



national foster care coalition



# The Chafee Educational and Training Voucher (ETV) Program

## Six States' Experiences

A report made possible by Casey Family Programs



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We encourage you to share this document with others. Permission to copy, distribute, and otherwise use this document in whole or in part is granted as long as appropriate acknowledgment is given.

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# Introduction

Nationwide, an estimated 20,000 to 25,000 young people “age out” of the foster care system every year without a family to support them. These alumni from foster care are more likely to suffer from untreated health and mental health problems, more likely to become homeless, and less likely to graduate from high school or go to college than their peers not in foster care. It is estimated that as few as 10 percent enroll in a higher education program. In addition, they are often unemployed and when employed, earn, on average, too little to escape poverty.<sup>1</sup> Through the federally funded Chafee Foster Care Independence Program (CFCIP) and the Chafee Educational and Training Voucher Program (Chafee ETV Program), states are working to improve the outcomes experienced by this vulnerable population of young people and engage them more fully in decision making related to their transition to adult life, economic self-sufficiency, and achievement of educational and career goals.

This publication examines how the Chafee educational and training vouchers and other state-based supports for higher education have been working for these young adults. The National Foster Care Coalition (NFCC) has worked closely with six states to examine the implementation of the Chafee ETV Program since its inception in 2003: California, Maine, Montana, New York, North Carolina, and Wyoming. These states were selected to provide a diverse view of ETV program implementation, including state- and county-administered child welfare programs, urban and rural programs, and programs serving either very large or very small populations of youth. This publication documents a select number of young people’s experiences with the ETV program and also shares recommendations from constituents and other stakeholders on how to improve this unique and important postsecondary education and training program.

In addition to a Chafee ETV Program overview and federal and state recommendations for strengthening implementation nationwide, this document includes six state sections which each feature:

- A state profile
- An overview of the state Chafee Foster Care Independence Program
- An overview of the state Chafee ETV Program
- Challenges encountered
- Noteworthy practices
- Positive outcomes

Three states also include feedback from young people (Montana, North Carolina, and Wyoming). The information is intended to be a resource for states engaged in strengthening their current ETV program implementation.

Data collection for this publication was undertaken through questionnaires and individual interviews with state Independent Living/Chafee coordinators, contractor organizations, and student recipients of education training vouchers. NFCC staff reviewed the Chafee section of each state’s Annual Progress and Services Reports to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and interviewed advocates from national organizations and federal staff responsible for overall national implementation of the Foster Care Independence Act (FCIA) and Chafee ETV Programs. General information on states’ child welfare systems and youth served was collected from federal Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS) reports, the HHS Policy Manual, and HHS Program Instructions for FCIA and Chafee ETV programs.

# Overview of the Chafee ETV Program

## WHAT IS THE CHAFEE ETV PROGRAM?

The Chafee ETV Program makes financial resources available to meet the postsecondary education and training needs of youth aging out of foster care and enrolled in a qualified higher education program. The program was established in 2001 by Congress as part of a reauthorization of the Promoting Safe and Stable Families Act.<sup>2</sup> The Act amended the Foster Care Independence Act (FCIA) of 1999 by adding the Chafee ETV Program as the sixth purpose of the Chafee Foster Care Independence Program (CFCIP).<sup>3</sup>

The Chafee ETV Program makes vouchers of up to \$5,000 per year available to young adults coming from foster care to support their costs of attending institutions of higher education, as defined in the Higher Education Act of 1965.<sup>4</sup> This expands and supplements the assistance authorized in the FCIA of 1999 to help youth transitioning out of foster care to prepare for, enroll in, and be successful in postsecondary training and education institutions.

While the overall Chafee Foster Care Independence Program has a general annual mandatory appropriation of \$140 million, the Chafee ETV Program authorizes up to \$60 million in discretionary funds. Unlike the rest of the Chafee Program, ETV funds can only be used to provide resources for youth participating in eligible postsecondary educational and training programs. The first appropriation to the program was made in 2003 in the amount of \$42 million. From 2003–2007, the amount appropriated each year has varied between \$44 and \$46 million, with some reductions caused by HHS administration and evaluation costs, as well as across-the-board budget cuts made by Congress. States receive an annual allocation based on their percentage of children and youth placed in foster care, and they have two years to spend each year's allocation. States are then

required to provide 20 percent of their annually allocated amount in cash or in-kind match.

As part of the FCIA of 1999, Congress also authorized states to extend Medicaid coverage to youth aging out of foster care. States may elect to offer the Medicaid extension to young people up to age 19, 20, or 21. According to a 2007 study done by the American Public Human Services Association (APHSA), 17 states have so far enacted the “Chafee option” and five more are planning to do so. The study also found that the cost of providing such care is only \$110 to \$350 per month.<sup>5</sup> Other states may provide continuing health care via extension of foster care status beyond age 18 or through other state-funded healthcare programs.

## CHAFEE ETV PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

Implementation of the Chafee ETV Program has presented significant challenges to the six states profiled, especially in relation to setting up new administrative processes in the first two years; identifying and informing potential voucher recipients; informing child welfare, Independent Living, and higher education staff; and expending all of the available funds within the two-year time limit. From interviews with federal staff and state child welfare administrators, we conclude that states have fully organized the Chafee ETV Program within state government or through contracting with other public or private entities, and are expending all available funds. States have also made significant improvements in efforts to reach out to eligible foster youth, including American Indian youth served by tribal child welfare programs.

Stronger collaborative relationships between child welfare agencies, service providers, and higher education representatives have also contributed to





more effective implementation of the Chafee ETV Program. States report that the Chafee ETV Program contributes to greater motivation and interest in attending college or other postsecondary education and training programs among youth from foster care, increased rates of college attendance, and more efforts to support the educational aspirations of those youth through additional scholarship dollars or state tuition waivers. For example, the rapidly expanding Guardian Scholars program in California (see page 12), as well as other models being implemented in other states, provides both scholarship dollars and support services for young people attending college.

While states have made great progress over the past several years, gaps in program implementation remain an issue of concern, largely related to the states' ability to collect information regarding the

overall Chafee Foster Care Independence Program and the Chafee ETV Program. There is a need for increased investment on the part of the federal government, the states, and communities to effectively monitor the quality and quantity of services provided, as well as the outcomes experienced by young people.

#### **CHAFEE ETV PROGRAM OUTCOMES**

The Foster Care Independence Act of 1999 requires the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), in consultation with key stakeholders, to develop a set of outcomes and measures to assess states' performance with respect to their effectiveness in assisting youth in making a successful transition from foster care to independent living.

The FCIA requires states to collect data in order to track:

- The number and characteristics of young people receiving services under the CFCIP (including the Chafee ETV Program)
- The type and quantity of services being provided
- State performance on youth outcome measures developed by HHS

In 2000 and 2001, HHS worked with stakeholders nationwide to develop a state performance assessment tool designated as the National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD). In 2001, HHS announced that it would issue a regulation on state implementation of data collection and performance assessment processes. Implementation of NYTD continues to be delayed as the regulatory process is completed. A Notice of Proposed Rulemaking was released for public comment in July 2006, and a final rule is anticipated some time in 2007. Projections for when the state performance process would be initiated range from 2008 to 2010. Until such time as NYTD is released, states will be unable to track and report consistent information as required by federal law. This issue only becomes more urgent as advocates, state child welfare leaders, and young people themselves struggle to ensure that there are adequate and effective supports for youth leaving foster care, including those services and supports offered through the Chafee ETV Program.

#### **STATE INVESTMENT**

There continues to be great concern among communities about the well-being and suc-

cess of youth leaving foster care, especially as it relates to postsecondary education readiness, access, and retention success. Many states have invested additional funds in transition and education services, ranging from state-funded scholarship programs to tuition waivers and needs-based grants to targeted support programs for youth in college. Growing private/public collaborations have resulted in the development of targeted college support programs for students from foster care. For example, the Guardian Scholars Program model has spread to well over 20 campuses in California. Similar programs have been started in Texas, Indiana, Washington, and Florida. ETVs are an important part of these students' financial aid packages, and financial aid offices play an important role in outreach to eligible students as well as in ETV funds distribution.

Many state Independent Living Program staff, as well as ETV contractor organizations' staff, are dedicating significant time (both funded and unfunded) to individualized comprehensive supports for youth in postsecondary programs. These include mentoring services, care packages, leadership opportunities, internships, health insurance, housing, and the assurance that someone is available to talk or to help any time and every time it's needed.

While the need for improved data collection and performance assessment is evident, it is also clear that increased attention to, and resources for, these young people are helping more and more students achieve their dreams of a college education and a better future.



## Recommendations at a Glance

The chart below highlights federal and state recommendations for strengthening the Chafee ETV Program implementation based on the six states' experience. These recommendations are expanded upon in detail at the end of this publication.

| FEDERAL   |
|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Provide full funding of \$60 million per year in anticipation of the growing demand.</li></ul>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Remove barriers to permanency by extending program eligibility to youth who leave foster care at age 16 to legal guardianship.</li></ul>                            |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Develop a national tracking and reporting system for ETV implementation and student outcomes information.</li></ul>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Collect more data about program effectiveness and provide this to all states.</li></ul>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Modify federal rules regarding redistribution of funds after expenditure to allow for changes in enrollment and challenges in distribution.</li></ul>               |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Provide technical assistance to states.</li></ul>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Explore how to leverage state ETV funds to deliver support services to recipients, especially those at risk of leaving their program prior to completion.</li></ul> |

| STATE   |
|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Increase outreach to eligible youth in care, to youth who have left care, and to adopted youth ages 16 and above.</li></ul>             |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Engage young people as full partners in the implementation, evaluation, and expansion of the Chafee ETV Program.</li></ul>              |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Increase collaborative partnerships with state higher education systems, especially financial aid administrators and offices.</li></ul> |

# State Data at a Glance

What follows is a quick overview of some of the key information from the states that are the focus of this publication:

|   | California  | Maine   | Montana  | New York  | North Carolina   | Wyoming  |
|---|---|---|--|---|--|--|
| <b>No. of Children &amp; Youth in Care</b>              | 78,278 ('06)  | 2,309 ('05)   | 2,222 ('05)  | 30,420 ('05)  | 11,309 ('06)   | 1,209 ('05)  |
| <b>No. of Youth Eligible/Served for CFCIP Services</b>  | Information unavailable   | 1,031 youth age 15-20 eligible. ('05)   | 506 <sup>6</sup> youth age 16+ served ('05)  | 11,179 youth age 14-21 eligible. ('06)<br>4,556 youth served ('05)  | 4,211 youth age 13-20 eligible ('05)<br>2,725 (65%) youth served. ('05)  | 1,285 youth age 14-21 eligible ('06)<br>796 (62%) youth served. ('06)                                    |
| <b>No. of Youth Participating in Chafee ETV Program</b> | 1,881 youth ('05-'06 school year)   | 150 youth ('05-'06 school year)   | 46* youth ('06)<br>46* youth ('05)<br>* Have served all applicants.  | 782* youth ('05)<br>* Have served all applicants.   | 240 youth ('05)  | 31 youth ('05-'05 school year)<br>22 youth ('04-'05 school year)   |
| <b>Allocation of CFCIP Funds</b>                        | \$23,738,286 ('06)<br>\$25,012,729 ('05)  | \$702,298 ('06)<br>\$771,257 ('05)  | \$521,839 ('06)<br>\$500,000 ('05)   | \$11,585,958 ('06)<br>\$11,585,958 ('05)  | \$2,590,431 ('06)<br>\$2,451,871 ('05)   | \$500,000 ('06)<br>\$500,000 ('05)   |
| <b>Allocation of Chafee ETV Funds</b>                   | \$8,108,697 ('06)<br>\$8,547,517 ('05)  | \$239,836 ('06)<br>\$263,559 ('05)  | \$178,254 ('06)<br>\$163,988 ('05)   | \$2,936,794 ('06)<br>\$3,362,375 ('05)  | \$884,858 ('06)<br>\$837,869 ('05)   | \$106,162 ('06)<br>\$92,716 ('05)  |
| <b>Average Chafee ETV Award</b>                         | \$4,334 ('06-'07)<br>\$4,318 ('05-'06)  | Unavailable   | \$4,433.81 ('05-'06)   | Approx. half received \$5,000 <sup>7</sup>  | <\$3,000 ('05-'06)<br>\$3,189 ('04-'05)<br>\$3,762 ('03-'04)   | \$2,950 ('05-'06)  |
| <b>Chafee ETV Program Administrator</b>                 | California Student Aid Commission   | State administered by IL Program manager  | Nonprofit service provider, Student Assistance Foundation  | Nonprofit service provider, Orphan Foundation of America  | Nonprofit service provider, Orphan Foundation of America   | Nonprofit partner, Casey Family Programs, but soon will be state administered by CFCIP coordinator       |
| <b>Status of Medicaid Extension Option</b>              | Took option. There is also a health insurance option for college students from foster care. | Did not take option. 18+ youth can apply for MaineCare.   | Did not take option. Up to 19 may be eligible for other state programs.                                    | Did not take option. Youth in care up to 21 can receive Medicaid.   | Took option. Youth eligible until 21 without regard to assets or income.   | Took option. Youth who left care after 18 can receive Medicaid until 21.                                 |
| <b>Other Postsecondary Resource Support</b>             | Guardian Scholars and other programs focusing on youth in foster care.                      | State tuition waivers, state payment of room & board to age 21, extension of foster care to age 21, school choice, life skills educators. | SAF provides advice and guidance to students, education and outreach to families, higher ed prep programs. | OFA provides service and guidance to students. Active statewide leadership team for youth in foster care. | Tuition waivers. OFA provides service and guidance to students, including mentor program, care packages, and e-mail support. | State-sponsored scholarships, C3 support program, state youth leadership program, personalized services. |

# California

## AT A GLANCE

|  |   |
|--|---|
| No. of Youth in Care                             | 79,278 youth (July '06)   |
| No. of Youth Eligible for Chafee Services        | Information unavailable   |
| No. of Youth Participating in Chafee ETV Program | 1,881 youth ('05-'06); expect to serve 3,000 youth in 2007                        |
| Allocation of Chafee Funds                       | \$23,738,286 ('06), \$25,012,729 ('05)  |
| Allocation of ETV Funds                          | \$8,108,697+ state allocation 5.1 million=\$13.8 million ('06), \$8,547,517 ('05) |
| Average Chafee ETV Award                         | \$4,334 ('06-'07), \$4,318 ('05-'06)  |
| Chafee ETV Program Administrator                 | California Student Aid Commission   |
| Status of Medicaid Extension Option              | California took the Chafee Medicaid option in 2000.                               |
| Other Postsecondary Resource Support             | Guardian Scholars and other programs focusing on youth in foster care.            |

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## STATE PROFILE

California is the nation's most populous state, with over 9.5 million children, approximately 78,278 of whom are currently in foster care.<sup>8</sup> California's child welfare system is county-administered, and counties have primary responsibility for the design and implementation of all child welfare services.

