College/University or a training institution, complete the entire ETV application packet via http://www.fc2sprograms.org/maryland/ by creating an account. ● Follow the instructions of the application packet. ● Request the financial aid office complete the “Financial Aid Release Form” and send back to md@statevoucher.org ● Maintain regular contact with the assigned ETV Coordinator.

SAMPLE ETV RELEASE FORM
 > Submitting this form does not guarantee the student will receive funding <
Financial Aid Release Form 2018-2019



First Name: _____ Last Name: _____ Current Term: _____

Student Id: _____ Phone #: _____ Last 4 digits of SS#: _____

Student Signature Release: _____ Date: ____/____/____

I have applied for the federally-funded, Education and Training Voucher (ETV) Program for the current term to help meet my post-secondary expenses. I authorize the Financial Aid Office to release my account information to the program.

MUST BE COMPLETED BY FINANCIAL AID OFFICE CURRENT TERM ONLY!

Preparer's Signature: _____ Print Name: _____ Date ____/____/____

Direct Phone #: _____ Email Address: _____

Current Term: <i>Fall Winter Spring Summer</i> # of Credits: _____ Total owed to school after financial aid: \$ _____ Student refund after financial aid: \$ _____ Tuition/Fees per term: \$ _____	School Name: _____ Campus: _____ Cost of Attendance per term: \$ _____ <small>* As defined by the Higher Ed Act - tuition, fees, room, board, transportation, supplies, etc*</small>
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Has student completed the FAFSA: Yes No Pell Grant Amount Received (per term): \$ _____

*No Pell indicate why: EFC too high Academic Suspension Pending Verification Ineligible why: _____

Does student live on campus? No or Yes \$ _____ Does student have a meal plan? No or Yes \$ _____

MD Tuition Waiver: \$ _____ Perkins Loans \$ _____

Subsidized Loans \$ _____ Unsubsidized Loans \$ _____

Grant/scholarships (current term only):

1.) _____ \$ _____

2.) _____ \$ _____

3.) _____ \$ _____

PLEASE FAX FORM TO: 855-802-0093 or email: md@statevoucher.org
 Questions? 855-288-8078