

# GEARING UP FOR SUMMER & FALL:

## 11 TIPS FOR MAXIMIZING SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS WITH EXPERIENCE IN FOSTER CARE AND HOMELESSNESS IN HIGHER EDUCATION DURING THE PANDEMIC



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11-TIPS-TO-SUPPORT-FOSTER-CARE-AND-HOMELESS-STUDENTS-IN-HIGHERED](http://WWW.SCHOOLHOUSECONNECTION.ORG/11-TIPS-TO-SUPPORT-FOSTER-CARE-AND-HOMELESS-STUDENTS-IN-HIGHERED)

## 1. HELP YOUTH UNDERSTAND THE COVID-SPECIFIC FINANCIAL AID AVAILABLE TO THEM THROUGH THEIR COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES.

Congress provided significant 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 relief to students, but are distributed through the 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](#).

If the school does not have an application on its website for assistance (which may be called HEERF, pandemic assistance or emergency assistance) ask the financial aid office. Support youth in making a request for funds by helping them identify their specific needs and put 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.”

## 2. HELP YOUTH MANAGE THEIR MONEY, INCLUDING ANY ADDITIONAL ASSISTANCE THEY MAY RECEIVE.

Youth may be getting aid from various sources during the pandemic. For example, some schools may decide to provide emergency aid automatically to certain groups of students, like all Pell-eligible students. Encourage youth to keep an eye on their financial aid/student account, and to be aware of funds coming in so they can decide the best ways to use them. Youth may get funds on their account even if they owe an outstanding balance, so it is important to keep track.

## 3. HELP YOUTH APPLY FOR AND FINALIZE THEIR FINANCIAL AID PACKAGE.

Make sure that youth have completed their financial aid properly and have all appropriate documentation and paperwork needed. Remind unaccompanied homeless youth that they will need to go through this process next year. See more financial aid tips [here](#).

#### **4. HELP YOUTH ASK FOR NON-MONETARY ASSISTANCE FROM THEIR COLLEGE OR UNIVERSITY.**

In addition to financial assistance, many schools are providing other aid to students that students may not be aware of. For example, schools may be able to provide:

- Laptop computers and technology lending to ensure youth have the up-to-date equipment they need.
- Mobile hotspots to help with consistent internet access.
- Food assistance in the form of goods, stipends, or gift cards.
- Housing assistance.
- Mental health supports.
- Tutoring supports.

#### **5. HELP YOUTH ACCESS LOW COST INTERNET.**

If youth cannot access hot spots or free internet service through their school and other sources, they may be eligible for low cost internet/ broadband through the Federal Communications Commission (FCC). The FCC is providing individuals low cost broadband if they are Pell grant eligible or eligible for other benefits like SNAP or Medicaid. Young people may be eligible for up to \$50 per month towards broadband service and up to \$75 per month for households on qualifying Tribal lands. 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. Go to [GetEmergencyBroadband.org](https://www.getemergencybroadband.org) to apply online and to find participating providers near you.

#### **6. HELP YOUTH WHO HAVE EXPERIENCE IN FOSTER CARE ACCESS CHAFEE FUNDS AND THE EDUCATION AND TRAINING GRANT (ETG) FOR WHICH THEY MAY BE ELIGIBLE THROUGH THE CONSOLIDATED APPROPRIATIONS ACT.**

States were awarded \$400 million in Chafee funds, including \$50 million in Education and Training Vouchers, as part of the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021. Youth are eligible for these funds if they are in foster care or were in foster care at age 14 or older and are now under age 27. (This could include young people who are or were in the juvenile justice system or are homeless.) These funds will be distributed through the states and should be used to meet the needs of young people during the pandemic, including those related to education, housing, food, and other supports. Help youth make requests for funds and assistance through their Independent Living Program and child welfare agency. You can help youth reach out to their state Independent Living Coordinator and make a request for funds and assistance. You can find the contact information for State IL Coordinators [here](#).

## 7. HELP YOUTH PLAN FOR THE SUMMER SESSION.

The summer session can be a time to get ahead and make up for a challenging year. Talk with youth about the credit hours they took this year, their financial aid package, and their plans for the fall so they can make informed decisions about the summer session. Since the summer sessions are shorter, make sure youth are aware of the withdrawal deadlines so that they do not get penalized if they decide to withdraw past a deadline.

## 8. HELP YOUTH GET ACCESS TO VACCINES.

Some campuses are requiring students to be vaccinated (with the exception of medical or religious exemptions) before coming back to campus. Help youth find vaccine centers and schedule their shots. If the youth is a minor and not in contact with their parents, [review this summary of state laws](#) that can help them get the vaccine without parental consent.

## 9. HELP YOUTH ARRANGE THEIR HOUSING FOR THE NEXT SEMESTER.

If a youth needs housing for the summer or fall semester, help them make that request to the school right now, if there is on-campus housing. Make sure to see if campus housing is available year-round, including winter and summer breaks. If campus housing is not available, make sure youth have housing through extended foster care, a housing program like [Foster Youth to Independence Program](#) Chafee room and board if they had experience in foster care, or [housing programs](#) specific for homeless youth.

## 10. REMIND YOUTH TO CHECK THEIR COLLEGE OR UNIVERSITY EMAILS CONSISTENTLY OVER THE SUMMER SO THEY DO NOT MISS IMPORTANT DEADLINES AND INFORMATION.

Youth will receive emails from their schools over the summer with important information like: whether the school will be opening fully, closed, or providing hybrid learning; whether vaccination will be required for attendance; and whether they will receive any pandemic assistance or additional aid. They will miss this important information and may miss deadlines and opportunities if they do not read these emails.

## 11. HELP YOUTH GET CONNECTED WITH STUDENT SUPPORT PROGRAMS & POINTS OF CONTACT.

Colleges and universities might have specific points of contact or liaisons for homeless and foster students on campus. Connect youth with these individuals so they have an easy transition into college. For campuses that don't have a specific point of contact, connect the student with the student support program on campus so they are aware of resources that are available. See more key offices [here](#).