## CHAFEE FOSTER CARE INDEPENDENCE PROGRAM OVERVIEW

### Funding and Youth Served

California's Chafee Foster Care Independence Program allocation for FY 2006 was \$23,738,286, and for FY 2005 \$25,012,729. The number of youth age 15½ to 21 who were eligible and served for CFCIP services was unavailable at the time of this printing. An individual Transitional Independent Living Plan (TILP) must be completed for all eligible youth by the time they turn 16.

### Program Administration

The Chafee Foster Care Independence Program is administered independently by the various counties in California, with some oversight and support from a statewide program. Each county has an Independent Living Skills Program (ILSP), though

some small counties have pooled resources to create a shared program. Over the past several years, the state has convened stakeholder working groups to engage in ILSP program improvement and to create statewide standards to which all counties must adhere.

In addition to Chafee-funded services, California's communities offer a variety of other services and supports for teens in care and young people in transition, including independent-living services for youth under age 16. Three counties, including Los Angeles, have implemented the Early Start to Emancipation Program (ESTEP) for youth age 13 to 16. In recent years, the state legislature has enacted a number of laws to support children and youth in foster care, including increased educational support, requirements related to supporting family and sibling connections, and adequate preparation for emancipation. In addition to state and legislative efforts, community-based organizations have collaborated in a number of innovative initiatives to improve services to youth.<sup>9</sup>

### Aging Out

Young people must leave foster care when they turn 18, unless they have not finished high school. They may voluntarily remain in custody up until age 19 if they are working toward graduation or their GED, if the court so orders, and if they are funded by the county. The state also funds a monthly stipend program for youth age 18 to 21 who have emancipated, and it has a limited number of transitional housing spaces for emancipated youth. Recent legislation has significantly enhanced housing and related support, but in spite of the increase, capacity is still inadequate.

### Healthcare

In 2000, immediately following passage of the Foster Care Independence Act of 1999, California elected to take the Medicaid option available to states under Chafee for youth aging out of foster

care. In addition, there is a Medical health insurance option available to college students from foster care—an important benefit for California students.

## CHAFEE ETV PROGRAM OVERVIEW

### Funding and Youth Served

California's Chafee ETV Program allocation for FY 2006 was \$8.1 million, which was supplemented by a \$5.7 million appropriation of state funds, bringing the total Chafee ETV Program budget to 13.8 million. For FY 2005, it was \$8.5 million. In 2005–2006, the state awarded 1,881 vouchers to youth. They expected to award 3,000 vouchers during the 2006–2007 school year. The average ETV award for the 2006–2007 school year was \$4,334. For the 2005–2006 school year, it was \$4,318.

### Program Administration and Data Collection

California's Chafee ETV Program, known as the Chafee Grant Program, is implemented through an interagency agreement between the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) and the California Student Aid Commission (CSAC). CSAC, whose mission is making education beyond high school financially accessible to all Californians, is the principal state agency responsible for administering financial aid programs for students attending public and private universities, colleges, and vocational schools in California. CSAC has administered the Chafee Grant Program since funds first became available in 2003. County-based Independent Living Skills Program staff work with individual ETV applicants and recipients.

Some student data are tracked using the *WebGrants* Web site, discussed in the next section.

### ETV Eligibility and Enrollment

Over the past several years, CDSS and CSAC have worked to streamline the application and renewal processes for the Chafee Grant Program. Students may apply online at the CSAC's Web site, download

a paper application, or call a toll-free telephone line to request an application. Initial eligibility (foster care/adoption status) was previously completed for each individual student by county IL coordinators, but it is now completed by CSAC and CDSS at the state level.

Students must file the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and then work with the education/vocational institution to determine the costs of attendance. They then submit a Needs Analysis Report (NAR) to CSAC before a grant is approved. The school must verify the youth's academic eligibility for a new or continuing grant, including at least half-time enrollment, enrollment in an academic program of at least one year's duration, satisfactory progress toward completion of the program (for renewal applications) as measured by GPA, credits earned, and progress in relation to the maximum timeframe for completing the academic or training program.

To facilitate the application, renewal, and verification processes, CDSS and CSAC have implemented a number of strategies, including:

- Creating a *WebGrants* Web site, which (a) allows students to track their Chafee Grant application and approval status at any time, (b) allows schools to view the application status of their enrolled students, and (c) allows child welfare and Independent Living Program staff to track deadlines and/or missing paperwork for students
- Sending letters and making phone calls to renewal students informing them of awards, needed paperwork, and application deadlines
- Holding annual stakeholder meetings convened for the purposes of planning, gathering consumer and other stakeholder input, and evaluating program progress
- Implementing a requirement for educational institutions to return Chafee ETV Program Grant

checks for ineligible students or for students whom the school is unable to locate to CSAC after 10 days so that the funds can be reallocated (CSAC then holds the checks for two weeks to allow some time for students who may have moved to contact them regarding their grant)

From 2003–2005, California quickly reached a point where there were more eligible applicants for the Chafee Grant (ETV) Program than available funds. Due to the overwhelming number of new and renewal applicants in 2005/2006, priority selection criteria were implemented during the award selection process.

Overall priority is given to renewal applications, which are approved prior to implementation of the priority process detailed below. A renewal deadline date is set for students to have all components of the application process completed. After this date, all new and renewal applications are assigned the following priority criteria:

- Priority 1: Students who are aging out of the program
- Priority 2: Students with dependents
- Priority 3: Students who have an unmet need of \$5,000 or higher
- Priority 4: Submission date of completed application

#### Fund Disbursement

Disbursement checks are mailed to the schools. The majority of the checks are made out to the student; however, a few schools have requested the checks to be made co-payable to the student and school.

#### Outreach

The state and CSAC engage in a significant level of outreach for the Chafee Grant Program to young people in foster care. Specific CSAC strategies include:



- Inserting Chafee Grant (ETV) Program flyers into MediCal (CA Medicaid) recipients' statements.
- Providing Chafee Grant (ETV) Program updates annually to financial aid professionals as part of Cal Grant Workshops across the state.
- Facilitating a 45-minute presentation for the California Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators and the California Community Colleges Student Financial Aid Administrators Association during their mini- and annual conferences.
- Conducting individual training sessions for financial aid professionals, high school counselors, state social workers, state Independent Living Program coordinators, caregivers of youth in foster care, and youth in foster care.
- Offering program information at various college outreach events, including setting up information booths at college campuses, conference centers, community centers, high schools, and the California State Fair.
- Providing ETV information to financial aid liaisons for youth in foster care at all 109 community colleges as part of the California Community College Chancellor's Office Foster Youth Success Initiative (FYSI).
- Granting access to program information online where the public can order free program publications. Publications available to order include brochures, bookmarks, fact sheets, applications and posters.
- E-mailing "Operation Memos" to the financial aid community via a mailing list that contains detailed program information and updates.

## CHALLENGES ENCOUNTERED

### More Applicants Than Available Grant Funds

The number of eligible applicants quickly exceeded the available funding for grants. Though this resulted in many applicants not receiving grants in 2005,

state funds added to the program in 2006 allowed for a significant increase in the number of renewal and first-year grants available.

### Funding Cycle Barriers

The federal and state funding cycles have also created barriers to implementation of the program. Delays in passage of the federal budget in the first two years of the program did not allow the state the two full years to expend the funds as stated in the authorizing legislation. Additionally, the state cannot begin to obligate any federal or state funds to the program until the state budget is passed, near the beginning of the state fiscal year, which begins July 1. Chafee Grant Program funds are generally disbursed beginning in October, which may create barriers to students in terms of enrollment or meeting other living expenses, especially housing.

### Managing Awards for Missing Youth

Lastly, CSAC, CDSS, and the schools have experienced difficulty managing awards for youth whom they are unable to locate once awards are issued. If checks are returned after the end of the federal fiscal year, the funds cannot be reallocated and may not be used. To address this issue, the state has implemented a number of processes, detailed above, to streamline the application timeline and to both facilitate and increase communications with students and schools related to student contact information and the timely return of checks that have not been cashed.

## NOTEWORTHY PRACTICES

### Collaboration and Cooperation

California's Chafee Grant Program reflects a significant level of collaboration and cooperation between state agencies, between the state agencies and the counties, and among state agencies, local organizations, educational institutions, and statewide stakeholder groups. The utilization of the CSAC as the administrative entity for the program maxi-

mizes efficiency in managing the dollars as well as optimizing exposure for the program as part of the array of financial assistance available to California students. The state has demonstrated a viable, ongoing commitment to overcoming challenges, to engaging stakeholders in planning and problem solving, and to meeting the increasing financial needs of the program through the addition of state funds. It is clear that this commitment has paid off in terms of increasing enrollment of youth from foster care in postsecondary education and training programs. California's efforts demonstrate the strong influence and ongoing efforts of stakeholder groups, particularly young people themselves. Young people, through the California Youth Connection, a statewide youth advocacy group, are visible, highly influential leaders in the state's efforts to improve the services, supports, and opportunities available to youth in foster care.

### Emphasis on K–12 Supports

There have been significant investments on the part of community organizations and foundations to both fund higher education for youth from foster care and to ensure that they have the services and supports they need to succeed in higher education. Notable among these efforts are the expanding campus-based Guardian Scholars program model, which provides scholarships and a significant level of support to young people transitioning from foster care and entering college. (See box on page 12.)

Efforts continue to strengthen programs and services for young people pursuing postsecondary educational opportunities in California, including legislative proposals to create a tuition waiver for state schools, keep campus housing open year-round, expand the Guardian Scholars and Chafee Grant (ETV) programs, allow youth to stay in foster care up to age 21, and expand aftercare supports to age 25.<sup>10</sup>

In addition, there have been efforts in Los Angeles and statewide that focus greater attention on K–12 education and college readiness for youth in care, including policy efforts promoting stability and continuity, e.g., AB 490 and highly visible Education Summits. These expanding K–12 efforts have been indirectly influenced by the Chafee ETV Program as the awareness of the need for improved college preparation has significantly increased for educators and child welfare systems.

### Web Application Process

CSAC has created a *WebGrants* Web site, which carries the entire Chafee ETV grant application process online. In addition, it allows both students and schools to view application and approval status and allows child welfare and Independent Living Program staff to track deadlines and/or missing paperwork for students.

### Prioritization System

CSAC has created a prioritization system due to the high number of applications they receive for their limited ETV funds. Priority is based on such items as whether a student is aging out of the program, has dependents, and has an unmet need of \$5,000 or higher, as well as the date of their completed application.

## POSITIVE OUTCOMES

California documented a 13 percent increase in college enrollment among youth in foster care from 2004 to 2006. State investments in higher education for emancipated youth, including transitional support services such as housing and healthcare, exceed \$10 million per year. This is attributable not only to the availability of funds through the Chafee Grant Program but also to widespread efforts to improve educational outcomes for youth still in high school and to improve overall community supports for young people aging out of foster care. There is an

ongoing, synergistic wave of collaborations, community- and foundation-sponsored initiatives, and youth-led advocacy that have created a statewide culture of attention and dedication to improving outcomes for this population. As the state with the largest foster care population in the country, California has a particularly critical role in modeling such efforts.

#### **THE GUARDIAN SCHOLARS PROGRAM**

The Guardian Scholars Program began in 1997 with three students at California State University, Fullerton. Today, the program has expanded to more than 20 colleges in California, Washington, Colorado, Indiana, and Massachusetts serving hundreds of students. The Guardian Scholars model provides a comprehensive framework that supports alumni from foster care in their efforts to gain entry to a university, community college, or trade school education.

The Guardian Scholars model has greatly influenced the development of other college support programs, such as Renaissance Scholars (California) and Fostering Scholars (Washington). These programs leverage the expertise and resources of the private sector and public agencies to achieve significant synergies to support students effectively and cost-efficiently. Academic institutions, Orangewood Children's Foundation, public agencies, and private citizens create a powerful team dedicated to assisting deserving youth from foster care in achieving their dreams of an education, realizing true independence, and reaching their full potential.

Guardian Scholars students receive academic advising, housing assistance, job assistance, tutoring, financial aid assistance, and mentoring. The retention rate of students in the Guardian Scholars program in the greater Orange County area is 70%, which is higher than the general population.

For more information, visit:

- [www.orangewoodfoundation.org/programs\\_scholars.asp](http://www.orangewoodfoundation.org/programs_scholars.asp)
- [www.fullerton.edu/guardianscholars/](http://www.fullerton.edu/guardianscholars/)

#### **SPOTLIGHT ON CONTRA COSTA COUNTY**

##### **Implementation of the Chafee Grant Program**

Primary informant: Kevin Bristow, Education Coordinator

Contra Costa County, in the northern section of the San Francisco Bay area, has approximately 1,640 youth and young adults that are served by the county Independent Living Skills Program (ILSP). These young people include those age 16 to 18 enrolled in the ILSP skills training program, and those age 18 and up who have emancipated from foster care.

In 2005–2006, approximately 150 youth emancipated from foster care, 104 graduated from high school, and 258<sup>11</sup> enrolled in college, up from 188 youth in 2004–2005.

The county's education coordinator reports that the availability of the Chafee Grant (ETV) Program has, despite a number of challenges, helped to increase the actual enrollment as well as the aspirations of young people to go on to college or other training after high school. The education coordinator, who is an alumnus of foster care himself, is clearly identified by youth as the “go-to guy” for education issues. He helps them to think about what they want to do after high school, complete college applications and financial aid paperwork, and get access to resources such as the Chafee Grant Program. Along with other ILSP staff, he also works to educate schools, community members, and other resource organizations as to the needs of youth in foster care in the county. ILSP staff participate in statewide conferences and stakeholder meetings, support youth-led efforts to address policy needs, and contribute to the broader planning around improving transitional supports.

# Maine

## AT A GLANCE

|  |   |
|--|---|
| No. of Youth in Care                             | 2,309 youth ('05)   |
| No. of Youth Eligible for Chafee Services        | 1,013 youth, age 15–20 ('05)  |
| No. of Youth Participating in Chafee ETV Program | 150 youth ('05–06 school year)  |
| Allocation of Chafee Funds                       | \$702,298 ('06), \$771,257 ('05)  |
| Allocation of ETV Funds                          | \$239,836 ('06), \$263,559 ('05)  |
| Average ETV Award                                | Information unavailable   |
| Chafee ETV Program Administrator                 | State administered by IL Program Manager  |
| Status of Medicaid Extension Option              | Did not take option. 18+ youth can apply for MaineCare.   |
| Other Postsecondary Resource Support             | State tuition waivers, state payment of room & board to age 21, extension of foster care to age 21, school choice, life skills educators. |

## PRIMARY INFORMANT

### Hugh Sipowicz

Independent Living Program Manager, Bureau of Children & Families, Maine Department of Human Services. Mr. Sipowicz retired in March 2007. A new program manager has yet to be assigned.

## STATE PROFILE

One of the smallest and least populous states, Maine has about 281,000 children under age 18. It has a state-administered child welfare system, and in FY 2005, there were 2,309 children and youth in foster care.

## CHAFEE FOSTER CARE INDEPENDENCE PROGRAM OVERVIEW

### Funding and Youth Served

Maine's Chafee Foster Care Independence Program allocation for FY 2006 was \$702,298, and for 2005 \$771,257.<sup>12</sup> During FY 2005, there were 1,031 youth age 15 to 20 who were eligible for CFCIP services.

## Program Administration

Maine's Chafee Foster Care Independence Program is overseen by an Independent Living Program manager (IL manager), who oversees six specialized life skills educators. Life skills educators are assigned to cover all of the state's district offices and to work directly with each office's Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) casework staff and supervisors, as well as with local service providers. Referrals to life skills educators are received directly from each district's DHHS caseworkers for youth who are at least 15 years of age. This serves to establish and maintain direct communication and consultation between life skills educators and district office casework and supervisory staff.

The life skills educators work directly with youth but also act as independent-living "consultants" for those agencies and foster parents who are providing care services directly to the eligible youth. The IL manager is also available to DHHS caseworkers and supervisors, foster parent groups, and other care providers to encourage them to work with their

adolescents to acquire basic life skills. Additionally, members of the Youth Leadership Advisory Team (YLAT) speak with members of the provider community and the public about the needs of older youth in departmental care.

The CFCIP also provides services through a contract with the University of Southern Maine's Muskie School of Public Service. The Muskie School operates and oversees a mentoring program, assists with planning and conducting the annual Teen Conference, and provides training and support for life skills caseworkers and supervisors.

#### *American Indian Youth*

American Indian youth currently in custody or in continued voluntary care, age 15 to 21, who were committed to departmental custody by the civil courts in Maine as opposed to the tribal courts, receive the benefits of CFCIP services. Maine consults with the tribes to address the independent-living preparation needs of American Indian youth who are under the tribal court's custody.

Maine also engages a statewide Child Welfare Advisory Committee, through which information about programs and services, including the Chafee and Chafee ETV Programs, is disseminated to communities. The Child Welfare Advisory Committee has American Indian representation and is utilized as another means to keep the American Indian community in Maine informed about Independent Living Program services available for youth in care who are American Indian.

#### **Aging Out**

In FY 2005, 201 youth age 18 to 21 emancipated from foster care. In Maine, young people may enter into an Extended Care Agreement with the Department of Human Services, which allows them to remain in care until age 21 if they are in need of support for educational, social, or physical reasons.

An important feature of the policy is the opportunity for a youth to request to return to voluntary care at any point between age 18 to 21 if they have chosen to leave care at any point during those ages. These youth are expected to have a plan with regard to their education and employment goals and be willing to work toward those goals. This policy has enabled between five and seven young adults each year to return to care and resume working on their independent-living goals.

#### **Healthcare**

Maine has not elected to take the Medicaid option for youth aging out of foster care available to states under Chafee. However, youth who have left foster care may reapply for MaineCare (Maine's state Medicaid program) coverage at age 18 or older, and most continue to qualify for medical coverage under federal poverty income guidelines.

### **CHAFEE ETV PROGRAM OVERVIEW**

#### **Funding and Youth Served**

Maine's Chafee ETV Program allocation for FY 2006 was \$239,836, and for 2005 \$263,559. During the 2005–2006 school year, the Chafee ETV Program provided grants to more than 150 youth.

The final ETV expenditures for 2005 and 2006 were not available at the time of this report; however, in FY 2004 Maine expended \$224,651 of their \$251,655 allotment.

#### *Tuition Waiver Program*

Since 2000, Maine has also had a state tuition waiver program for youth from care attending state university system schools and community college system schools allowing more youth to be served. There are 30 new waiver slots available each year. A student may renew his or her tuition waiver each year for up to five years to complete the undergraduate degree. For the 2005–2006 school year, 57 youth benefited



from the tuition waiver. According to the IL manager, of the youth receiving Maine's tuition waiver, 30 are freshman and the remainder are sophomores, juniors, and seniors. A number of students accessing the tuition waiver attend two-year programs at local community colleges. In February 2006, Maine amended the current foster care tuition waiver law to include youth who were adopted through DHHS or who come under the new permanency guardianship program. At this point, more than 20 adoptive parents have contacted DHHS regarding the amended tuition waiver law.

#### **Program Administration and Data Collection**

The state IL manager collects information from life skills educators and caseworkers, and is aware of each student who plans to attend a postsecondary education or job skills training program each year. The IL manager maintains a central database to track the progress, financial need, and expenditures of funds for all youth and alumni of foster care who attend a vocational training or postsecondary education program. Life skills educators and caseworkers also help with collecting this information and ensure that it is contained in the individual youth's automated child welfare record.

#### **ETV Eligibility and Enrollment**

Maine uses Chafee ETV Program funds for students who are attending private colleges or universities that do not fall under the tuition waiver program, for those attending specialized job skills training programs, and for students who are attending a tuition waiver institution and have remaining financial need. All students who have a postsecondary education financial need may receive the benefit of the Chafee ETV Program funds, including any older youth who were adopted after the age of 16. The program is available to all categories of former youth in care up to age 23. There are no identified statutory or administrative barriers that prevent full implementation of the Chafee ETV Program in Maine.

The state IL manager determines each youth's eligibility and the amount of the ETV award annually. All eligible young people are expected to fill out the FAFSA to apply for federal aid funds, and to also apply for the foster care tuition waiver, if applicable. Students are assisted in applying for additional local and state scholarships. After all financial assistance (exclusive of loans) has been identified, the remaining level of needed financial assistance determines the amount of ETV funds to be awarded. In this way, the state is able to assure that the total amount of educational assistance to a youth and any other federal assistance program does not exceed the total cost of attendance. It also avoids duplication of benefits under the Chafee ETV Program and any other federal assistance program. The state requires that the student maintain a GPA of at least 2.0 or what is considered a satisfactory level of academic performance in order to remain eligible for ETV funds.

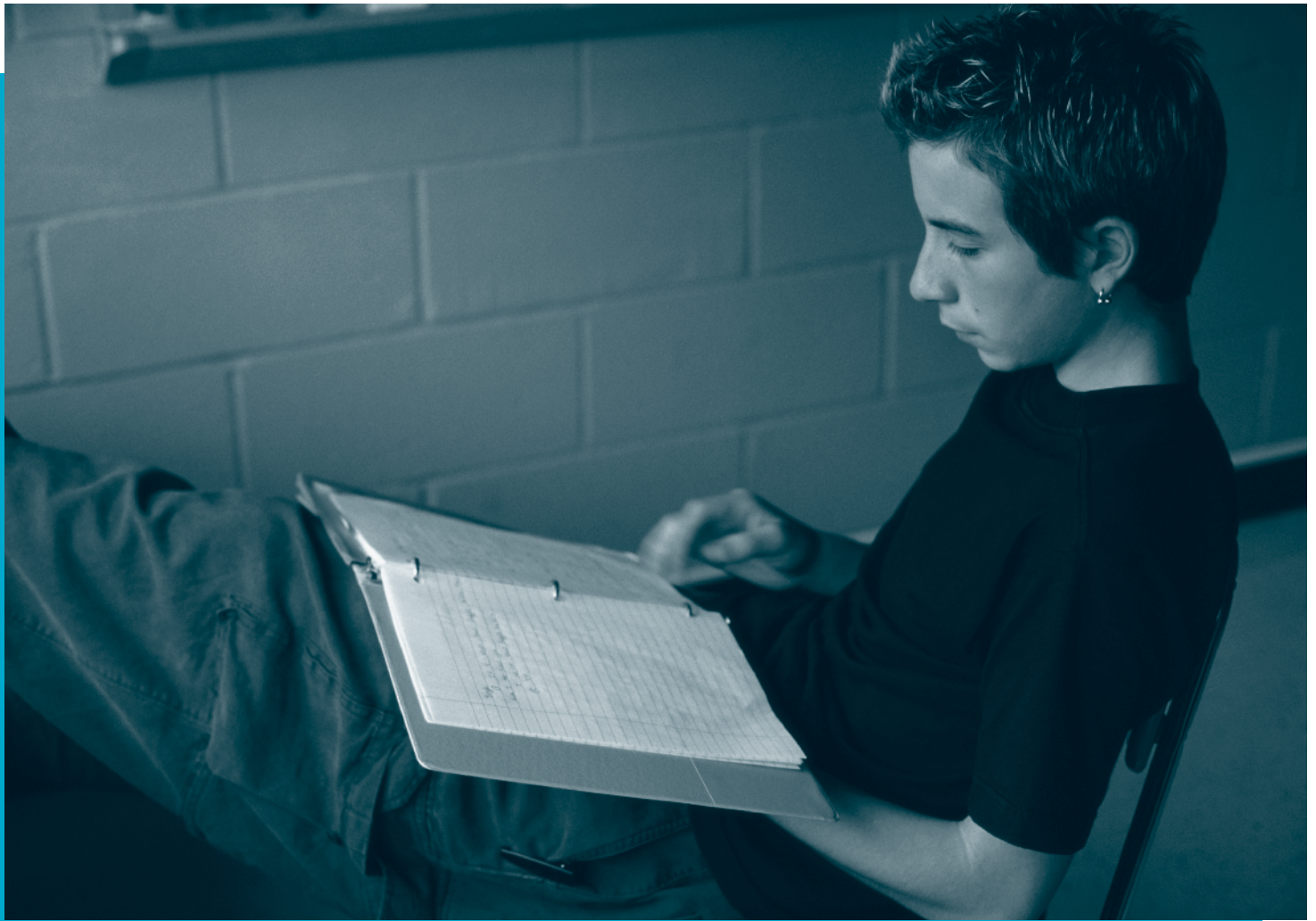
#### **Fund Disbursement**

The IL manager maintains ongoing communication with all schools and vocational programs in which ETV students are enrolled. Each year, letters are sent directly to the schools outlining the process for invoicing the state. Once the state is invoiced, the IL manager makes ETV payments directly to the schools. For youth between age 21 and 23, the state often utilizes ETV funds to cover the cost of room and board, including some rent costs if the student is still in college working toward completion of an undergraduate degree.

The IL manager maintains a college database spreadsheet in which ETV payments are tracked. ETV expenditures are tracked separately from other expenditures under the CFCIP.

#### **Outreach**

The state provides information to all postsecondary financial aid offices in Maine with respect to the



Chafee ETV Program and how it works. This has included e-mails, presentations, and direct communication by the IL manager. Maine also coordinates with other state and federally supported programs such as the U.S. Department of Education's Upward Bound program, the U.S. Department of Labor's Workforce Investment Act programs for out-of-school youth, and other private sector initiatives. As with Maine's overall Chafee Program, life skills educators and members of the YLAT present information on supports for postsecondary education and training (including ETV) to youth, caregivers, and other service providers.

#### **CHALLENGES ENCOUNTERED**

##### **Delay in Receiving Program Instructions**

Delays in the receipt of federal program instructions in the initial years of the program (FY 2003 and 2004) caused some challenge to the state's ability to expend all available funds, but those issues have since been resolved. The program is running very well according to student participants, caseworkers, postsecondary institution contacts, and other stakeholders.

## NOTEWORTHY PRACTICES

### Diversity of Financial Assistance Options

In Maine, youth from foster care who are pursuing postsecondary education and training have access to a wide range of student financial assistance options, including a state tuition waiver, state payment of room and board expenses up to age 21, and the Chafee ETV Program, in addition to traditional federal financial aid such as Pell grants. For current and former youth in care in Maine, lack of financial resources is not a barrier to higher education. As a result of the multiple resources available to Maine's youth in care, they have not had to rely solely on ETV funds to support them with the costs associated with postsecondary education/training programs.

### Tuition Waiver

Maine's foster care tuition waiver is available for up to 30 freshman students per academic year who are planning to attend one of the state university system schools or one of the state community colleges. This waiver is supported by state funds budgeted to state schools, as the schools have agreed to absorb the cost of the waiver within their operating budgets. There are more than 15 college campus locations for youth to choose from among these schools. There is no cap on the numbers of waiver renewal students as long as they continue to be eligible for the waiver. Once a freshman has qualified for the waiver, he or she has up to 5 years of waiver eligibility to complete an undergraduate degree provided he or she remains a student in good academic standing.

### Extension of Foster Care to Age 21

Youth have the option to remain in foster care until their 21<sup>st</sup> birthday through the Department's Extended Care Agreement, if they are in need of care and support for educational, social, or physical reasons. Under Maine's extended care program, room and board placement costs are covered by state child welfare funds. Many are commuter stu-

dents, which helps defray the costs associated with college attendance and decreases the ETV funds needed for living expenses. In many of these cases, the youth's tuition waiver, federal Pell grant, SEOG, or other non-loan funds are more than enough to cover tuition, books, and fees costs without the need to expend any ETV funds at all. Many of these students are living in their own apartments where the child welfare agency pays either the full rent amount or a portion of the rent depending on their financial situation.

### School Choice, Including Private and Out-of-State Schools

The majority of Maine's students attend in-state schools. Maine has youth from care attending every state university system campus school, every community college school, the Maine Maritime Academy, and several private and smaller in-state colleges. However, a number of Maine's students attend college out of state, including the University of Massachusetts-Amherst, Arizona State University, Worcester Polytechnic Institute, Seattle University, Skidmore College, and Liberty University. Maine's diversity of postsecondary education financial resources, as well as the Extended Care Agreement, makes this level of choice possible.

### Postsecondary Support Services

The CFCIP life skills educators work with about 60 to 70 postsecondary students each year. Youth are referred by their child welfare caseworker for specific support needs such as locating local services, finding an apartment, getting a job, and learning how to budget. Life skills educators spend a considerable amount of time planning with the youth before they enter a postsecondary education or training program, and the educators provide additional guidance and support during the first year. They have direct and regular contact with youth receiving ETVs, helping with the completion of required college applications, tests, and financial aid forms, and with

locating housing, childcare, and tutoring, if needed. The staff has well-established links with secondary education counselors, college financial aid offices, officials, and other support persons for the benefit of the youth with whom they work.

### Youth Voice

This is a critical part of the process of overseeing the Chafee ETV Program. Individual youth as well as members of Maine's Youth Leadership Advisory Team (YLAT) are consulted regularly by staff with regard to the Chafee ETV Program. Young people are actively engaged in sharing information with their peers about the importance of postsecondary education. YLAT develops publications, provides training, and spreads the word about higher education and the many resources available to foster youth—including ETVs.

### Promotion and Outreach

The IL manager, as well as the life skills educators, keep caregivers, caseworkers, and other service providers up to date about the ETV and other assistance programs, and encourage them to pass such information on to the youth in their care. Information about ETVs and college opportunities are provided directly to youth in care by care providers, child welfare caseworkers, and life skills educators, and by their peers in YLAT. At the annual teen conference, college financial aid personnel and the state tuition waiver administrator co-present a workshop regarding all forms of college student aid, including ETVs. In addition to the more formal ways of getting the word out, youth in care know through word of mouth that they can achieve the dream of attending college without incurring loan debt. These youth advocates are essential in getting this "message" to other youth in care. Finances are a big worry

for older youth when it comes to attending college or training programs. Young people in Maine are greatly relieved to find out about the many forms of financial support available to them.

Educational opportunity for young people in foster care has become much more of a priority in Maine during the last 10 years. The state's IL manager travels around the state each year to present on postsecondary educational opportunities and resources to local community stakeholders, including service provider programs, community agency representatives, foster parents, school personnel, child welfare staff, therapists, youth, and others.

*"Now, any youth in care who has any aspiration to attend a postsecondary school is able to do that if they really want to. Finances are not a barrier."*

—Hugh Sipowicz, former IL Program Manager

### POSITIVE OUTCOMES

Ten years ago, the state of Maine had fewer than 50 youth enrolled in postsecondary educational programs. In 2004–2005, the number was just over 170 students. In 2005–2006, Maine had nearly 190 older youth enrolled in postsecondary education and training programs, most in college programs. Of the 190, 8 or 9 students were over age 21 and working to complete a four-year undergraduate degree, and continued to receive the benefit of ETV funds for uncovered educational costs. Additionally, 7 of the 190 students were youth adopted after age 16 and thus eligible for ETV funds.



# Montana

## AT A GLANCE

|  |  |
|--|--|
| No. of Youth in Care                             | 2,222 ('05)  |
| No. of Youth Eligible for Chafee Services        | 506 youth, age 16+ served. ('05)   |
| No. of Youth Participating in Chafee ETV Program | 46 youth ('06), 46 youth ('05). Have served all applicants.  |
| Allocation of Chafee Funds                       | \$521,839 ('06), \$500,000 ('05)   |
| Allocation of ETV Funds                          | \$178,254 ('06), \$163,988 ('05)   |
| Average ETV Award                                | \$4,433.81   |
| Chafee ETV Program Administrator                 | Nonprofit service provider: Student Assistance Foundation  |
| Status of Medicaid Extension Option              | Did not take option. Up to age 19 may be eligible for other state programs.  |
| Other Postsecondary Resource Support             | SAF provides advice and guidance to students, education, and outreach to families, higher education prep programs. |

## PRIMARY INFORMANT

### Heather Winters

Independent Living Coordinator, Montana  
Department of Human Services  
hwinters@mt.gov, 406.444.4191

served 506 youth, including 50 American Indian youth served through tribal contracts. Young people age 16 and up who are likely to age out or who have aged out of foster care are eligible for CFCIP services.

## STATE PROFILE

Montana is the fourth largest state and among the least populated in the lower 48, with about five people per square mile. There are just over 200,000 children in the state.

Montana has a state-administered child welfare system. In FY 2005, there were 2,222 children and youth in foster care.

## CHAFEE FOSTER CARE INDEPENDENCE PROGRAM OVERVIEW

### Funding and Youth Served

Montana's Chafee Foster Care Independence Program allocation for FY 2006 was \$521,839 and for 2005 \$500,000. During FY 2005, the program

### Program Administration

Montana's Chafee Foster Care Independence Program services are primarily provided by contracted service providers. Some of these services include information and support to youth related to ETVs, applications for financial aid, and other education issues. The Chafee ETV Program, for example, is administered by the Student Assistance Foundation (SAF). State CFCIP staff coordinate communication and support with local contractors and SAF to ensure that all youth receive support and needed services.

### *American Indian Youth*

There are seven federally recognized tribes in Montana, and one additional state-recognized tribe. To ensure support to American Indian youth, the CFCIP has engaged specialized tribal support



contractors around the state. These contractors provide information and support around the ETV application and other financial aid to these youth. SAF provides information and assistance around ETVs to all Chafee contractors, as needed.

### Aging Out

In FY 2005, 1,185 youth exited care, 88 of whom aged out. Youth in foster care in Montana are routinely discharged at age 18. In some cases, the Child and Family Services Division will extend care if a young person has not yet graduated from high school. Discharge from care, however, then occurs immediately upon high school graduation. The state does not currently track high school completion rates for youth in foster care, but it is working to collect these data in the future.

### Healthcare

Montana has not elected to take the Medicaid option for youth aging out of foster care available to states under Chafee. However, young people up to age 19 may be eligible for other state health care programs.

## CHAFEE ETV PROGRAM OVERVIEW

### Funding and Youth Served

Montana's Chafee ETV Program allocation for FY 2006 was \$178,254 and for 2005 \$163,988. During both 2005 and 2006, the Chafee ETV Program provided grants to 46 youth. Almost all of Montana's youth in care who apply for an ETV qualify for and receive the full \$5,000 toward costs of attendance at institutions of higher education. The average ETV award for 2006 was \$4,433.81.

In FY 2005 and 2006, the state of Montana fully expended ETV funds.

### Program Administration and Data Collection

In November 2005, the state of Montana initiated a contract with the Student Assistance Foundation (SAF) to administer their Chafee ETV Program.

SAF is a nonprofit Montana organization dedicated to providing students with knowledge and tools to finance and pursue their postsecondary education. Funds generated by SAF are returned to Montanans in the form of education grants and public benefit programs. SAF has overall responsibility for implementation of the Chafee ETV Program across the state. Under this arrangement, the state spends just under 27 percent for administration of the Chafee ETV Program, with 71 percent of the funds set aside strictly for ETV payments. The remaining 2 percent covers the state's indirect costs. Prior to this arrangement, the administration of the Chafee ETV Program was the responsibility of the state IL coordinator.

SAF designates a staff person responsible for the coordination of the Chafee ETV Program. In addition to determining eligibility and providing assistance with applying for ETV funds, SAF also provides a range of supportive services which include:

- Screening of Chafee ETV Program applications
- Advice and guidance to students through the education and career planning process
- Assistance to students in developing a detailed financial plan for their higher education
- Organization of higher education preparatory programs for youth in care age 16 to 21, including at least one computer camp
- Development of strong relationships with various partners (state agencies, postsecondary institutions, nonprofit organizations, and private businesses) where appropriate
- Promotion of the use of ETVs and other financial aid resources for youth in care
- Tracking of information regarding all Chafee ETV Program participants, including retention, fiscal, progress, and information regarding the delivery of support services
- Ensuring that all youth in foster care submit the

FAFSA every year (in time for early application) if they plan to attend a postsecondary institution on at least a half-time basis

SAF (with support from the state) also maintains an online tool, the *Montana Career Information System* (MCIS). The MCIS provides academic and social supports to all Montana students. The MCIS promotes consideration of individual interests, knowledge, skills, and values to encourage young Montanans to think broadly about their educational choices and career options. SAF works with all ETV recipients to utilize this online tool to search for additional scholarships, explore a broad range of occupations, and engage in career planning. In 2006–2007, SAF will be working to track utilization of the MCIS among ETV recipients.

#### ETV Eligibility and Enrollment

The process for accessing ETVs has been streamlined by SAF. The ETV application is now online and eligibility is determined quickly through a collaboration between the state child welfare agency and SAF. SAF staff ensure that all youth in foster care submit the FAFSA every year as part of their application process.

#### Fund Disbursement

Once eligibility for ETV funds has been established and the cost of attendance is confirmed, SAF will disburse ETV funds directly to the school or vocational program on the youth's behalf. SAF invoices the state directly for support services provided and ETV payments. This arrangement minimizes any delays or disruptions experienced by youth with their registration or living expenses.

#### Outreach

SAF provides education and outreach to youth in care and their families about the achievability of higher education and the resources available to them. They also educate the Montana financial aid community about the strengths and needs of youth

in care as well as the Chafee ETV Program. In addition, they work with school personnel to educate them regarding confidentiality issues. SAF's outreach is assisted by SAF staff working directly out of the financial aid offices in each of the major universities in the state.

### CHALLENGES ENCOUNTERED

#### Disbursement of Funds

Initially, the state experienced difficulties with the disbursement of the Chafee ETV Program funds. During the first two years of the Chafee ETV Program, vouchers were paid directly to the youth. There were delays in getting funds directly to the students because payments had to be processed through the state's fiscal department. There were also difficulties tracking the use of funds when they were disbursed directly to youth. If a young person dropped out after receiving the voucher, the state might not be informed until some amount of time had passed and the funds had been spent.

Finally, youth who participated in the early years of Montana's Chafee ETV Program received 1099 tax forms and were directed to report ETV funds as income, which was incorrect.

These challenges have now been addressed. Under the contractual arrangement with SAF, Montana's ETV funds currently are disbursed directly to the school or vocational program. Any unused ETV funds are returned to SAF and can be utilized for other vouchers.

#### Cost of Living

A second challenge experienced by Chafee ETV Program students is in covering all expenses in Montana where the cost of living is very high and wages are very low. Young people must search for and access other resources to be able to cover costs without having to take out student loans. Many youth, even with Chafee ETV Program and other

assistance, end up needing to take out student loans in order to pay educational and living expenses.

### Communication with Financial Aid Offices

There continues to be some confusion about Chafee ETV Program funds on the part of college financial aid offices. State and SAF staff are working to help universities and other postsecondary programs understand that ETV funds can not reduce Pell grant awards or other resources as stated in the legislation and the federal program instructions for Chafee ETV. SAF staff now work directly out of the financial aid offices in each of the major universities in the state, which should also help clarify this issue. 82 percent of Chafee ETV Program recipients attend 13 different Montana universities, community colleges, and colleges of technology (including tribal community colleges).

### Confidentiality

Maintaining confidentiality for youth involved with the foster care system has been a challenging part of the Chafee ETV Program. When schools and programs learn that a youth is connected with the foster care system, some school personnel have requested more information about the youth's foster care experience than is necessary to process and maintain his or her financial aid. To address this challenge, one staff person at SAF works with school personnel to educate them regarding confidentiality and have them sign the state's confidentiality agreement. A single contact person at SAF helps to ensure confidentiality protections to the 46 youth who attend approximately 20 schools across the state.

## NOTEWORTHY PRACTICES

### Efficient, Experienced Chafee ETV Program Administration

The administration of Montana's Chafee ETV Program by SAF, a third-party nonprofit, has strengthened the state's program in a number of ways.

Extensive experience working with the financial aid and education communities has given SAF the knowledge, skills, and contacts needed to build the infrastructure critical to a successful program. SAF has streamlined the ETV process, from outreach to potential candidates all the way to disbursement of funds on the youth's behalf. The state's contract with SAF also ensures that a full range of supports are available to all ETV participants and that tracking of these services will occur. SAF is able to guarantee that disbursements are made directly to the schools in a timely manner so that youth do not experience any disruptions to their enrollment or delays with receiving funds for living expenses. Finally, SAF provides the 20 percent match required by Chafee to the state by writing grants, raising funds, and making in-kind contributions of time, goods, and services.

### Augmenting Resources and Supports

Working with SAF has generated widespread community interest in the issue of youth in foster care and education. SAF is very invested in raising awareness about the challenges facing young people in foster care as well as raising funds on their behalf. During the summer of 2006, SAF raised \$5,000 to support a computer camp for youth in care, and 60% of the youth who attended actually went on to enroll in college. SAF has already committed to supporting a similar event in 2007. SAF has also initiated conversations with state universities around the creation of tuition waiver programs for youth in care as a strategy for creating additional resources.

### Appeal to Young People

It's likely that many youth are more inclined to work with SAF as opposed to child welfare staff because Montana's Chafee ETV Program is no longer administered by a foster care agency. Essentially, there is no stigma of being associated with "foster care" because the Chafee ETV Program is just another resource for youth wanting to go to school.

### Outreach to American Indian Youth

The CFCIP has contracted with service providers to provide outreach and support specifically to American Indian youth. It provides information and assistance regarding the Chafee ETV Program and other financial aid options. As a result, the state has documented a significant increase in the number of American Indian Youth who are accessing Chafee ETV Program funds and attending college.

### POSITIVE OUTCOMES

In one year, American Indian youth accessing Chafee ETV Program funds increased from 9 percent to 26 percent of recipients over all. The state connects this increased enrollment with their efforts to provide specialized supports within tribal communities as well as to raise awareness and provide information about the Chafee ETV Program.

Montana has also experienced a big increase in their overall Chafee ETV Program enrollment, nearly doubling from 27 youth in 2004 to 46 youth in 2005 and 2006. This jump in ETV enrollment can be attributed to a stronger Chafee ETV Program made possible through the collaboration with SAF as well as increased efforts to reach out to eligible young people. To date, the state has been able to serve all youth who have applied for the Chafee ETV Program. Most youth served by the program receive the full \$5,000, and there are a number of youth who only access the funds for one semester. This allows ETV dollars to serve more young people. The increase in ETV enrollment has resulted in the institution of an application deadline policy and may mean that in the future not all youth will be able to receive the ETV, or they will not receive the full amount for which they are eligible.

The emphasis on postsecondary education and training resulting from efforts to strengthen the Chafee ETV Program has led staff to think about alumni from foster care who are not receiving ETV vouchers because they are enrolled in nonaccredited or nontraditional programs. Nonaccredited or nontraditional programs include flight school, medical billing training programs, outdoor sports guide school, and cosmetology schools. Currently, the state does not track completion or graduation rates for youth enrolled in such programs. However, staff are interested in obtaining information about the numbers of youth who successfully complete these programs and go on to obtain gainful employment, and they plan to pursue tracking this information.

### FEEDBACK FROM YOUNG PEOPLE

Young people, such as Schylar Canfield, MT, report that the process for accessing ETV funds in Montana is *“pretty painless—just like filling out applications for anything else you have to do for college.”* Having SAF coordinate the process also seems to be working. Youth report receiving their ETV funds in a timely manner and, according to Schylar, also feel that having SAF involved *“gives state foster care workers the time needed to focus on their main jobs.”*

Youth did report that many young people in Montana still do not know about the resources and supports that the Chafee ETV Program offers. To address this issue, SAF has created marketing and outreach materials and frequently speaks to youth, foster parents, community members, stakeholders, and members of the educational community to raise awareness about the needs of youth in foster care and the Chafee ETV Program. During 2005–2006, SAF distributed 5,000 ETV brochures around the state.

# New York

## AT A GLANCE

|  |  |
|--|--|
| No. of Youth in Care                             | 30,420 ('05)   |
| No. of Youth Eligible for Chafee Services        | 11,179 youth age 14–21 eligible.('06), 4,556 youth served ('05).                                   |
| No. of Youth Participating in Chafee ETV Program | 782 youth ('05); have served all applicants.   |
| Allocation of Chafee Funds                       | \$11,585,958 ('06), \$11,585,958 ('05)   |
| Allocation of ETV Funds                          | \$2,936,794 ('06), \$3,362,375 ('05)   |
| Average ETV Award                                | About half the students received \$5,000.  |
| Chafee ETV Program Administrator                 | Nonprofit service provider Orphan Foundation of America (OFA)                                      |
| Status of Medicaid Extension Option              | Did not take option. Youth in care up to 21 can receive Medicaid.                                  |
| Other Postsecondary Resource Support             | OFA provides service and guidance to students. Active statewide foster care youth leadership team. |

## PRIMARY INFORMANT

### Nancy White Martinez

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## STATE PROFILE

New York has over 4.5 million children. It has a state-directed, county-administered, child welfare system, which includes 57 counties, New York City, and the St. Regis Mohawk tribe. At the end of FY 2005, 30,420 of New York's children and youth were in foster care.

## CHAFEE FOSTER CARE INDEPENDENCE PROGRAM OVERVIEW

### Funding and Youth Served

New York's Chafee Foster Care Independence Program allocation for FY 2006 was \$11,585,958, and for 2005 \$11,585,958. As of December 2006, there

were 11,179 youth age 14 to 21 eligible for CFCIP services. During FY 2005, the program served 4,556 youth.

### Program Administration

New York State's Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) administers the Chafee Foster Care Independence Program. OCFS serves the public by promoting the well-being and safety of their children, families, and communities by setting and enforcing policies, building partnerships and funding, and providing quality services. New York's CFCIP services are primarily provided by service providers contracted by OCFS. The Chafee ETV Program, for example, is administered by the Orphan Foundation of America (OFA).

### Aging Out

In FY 2005, 2,405 youth aged out of foster care. Youth age 18 to 21 years may remain in foster care past their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday and up until their 21<sup>st</sup> birthday, provided the youth consents to remaining in care and is attending school, college, vocational, or



technical training or lacks the skills or ability to live independently.

### Health Care

New York has not elected to take the Medicaid option for youth aging out of foster care available to states under Chafee. However, youth who remain in care to age 21 continue to receive Medicaid. Young people may reapply to Medicaid or other state-sponsored health care programs after leaving foster care and may be eligible based on income determination.

## CHAFEE ETV PROGRAM OVERVIEW

### Funding and Youth Served

New York's Chafee ETV Program allocation for FY 2006 was \$2,936,794, and for FY 2005 \$3,362,375. During FY 2005, the Chafee ETV Program provided grants to 782 youth in 34 counties. During the 2005–2006 school year, the Chafee ETV Program provided grants to 886 youth. For the 2005–2006 school year, approximately half of the students received \$5,000. In addition, 78 students received \$4,000–\$4,999; 95 students received \$3,000–\$3,999; 182 students received \$2,000–\$2,999; 76

students received \$1,000–\$1,999; and 27 students received \$0–\$999.

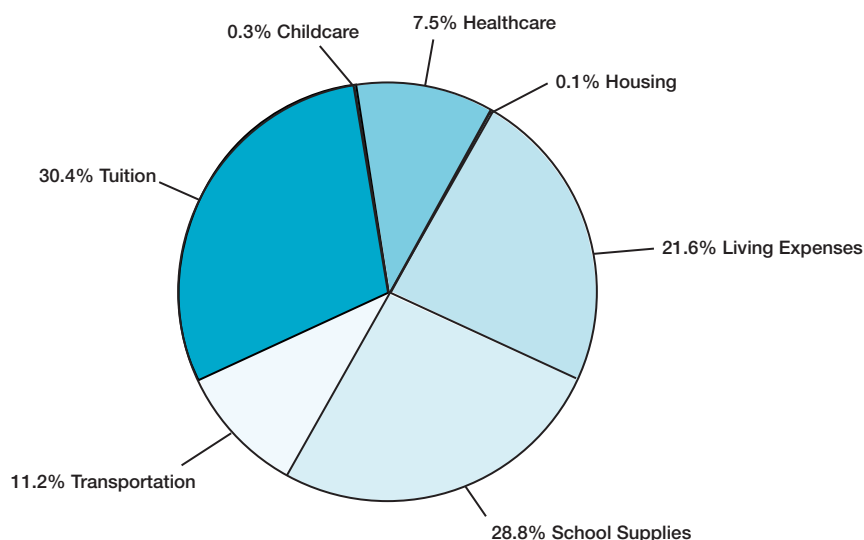
New York fully expended its ETV allocation during both years. New York anticipated that it would also be able to expend all of its allocation for the current FY 2007, ending September 30, 2007.

### Program Administration and Data Collection

OCFS contracts with the Virginia-based Orphan Foundation of America (OFA) to administer and serve as New York State's fiscal agent for the Chafee ETV Program. OFA has administered New York State's Chafee ETV Program for the past three years. See page 31 for more information about OFA.

In New York, Chafee ETV Program expenditures are allocated to six categories: tuition, housing/room and board, living expenses, childcare, school supplies, and transportation. Through OFA's database, New York knows exactly how much money is spent across the identified categories at any given time. The chart below illustrates how the funds were spent in FY 2005.

FY 2005 ETV Fund Expenditures



Each year, OCFS issues a Local Commissioners Memorandum (LCM), which provides guidance to local social services districts (counties) on the Chafee ETV Program. The LCM provides information on the Chafee ETV Program funding requirements and the application and selection process. The most recent LCM was issued on October 23, 2006.

In each of the six OCFS regional offices, there is a point person who is active in getting the information out to the counties and agencies in his or her region. Each county also identifies a person to serve as ETV Coordinator and conducts its own outreach.

The Chafee ETV Program, through OFA staff, works closely with students to help them understand their financial aid package and the long-term implications of higher education financing. Each semester OFA's ETV coordinators work with students to review their financial aid package and grades and confirm that the student understands that if their GPA drops below a 2.0, they are at risk of losing federal, state, and private funding including the ETV and they also understand that a GPA below 2.0 for two semesters places them at risk of academic dismissal. For those students who come into the Chafee ETV Program facing academic dismissal, the New York Chafee ETV Program works closely with them to provide counseling and assistance with going through the appeal process.

ETV coordinators provide students with coaching so they are prepared to access services on campus such as the tutoring center, student health services, child care, and the job placement center and schedule meetings with advisors, financial aid officers, and their professors. The key is frequent communication with students so they stay on top of the details and issues that might otherwise derail their education.

OFA handles the tracking of all ETV participants through a state-specific database to which New York State officials have 24-hour access. Designated officials at the state and county levels can always

identify exactly how much money has been disbursed to youth and for what purposes. The Chafee ETV Program collects extensive information about each of the young people participating in the Chafee ETV Program such as school major, GPA, credits earned, and parenting status. It provides information to New York in various database reports that can categorize information by individual student, by county, by week, by month, and by quarter.

### ETV Eligibility and Enrollment

New York has prioritized services to ETV recipients to ensure that as many eligible young people as possible are able to receive assistance, and that they continue to receive ETVs once they are funded in a previous year.

Promotion and Outreach Districts are advised of the funding requirements and eligible expenditures under the Chafee ETV Program by the LCM issued each year. In addition, districts are requested to submit an intercept letter to OCFS by a specific date each year indicating the amount of local funds they will commit to the Chafee ETV Program. The districts are also asked to submit the names of the youth to whom they would like to provide ETV awards, if otherwise eligible. Districts are also advised that youth should apply for the Chafee ETV Program via the online application at the OFA Web site. The LCM outlines the selection criteria that will be used to prioritize funding for youth. If there are still funds available after prioritized ETVs have been awarded, additional awards are made on a first-come first-served basis.

The selection criteria for the initial selection of ETV participants are as follows:

- First priority is given to youth over age 21 who received an ETV award in the previous year *and* who continue to attend a postsecondary educational or vocational training program *and* who are making satisfactory progress toward completion of that program.

- Second priority is given to any other youth who received an ETV award in the previous year.
- Third priority is given to youth who will soon be 21 and are enrolled in and attending a postsecondary educational or vocational training program and are making satisfactory progress toward completion of the program. These youth would not have received an ETV award in the previous year.
- Fourth priority is given to 17-, 18-, 19-, and 20-year-olds who are enrolled in and attending a postsecondary educational or vocational training program and making satisfactory progress toward completion of that program.

When youth apply for the Chafee ETV Program, they take forms to school to confirm the school's cost of attendance (tuition, fees, and living expenses) and the amount of state and federal grants and scholarship funding the students will receive as well as any student loans being offered. Eligibility for such funds is based on completion of the FAFSA by all ETV applicants. Often students do not realize they are signing for loans so it is important for ETV coordinators to determine if an ETV can fully or partially replace the loan and then confirm that the loan is canceled if possible or repaid if the funds have been disbursed to the student. New York ETV awards are based on actual unmet need/cost of attendance less grants, scholarships, and other funding.

#### Fund Disbursement

OFA coordinates the payment of tuition directly to the school and the remainder of ETV funds is disbursed to the student for qualified living expenses, including those designated for a third party. For example, if a student lives off campus, the New York Chafee ETV Program gets a copy of the lease and sends a third-party check (e.g., made out to the landlord) to the student who is then responsible for paying rent, childcare expenses, etc., which further engages the student in managing his or her own life and expenses.

Each semester, the youth are required to verify the cost of attendance. It is critical for the youth to do so because the unmet need can change from semester to semester. Students are encouraged to meet with the financial aid office to learn about additional funding available to them, such as the Higher Education Opportunities Program (HEOP), Work Study, or private scholarships.

To date, New York has been able to fund all eligible applicants for whom the district has provided the matching funds. However, as the Chafee ETV Program becomes better known and the number of applications increases, the priority system for selecting applicants will become more challenging.

#### Outreach

OFA staff and county ETV coordinators interface directly with social workers, group homes, and residential facilities, and conduct various meetings and training in each of the regions. They provide information about New York's Chafee ETV Program frequently and in multiple ways—flyers, brochures, e-mail, and conference calls—so that the information is disseminated throughout the system. They reach out to foster parents by providing information to the state foster parent association as well as Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASAs) and other stakeholder groups.

Youth adopted from foster care after age 16 are served by New York's Chafee ETV Program. The state provides information about their eligibility through the LCMs sent out each year on the Chafee ETV Program, through training and communication with the New York State Citizens' Coalition for Children (NYSCCC), and the New York State Foster and Adoptive Parents Association (NYSFPA). There is currently a code on the OFA ETV online application to identify youth as adopted.

New York also has a very active statewide leadership team for foster care youth called *Youth in Progress* (YIP). YIP helps to spread the word about postsecondary education and the Chafee ETV Program by:

- Posting information about the Chafee ETV Program on the YIP Web site at [www.youthinprogress.org](http://www.youthinprogress.org)
- Having ETV grant recipients tell other youth in care about the program during YIP regional meetings
- Conducting workshops on the Chafee ETV Program at the annual regional speak-outs, which are well attended by older youth in care
- Encouraging other youth in foster care to take advantage of the voucher program

## CHALLENGES ENCOUNTERED

### Funding

In FY 2003 and 2004, New York shared the experience of many states in having difficulty expending all available funds due to difficulties with getting instructions from the federal government on reporting requirements in year one and delays in receipt of the grant award letter for FY 2003 and FY 2004. NY has expended all available funds for FY 2005 and 2006.

New York's ETV funds have decreased from FY 2005 to FY 2006 due to the state's overall decrease in the number of children and youth placed in foster care. This has resulted in concerns that the decrease in their allocation could potentially diminish the ability to serve all youth who attempt to access ETV funds. State staff and other stakeholders are actively advocating for additional funds to meet the ongoing needs of students enrolled in the program. New York consistently requests their full allocation plus an extra \$1 million if available from unallocated funds to other states.

### Training

New York has identified a need for expanded training of local district and voluntary agency staff on the Chafee ETV Program. A number of efforts have been launched, including teleconferences and regionally based on-site presentations designed to increase local child welfare staff's familiarity with the Chafee ETV Program and other resources to support the postsecondary education and training of youth from foster care.

The Adolescent Services Resource Network (ASRN), consisting of four regionally based offices throughout the state, also provides training and technical assistance on adolescent issues to local districts and voluntary agencies located within their region.

### Non-College-Bound Youth

There are many non-college-bound youth who are currently not being served. New York would like to reach out to this group and connect them with career/vocational programs. They want to start working with these youth prior to high school graduation so that the youth understand that college is not the only option. *"We need to start valuing the plumber versus telling youth that they couldn't make the cut for college,"* says Eileen McCaffrey, Executive Director, Orphan Foundation of America. In conducting training, OFA emphasizes the importance of exploring career options available through training programs as well as college. They have created a "career options" poster, which includes information about trades programs and alternatives to college. Additionally, they are working with trades programs to provide information about the Chafee ETV Program to youth in high school.

### Parenting Youth

There is great concern about the challenges facing youth who are parenting and the specialized supports that they may need. OFA retention specialists work with each of their students who are parenting to help them achieve success by:

- Assisting them with securing and budgeting for childcare
- Accessing and managing multiple resources available to them
- Securing transportation
- Helping balance school, work, and family life
- Identifying and broadening their networks of support

## NOTEWORTHY PRACTICES

### Third-Party Administration

New York's contract with OFA has helped to create a more efficient service system for administration, distribution, and tracking of ETVs. OFA and OCFS also work together to ensure that New York's ETV participants receive the comprehensive, individualized support that they need to be successful in postsecondary education and training.

### Strengths-Based and Relationship-Based Support and Services

OFA places a strong emphasis on the development of relationships with young people and the importance of focusing on the strengths that each young person brings to the table. From the time that students apply for Chafee ETV Program funds to the time when the ETV award is made, OFA coordinators provide them with individualized attention to ensure that youth have the support necessary to succeed. While their focus is always on education, OFA staff also provide guidance to youth about working with financial aid offices; finding and moving into an apartment; talking with professors; networking; utilizing campus, social services, and community resources; healthy decisionmaking; time management; and budgeting.

In terms of supports, the Chafee ETV Program mantra is that youth need support *"more and frequently!"* The supports that program coordinators provide to youth are not always quantifiable, but they believe that results occur when youth know that someone

is taking an interest in them and cares enough to be in touch. As students get older, staff start working with them to transition from student/youth in care to young professional. Young people are coached to think about and envision their success beyond the postsecondary educational experience.

As an additional reminder that someone is thinking about them, New York youth also receive care packages several times a year through OFA's care package program and a handbook on general success and navigating life. New York ETV recipients are also eligible to participate in OFA's Washington, DC summer internship program.

### Social Worker Involvement/Coordinated Services

In addition to the support that young people receive from the OFA coordinators, county social workers continue to be involved with the youth who are still in foster care. Social workers are in regular communication with them and are committed to maintaining these relationships. Face-to-face casework contact must occur monthly for youth in care. If the youth is age 18 or older and is attending an educational or career/vocational program 50 miles or more outside the local social services district, the casework contacts may be made by telephone. In addition, when custody ceases, the social services district must maintain supervision of the youth until age 21 through quarterly contacts. OFA staff and county social workers also stay in touch with each other to ensure that information is shared and their approach is integrated.

### 24-Hour Access to State-Specific ETV Database

New York State officials have 24-hour access to a state-specific ETV database. This database not only can identify how much money has been disbursed to youth and for what purposes, but it also collects extensive information about each of the young people participating in the Chafee ETV Program such as school major, GPA, credits earned, and parenting status. This information can then be categorized into various useful reports for the state.





### Youth Leadership Team

New York has a very active statewide leadership team for youth in foster care called *Youth in Progress*, which helps to spread the word about postsecondary education and the Chafee ETV Program to youth in foster care. This group is comprised of youth leaders, each with an adult mentor from each of the six regional youth in foster care leadership groups, OCFS partners, and the NYS Adolescent Services Resource Network.

### POSITIVE OUTCOMES

In federal FY 2005, 782 students received ETV funding, and 886 received funding in FY 2006. Of those funded in 2005, 526<sup>13</sup> students remained in the program and continued receiving an ETV in 2006.

Additionally, 11 students reported graduating and 20 recipients turned 23 and were no longer eligible for the ETV.

Thus far, New York has been able to provide ETV supports to every youth who has applied for the vouchers. This has been facilitated by the state's ability to keep youth in foster care up to age 21. For youth who are still in care while in a postsecondary program, foster care board payments cover housing, health care, and mental health care costs. Many youth also opt to attend community college. As a result, their unmet need in relation to the overall cost of attendance is much less than those youth who are living on their own. The state has done a good job making sure that youth are accessing the full range of resources and supports available to them.

## **The Orphan Foundation of America**

The Orphan Foundation of America (OFA) is the nation's oldest nonprofit organization solely committed to helping youth transition from foster care to postsecondary education and training and ultimately the workforce. Since 1986, it has awarded privately funded scholarships to youth coupled with a comprehensive support system to help them succeed in their course of study. Over the years, OFA has awarded more than \$15 million in private funding to more than 4,000 students nationwide and provided support services to more than 10,000 youth. OFA's mission is to:

- Provide opportunities for America's youth in foster care to continue their education
- Raise awareness about the number and plight of older teens leaving the system
- Illustrate the bureaucratic maze of foster care that youth encounter
- Highlight the potential of America's youth in foster care and show the importance of supporting their dreams
- Offer direct opportunities for citizens, businesses, and civic organizations to assist older youth in care

In 2003, the Department of Health and Human Services' office of the Children's Bureau issued the Program Instruction for the Education and Training Voucher (ETV) Program and highlighted OFA's capacity for effective administration of the ETV program. As a result, a number of states currently contract with OFA to administer their ETV program, including Alabama, Arkansas, Colorado, Indiana, Maryland, Missouri, New York, North Carolina, and Ohio. OFA also hosts a Web site, [www.statevoucher.org](http://www.statevoucher.org), to support the program and offer information to young people from all 50 states.

OFA provides the following administrative services to implement the ETV programs in each of the states in which it works:

- Verify the eligibility of participants and institutions
- Process ETV applications
- Issue ETV vouchers in accordance with federal law
- Monitor and support student progress
- Utilize volunteers to provide adjunct services to students
- Provide regular program reports to the designated state representative
- Coordinate with state, county, and other service providers
- Submit a comprehensive monthly bill
- Provide quarterly fiscal reports that account for the use of the ETV funds for each contract, including detailed information on the disbursements made to and on behalf of ETV recipients
- Survey students annually to determine their satisfaction with the program, including the delivery of services and program efficacy, and to identify needed program improvements or enhancements

# North Carolina

## AT A GLANCE

|  |  |
|--|--|
| No. of Youth in Care                             | 11,309 ('06)   |
| No. of Youth Eligible for Chafee Services        | 4,211 youth age 13–20 eligible, 2,725 youth served (65%),('05)   |
| No. of Youth Participating in Chafee ETV Program | 240 youth ('05)  |
| Allocation of Chafee Funds                       | \$2,590,431 ('06), \$2,451,871 ('05)   |
| Allocation of ETV Funds                          | \$884,858 ('06), \$837,869 ('05)   |
| Average ETV Award                                | <\$3,000 ('05–'06), \$3,189 ('04–'05), \$3,762 ('03–'04)   |
| Chafee ETV Program Administrator                 | Nonprofit service provider, Orphan Foundation of America (OFA)   |
| Status of Medicaid Extension Option              | Did not take option. Youth over 18 must meet general Medicaid requirements.  |
| Other Postsecondary Resource Support             | Tuition Waivers. OFA provides service and guidance to students, including a mentor program, care packages, and e-mail support. |

## PRIMARY INFORMANT

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State Coordinator, NC LINKS

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## STATE PROFILE

North Carolina has about 2,155,000 children under age 18, of whom 11,309 were in foster care in 2006. Though nationally the size of the foster care population is decreasing, in North Carolina the number of children in foster care has steadily increased since 2003.

North Carolina is committed to providing family-centered services to children and their families to achieve well-being through self-sufficiency, supports, safety, and permanency. Its child welfare system is county-administered.

## CHAFEE FOSTER CARE INDEPENDENCE PROGRAM OVERVIEW

### Funding and Youth Served

North Carolina's Chafee Foster Care Independence Program allocation for FY 2006 was \$2,590,431, and for 2005 \$2,451,871. During 2005, there were 4,211 youth age 13 to 20 eligible for the CFCIP and 2,725 (65%) of these were served.<sup>14</sup> As of September 30, 2006, 632 youth, age 18 to 21, were eligible for after-care services because they aged out of care.

### Program Administration

North Carolina's Chafee Foster Care Independence Program is called NC LINKS. Through this program, services are available to youth who are currently or formerly in foster care after the age of 13 years and not yet 21 years.

The LINKS program is outcome-based and is designed to help young people achieve the following positive outcomes:

- Safe and stable housing
- Sufficient income to live on
- Sufficient education and vocational training to secure stable and meaningful employment
- A support system of at least five caring and responsible adults who are involved with the young person on a personal, rather than simply professional level
- Avoidance of high risk behaviors
- Postponed parenthood until emotionally and financially able to parent
- Access to needed healthcare (physical, mental and dental)

### Aging Out

As of September 30, 2006, 1692 young adults age 18 to 21 aged out of foster care. For youth to remain in care to age 21, they are required to sign a Contractual Agreement for Residential Services (CARS), be enrolled in an educational/vocational training program, and live in a licensed foster care placement.

### Healthcare

North Carolina did take the Medicaid option under Chafee. As of October 2007, any young adult age 18 to 21 who ages out of the foster care system qualifies for Medicaid benefits without regard to assets or income.

## CHAFEE ETV PROGRAM OVERVIEW

### Funding and Youth Served

North Carolina's Chafee ETV Program allocation for FY 2006 was \$884,858, and for 2005 \$837,869. During FY 2005, the Chafee ETV Program provided grants for 240 youth.

Since the ETV funding became available, the state has been successful in spending down its ETV allocation. Despite the late disbursement of funds in Year One of the program, North Carolina was still able to disburse \$654,632 and served 174 youth. In FY 2005, they expended \$763,081 and in the first three quarters of FY 2006, they had expended nearly \$500,000 on vouchers to 171 youth<sup>15</sup> and were on track to fully expend their funds.

The average ETV award has dropped during the last three years (note that the average award has decreased in last three years due to increased demand for ETV assistance):

- In 2003–2004, it was \$3,762/student.
- In 2004–2005, it was \$3,189/student.
- In 2005–2006, it would average just under \$3,000/student.

### Program Administration and Data Collection

North Carolina was the first state to contract with the Orphan Foundation of America (OFA) to administer their Chafee ETV Program. State and local IL staff make final decisions about eligibility, and OFA processes and verifies applications, tracks ETV students in the state of North Carolina, tracks participant spending, and provides a wide array of support services. See page 31 for more information about OFA.

### ETV Eligibility and Enrollment

To be eligible for the Chafee ETV Program, youth must meet the following criteria:

1. Were in foster care at age 17
2. Completed high school/GED
3. Are participating in a qualifying postsecondary program

If the youth has not finished high school or ob-



tained a GED but is participating in a qualifying vocational program, the state of North Carolina will also award an ETV voucher. North Carolina does serve youth who were adopted after the age of 16 although they do not track these youth separately once they are categorized as eligible for ETV. The state IL coordinator estimates that there are fewer than 25 adopted youth being served by the Chafee ETV Program.

### **Fund Disbursement**

OFA ensures that payments are made directly to the schools/vocational programs, covers costs for rent and childcare, and works directly with the youth around budgeting for living expenses. OFA bills the state for the vouchers paid out as well as for their administrative costs, up to the contracted amount. In North Carolina, 90 percent of their ETV funds go to student vouchers with 10 percent for administrative costs. OFA tracks all expenditures and provides an itemized list of those expenditures as well as an overview of the support services provided to each of North Carolina's ETV recipients with each invoice.

### **Outreach**

All of the county coordinators inform students about the availability of the Chafee ETV Program for youth in care. Young adults who leave care without this knowledge and maintain contact with DSS learn from them. OFA provides information to the various colleges about ETV and conducts workshops. It also provides flyers and handouts for the county workers. North Carolina also has information on the new SaySo (NC's youth leadership board) Web site, [www.saysoinc.org](http://www.saysoinc.org), about ETVs, as well as other scholarship assistance.

The counties are responsible for informing adoptive families about the Chafee ETV Program.

### **Contracting and Reporting**

The state contracted with OFA at the outset to administer the program. OFA has developed a highly sophisticated system for tracking individual youth, service delivery, expenditures and the allowable in-kind match.

## **NOTEWORTHY PRACTICES**

### **Tuition Waivers**

Tuition waiver legislation passed in North Carolina in July 2006. This legislation provides free tuition at any of the University of North Carolina (UNC) system colleges and 57 community colleges for ETV eligible youth. However, the tuition waiver kicks in only after other financial aid is applied. More recently, the legislature passed a postsecondary support bill in July 2007 that will provide significant postsecondary education funding assistance for any youth who ages out of foster care at 18 or is adopted after age 12. The scholarship is valued at approximately \$11,000 per student and will cover tuition and room and board at any of the 16 branches of UNC system colleges.

### **Mentors**

After evaluating the retention rates of ETV recipients, North Carolina contracted with OFA in January 2006 to provide additional support services to incoming freshmen and students on probation through OFA's online vMentor Program. They recognize that many students require personal support services, in addition to the ETV funds they receive, to be successful in a postsecondary setting. The vMentor Program uses volunteer mentors who are carefully screened and trained to provide support to students via e-mail. The costs of the vMentor Program are covered out of North Carolina's Chafee funds.



Since January 2006, 55 freshmen and 14 students on probation have been matched with mentors. Thus far, 92% of the students participating in the vMentor Program report positive and meaningful contact with their mentors on a regular basis.

Additionally, OFA received a grant from the Duke Endowment that provides funding to connect North Carolina juniors in high school with specially trained mentors. These mentors are trained to provide assistance with preparing for college, career exploration, Cognitive Coaching,<sup>16</sup> and additional educational strategies to promote postsecondary success. In addition to receiving a mentor, the youth selected for this program also have an opportunity to participate in a 3–4 day college campus experience.

#### Care Packages/E-mail Support

OFA partners with corporations and community groups to prepare and send thousands of care packages three times per academic year—September, February (Valentine’s Day), and late April. All North Carolina ETV recipients receive the care packages. The care package program is a huge hit with the students, as well as the regular e-mail contacts with the OFA coordinators. The personal touch offered by OFA has made a big difference in the lives of North Carolina’s ETV recipients, based on feedback received from the ETV recipients.

#### POSITIVE OUTCOMES

The number of students participating in the Chafee ETV Program rose from 170 in 2003–2004 to 240 students in 2004–2005. They are anticipating that

the number of ETV recipients this year will surpass the number served last year. In the last three years, ETV recipients in North Carolina have attended 124 colleges, community colleges, and technical and vocational schools. For the 2006–2007 school year, students are attending 73 different schools.

In 2004–2005, North Carolina’s ETV retention rate was 52 percent, but this number jumped to 70 percent the following year. As of early 2007, 5 of their ETV students had graduated from college. The state coordinator attributes this increase in student retention to the vMentor Program.

#### FEEDBACK FROM YOUNG PEOPLE

##### Mentor Program Youth

*“The ETV Scholarship Program connected me with someone that has a career in my major and that is a great benefit to get input from someone who is already where I’m trying to be.”*

*“I think the mentor program has many benefits. It helped me build self-confidence and allowed me to express emotions and talk about problems that I wouldn’t ordinarily talk to someone about.”*

*“(OFA) is a support system of people who love youth even though they haven’t met you.”*

# Wyoming

## AT A GLANCE

|  |  |
|--|--|
| No. of Youth in Care                             | 1,209 (Sept. '05)  |
| No. of Youth Eligible for Chafee Services        | 1,285 youth age 14–21 eligible, 796 youth served (62%) ('06)   |
| No. of Youth Participating in Chafee ETV Program | 31 youth ('05–'06), 22 youth ('04–'05)   |
| Allocation of Chafee Funds                       | \$500,000 ('06), \$500,000 ('05)   |
| Allocation of ETV Funds                          | \$106,162 ('06), \$92,716 ('05)  |
| Average ETV Award                                | \$2,950 ('06)  |
| Chafee ETV Program Administrator                 | State-administered by Chafee IL coordinator, assisted by Casey Family Programs.                          |
| Status of Medicaid Extension Option              | Did take option. Youth who left care after 18 can receive Medicaid until 21.                             |
| Other Postsecondary Resource Support             | State-sponsored scholarships, C3 support program, state youth leadership program, personalized services. |

## PRIMARY INFORMANT

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## STATE PROFILE

Wyoming has about 121,800 children under age 18. In 2005, there were 1,209 children and youth in foster care.

## CHAFEE FOSTER CARE INDEPENDENCE PROGRAM OVERVIEW

### Funding and Youth Served

Wyoming's Chafee Foster Care Independence Program allocation for FY 2006 was \$500,000, and for FY 2005 \$500,000. During FY 2005–2006, there were 1,285 youth age 14 to 21 who were eligible for CFCIP services, and 796 (about 62 percent) of these were served.

### Program Administration

Wyoming has a state Chafee IL coordinator, who oversees the Chafee Foster Care Independence Pro-

gram. The following mission statement guides Wyoming's work with adolescents in care: *Bridging the way to self-sufficiency for youth who have experienced out of home care.* Youth age 14 to 21, in state custody, are eligible to receive assessment and training services within the foster care and Independent Living programs.

### Aging Out

Chafee funds are available to youth who have aged out of care after their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday through aftercare services and the Chafee ETV Program. Youth can remain in care to age 21 only if they have not yet completed high school. Decisions regarding extension of care are made on a case-by-case basis and a judge is required to order this extended stay. Cases are reviewed every six months. The state also has a small residential Independent Living Program that serves up to 10 youth. The program provides a semi-supervised apartment setting to young people for approximately six months and serves those who have little to no experience with living on their own.

The state has a youth leadership program, Wyoming Advocates for Youth (WAY), which is composed

of alumni from foster care. It provides education and support for youth aging out of the foster care system. Some WAY members are employed by programs that the state contracts with for Chafee and ETV services, including the president, who is the Chafee ETV Program coordinator in Sheridan and Johnson Counties. WAY members actively participated in the Governor's Roundtable on Foster Care in the summer of 2006, sharing stories about what it was like growing up "in the system." WAY members also conduct support groups for youth in care in their communities.

### Healthcare

Wyoming has taken the Medicaid Option under Chafee. Youth who leave care after age 18 are eligible for Medicaid until age 21 and are assisted by their case worker in completing the application.

## CHAFEE ETV PROGRAM OVERVIEW

### Funding and Youth Served

Wyoming's Chafee ETV Program allocation for FY 2006 was \$106,162, and for FY 2005 \$92,716. Each year since 2003, Wyoming has fully expended all ETV funds. In 2003–2004, Wyoming served 17 youth; in 2004–2005, it served 22 and provided ETV vouchers to 31 youth in 2005–2006 (this includes 19 in their first year of study, 9 in their second, 3 in their third, and 1 fourth-year student). The average ETV award for 2006 was \$2,950.

### Program Administration and Data Collection

Wyoming has a unique partnership with Casey Family Programs, the nation's largest foundation solely focused on foster care (headquartered in Seattle, Washington). In order to facilitate full implementation of the Chafee ETV Program in Wyoming, Casey temporarily provided the services of a full-time staff person for program administration.<sup>17</sup> The Casey Chafee ETV Program administrator worked with both the state Chafee IL coordinator and the state-contracted locally based community organiza-

tions that provide Independent Living services and supports. These organizations employ transitional living coordinators (TLCs) to work directly with young people. They each carry a caseload of 15 to 30 youth. One contractor identified a coordinator to work specifically with the Northern Arapaho Tribe. The Eastern Shoshone Social Services Office has also received a contract.

The partnership with Casey has enabled the state to access Harmony, Casey's web-based database. TLCs enter statistics in Harmony for each ETV participant at intake, every six months, and upon discharge. They track educational status, parenting status, access to mental health services, employment status, and housing status. As long as youth have an open case with a TLC, their information is maintained in the database. The state is hopeful that the data collected in Harmony will prepare them for federal reporting requirements under Chafee.

### ETV Eligibility and Enrollment

The TLCs are responsible for confirming eligibility of all youth for both the overall Chafee and Chafee ETV Programs with the local Department of Family Services office and for conducting the Ansell Casey Life Skills Assessment (ACLSA)<sup>18</sup> with each youth on their caseload to help develop an individualized independent living and college success plan for each ETV recipient. TLCs work with the youth to complete an ETV application and to assemble the required documentation, which includes completion of the FAFSA, a letter of acceptance from the school, recent transcripts, and a budget. The TLCs write a letter of recommendation for each youth's application.

Completed ETV applications go to a designated committee comprised of the IL coordinator, a Casey Family Programs representative, and a alumnus of foster care. This committee works together to verify foster care status and process the applications for approval.

As of February 2007, the state of Wyoming is not serving any adopted youth through their Chafee ETV Program, although such youth are eligible to apply. There is one young person adopted at age 17 who is planning to apply.

### Fund Disbursement

TLCs work directly with the university and community college admissions offices to determine costs of attendance and ensure that ETV funds for tuition, fees, and housing (if applicable) are sent directly to the college. The balance of the ETV funds or Pell grant is returned to the youth for books, school supplies, and living expenses. The TLC then works closely with the youth to budget these funds.

### Outreach

The TLCs work closely with the Department of Family Services and different residential treatment centers to identify eligible youth for the CFCIP and the Chafee ETV Program. Potential candidates for the Chafee ETV Program are referred to a TLC, who talks with the candidate about the program and his or her interest in pursuing postsecondary education or vocational training.

WAY members also conduct some outreach and provide support groups for youth in care in their communities.

## CHALLENGES ENCOUNTERED

### Fund Tracking

Initially, Wyoming experienced difficulty tracking how disbursed funds were being used by youth. To address this issue, youth are now required to work more closely with their TLC and college to track expenses and use of funds. Funds are no longer disbursed in a lump sum; payments are usually made once per quarter or semester if the youth is attending full-time. Payment of tuition, room and board, and any other fees are paid directly to the school. After payment of these expenses to the school, pay-

ment for any additional living expenses included in the overall cost of attendance are made directly to the youth; the maximum received by a youth for living expenses is usually \$1,000 per quarter or semester, if the youth is attending full-time.

### Youth Recruitment and Support

The state also has been challenged with recruiting youth for the program and ensuring that these youth have sufficient support to remain in school. WAY program members have been engaged in outreach efforts and are currently setting up support/informational groups for youth currently in care. State staff and TLCs have worked hard to create support systems for their youth in college. (See Noteworthy Practices, below.)

### Use of Available Funding

There has been some concern that all ETV-eligible youth have not been accessing the funding available to them. To address this issue, the state met with university and community college administrators throughout Wyoming in 2003 to increase awareness about the Chafee ETV Program as well as to facilitate the direct payment of tuition and fees from the state to the university or community college. Additionally, if a student marks *yes* to question #53 about being adopted after age 16 or in DFS custody on their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday on the FAFSA, the financial aid coordinator at the community college or university contacts the local TLC to ensure that the youth receives an ETV voucher.

## NOTEWORTHY PRACTICES

### Diversity of Financial Assistance Options

The State of Wyoming has been able to bring together a variety of different financial resources to support young people in foster care who are interested in pursuing postsecondary education and training. Youth are encouraged to avoid taking out student loans if possible, and staff work closely with all youth to pursue multiple sources of funding

(ETV funds, Pell grants, scholarships, Work Study, etc.) for their education. One student, for example, currently attends the Culinary Institute of America in New York. Her entire ETV voucher (\$5,000) goes to tuition and she also receives a scholarship from OFA. As a result of these efforts, lack of access to financial resources is *not* a barrier for any foster youth in the State of Wyoming who wants to access postsecondary education or training.

### State-Sponsored Scholarships

The state has recently established another educational resource for Wyoming's youth. Any young person who graduates or gets a GED after April 2006 will automatically be eligible for a Hathaway scholarship. The Hathaway scholarship is a state-sponsored educational fund for *all* youth in the state. Scholarships range from approximately \$600 to \$1,800 per semester, based on the student's grade point average.

### C3 Program

The child welfare agency and their partners are focused on supporting youth in care by "continuing to care and connect" or "C3." The C3 mantra strives to provide young people with both the financial and emotional resources needed to pursue their educational dreams and complete their postsecondary programs. Staff are in the process of formalizing C3 into a program that is similar to the Guardian Scholars program first begun in California and expanded now to 20 colleges in five states. (See page 12.)

### Personalized Services

Wyoming's ETV and IL staff prioritize the development of meaningful relationships with Chafee ETV Program participants. The Chafee ETV Program administrator routinely sends out care packages and makes sure that each youth knows that someone cares about his or her transition and college success. The staff also sends holiday greetings and birthday cards to all ETV recipients.

### Relationships with School Financial Aid Offices

Delays in federal or state processing of ETV funds do not negatively impact young people in Wyoming. Staff work to establish strong relationships with the financial aid offices at both the in-state and out-of-state schools attended by youth from Wyoming. These relationships ensure good communication and negotiation of situations where ETV payments have been delayed. No youth have had to delay enrollment due to payment issues.

### Effective Staff

The success of Wyoming's Chafee ETV Program can be attributed to the individuals who staff the program: the Chafee IL Coordinator and the TLCs. TLCs live in the communities where they work and are often able to facilitate connections and resources for their youth because of existing relationships with community members. TLCs advocate for the youth and support youth in advocating for themselves. Two of the TLCs are alumni of foster care themselves, which has had a very positive impact on ETV participants.

### Outreach to American Indian Youth

There are currently TLCs specifically working with tribal communities. This has helped increase the number of American Indian youth who know about and participate in the Chafee ETV Program. Prior to having TLCs on the reservation, there was no active recruitment of American Indian youth for ETV. In 2005, there was one such youth served, and in 2006, there were three.

## POSITIVE OUTCOMES

Almost all of the applications for the Chafee ETV Program are approved. Each year, the program is serving more students, from 17 youth in 2003–2004 to 31 youth in 2005–2006. The numbers will increase even more in 2007 because of the availability of the Hathaway scholarships. Five of the students in the program are over the age of 21.



There are five American Indian youth currently involved in the program, and the state has increased efforts to reach out to tribal communities. To do so, the state has currently contracted with the Eastern Shoshone Social Services Office and is also working with the Northern Arapaho to serve American Indian youth in these areas.

Young adults serve on a variety of leadership boards and councils: Juvenile Justice Advisory Council, Interagency Children's Collaborative, the Wyoming Citizens Review Panel, Child Welfare League of America's National Foster Youth Advisory Council, Systems of Care grant policy committee, State of Wyoming Substance Abuse Task Force, the State of Wyoming Victims Compensation committee, and several other planning committees. For the last two years, youth have served on the RFP review team to determine which providers will receive Chafee contracts. Two alumni from foster care are TLCs and implement the Chafee programs in their community.

The Chafee ETV program process is very efficient and is not bogged down by state bureaucracy. Specifically, Wyoming uses no Chafee or ETV program funds for administrative costs. When a young person is approved, the Chafee ETV program manager, (who is also the State IL Coordinator), issues a letter to the youth, the school, and the TLC informing them of the ETV award to be received by the youth. At this point, a check is issued to the school and credited to the youth's account. Young people are then able to access funds for books, tuition, or room and board.

## FEEDBACK FROM YOUNG PEOPLE

### Melinda Dennington, WY

Melinda is both a recipient and a staff person in the state who makes sure that other youth can access this resource.

*"Some say that money is not all there is to life. They're right, but it sure does make a difference. As a single mom, working and going to school, the release of stressing over finances makes me more able to focus on the important things in life. As a result of not being stressed over finances, I was able to complete my Associates of Arts Degree in May of 2005. I also completed the spring 2005 semester with a 4.0 GPA. Achieving a 4.0 GPA was a huge accomplishment that I don't recall ever doing before in my life. So, to all the people that helped me to receive the ETV, Thank You. You helped make a difference in my life, as well as my family's."*

Melinda takes a lot of pride in being able to tell graduating high school seniors that there are resources available to them if they want to go to school.

*"Colleges have been willing to work with us around delays in receipt of the funding. Here in Wyoming, we're all very close-knit. Once you connect with the folks in the financial aid offices, they're really willing to work with us as long as we can tell them that the money is on the way. The ETV Program just really worked well; we haven't run into any big problems. The personal contact with the financial aid offices makes all the difference!"*

*"I'm also really excited that my little sister will also get an ETV voucher shortly. She got a tuition scholarship but didn't have money for room and board. She was adopted at age 17. We really need to work on getting the word out to adopted youth about their eligibility for ETV. My younger brother, who lives with me, is not eligible for ETV because he was emancipated at age 16 years. Because of this, he hasn't been able to access all of the resources that my sister and I have been able to."*

### Brittany Mauk, WY

*"I know that I will not be able to afford all of the funds for college without this grant (ETV), so my plan is to use it to my advantage and get through college to start a bigger and brighter future for myself. This would really help enable me to do something positive with my life."*

# Recommendations

The experience of these six states in implementing and refining their Chafee ETV Programs over the last four years provides the basis for the following federal and state recommendations to strengthen program improvements nationwide.

## FEDERAL

- Provide full funding of \$60 million per year in anticipation of the growing demand.
- Remove barriers to permanency by extending program eligibility to youth who leave foster care at age 16 to legal guardianship.
- Develop a national tracking and reporting system for ETV implementation and student outcomes information.
- Collect more data about program effectiveness and provide this to all states.
- Modify federal rules regarding redistribution of funds after expenditure to allow for changes in enrollment and challenges in distribution.
- Provide technical assistance to states.
- Explore how to leverage state ETV funds to deliver support services to recipients, especially those at risk of leaving their program prior to completion.

## STATE

- Increase outreach to eligible youth in care, to youth who have left care, and to adopted youth ages 16 and above.
- Engage young people as full partners in the implementation, evaluation, and expansion of the Chafee ETV Program.
- Increase collaborative partnerships with state higher education systems, especially financial aid administrators and offices.

## FEDERAL

### Provide full funding of \$60 million per year in anticipation of the growing demand.

The Administration and Congress should provide the full funding of \$60 million authorized under the statute. Funding for the program currently stands at approximately \$45 million. The full appropriation will be required over the next several years in order to meet the needs of continuing students while allowing for new enrollment. Despite the challenges of structuring the program and delays in payment that have resulted in monies being returned to the federal treasury, most of the states are starting to fully spend their ETV allocation, necessitating either reductions in the size of awards or denial of vouchers to some youth. Although supplementing federal ETV allocations with state funds may be possible for some states, others will not be able to do this because of budget limitations. For these states, increasing federal ETV allocations will be necessary to meet increased demands.

### Remove barriers to permanency by extending program eligibility to youth who leave foster care after age 16 to legal guardianship.

Current law extends eligibility for the ETV program to youth who age out of foster care and those who exit foster care to adoption after age 16. This section of the law was designed to eliminate any barriers to adoption for older youth, recognizing that many families adopting older youth may not have time to save enough to cover the costs of their child's higher education. Policymakers wanted to ensure that youth in care did not have to choose between a permanent family and education. Similar barriers exist for many kinship care families who care for older youth in foster care who seek to provide a permanent home through guardianships. Legal guardianship is an important permanency alternative for youth in foster care for whom reunification or adoption is not an appropriate option. The federal government

and many states have recognized the important role that guardianships can play in providing children and youth in care a permanent home with relatives and other kin. Federal policy that provides support to children who exit foster care through adoption should also be applied to youth who exit foster care through legal guardianship.

#### **Develop a national tracking and reporting system for ETV implementation and student outcomes information.**

Better reporting regarding youth served by the program and their progress in pursuing postsecondary education and training programs is crucial to the assessment of this program's effectiveness. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) should require annual state reporting of student outcome information as well as specific, detailed information regarding Chafee ETV Program implementation. Identifying promising state practices and providing this information to states that are struggling in this area should be a priority. As the National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD) is finalized, additional components related to postsecondary education and the implementation of ETVs should be included. Annual reports should specifically request (a) the number of vouchers issued, (b) the number of new awards, (c) the number of renewals, (d) the average amount of the award, (e) the number of awards to adopted youth; (f) the average amount of other federal financial assistance to youth who received ETV funds; and (g) the average costs of attendance for youth who received ETV funds.

#### **Collect more data about program effectiveness and provide this to all states.**

Little information is available regarding ETV recipients or their academic outcomes, other than in OFA-administered states. Even in these states, however, not much information regarding ETV recipients is provided by the states in the annual report to HHS. Very limited data have been collected by states, especially with regard to student retention. Though it would be a challenge to predict that finan-

cial resources impact retention, given the resources currently available to youth in foster care, there can be no assessment of this program's effectiveness without some idea of retention. Other services, such as the Guardian Scholars Program's wraparound support to students, or OFA's individualized support and mentoring, are much more likely to demonstrate positive effects than money alone. Understanding what support systems and services are necessary to help ETV recipients successfully complete their postsecondary education or training programs and then transition to career and independent-living success is critical to realizing the intent of Chafee legislation.

#### **Modify federal rules regarding redistribution of funds after expenditure to allow for changes in enrollment and challenges to distribution.**

States currently have two years to expend each year's allocation of funds for ETV. Some state budgetary practices and limitations, however, require that each year's funding be expended within the state fiscal year. Current federal law only allows reallocation of federal ETV funds if a state does not request its full allocation. Federal law should allow for reallocation of unused funds even after they have been distributed to the states. This would allow those states experiencing high demand for ETVs to claim unutilized funds and continue to enroll eligible students.

#### **Provide technical assistance to states.**

There are several areas of technical assistance needed by the states:

- State management of the two-year federal expenditure period in relation to state budgets and state fiscal years. It is still unclear as to why some states are unable to expend the funds in the two-year period as required. There has been, however, steady (even dramatic) improvement from the first to the third year of funding.
- Matching funds. States have consistently reported difficulty in managing the matching process for

the overall Chafee Foster Care Independence Program, so it is likely that education/technical assistance regarding the 20 percent matching funds for the Chafee ETV Program would be useful.<sup>19</sup>

- Consistent information and policy direction from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Administration for Children and Families regional contacts, and ensuring that the information given by regional officials is consistent with direction from the Children's Bureau of HHS as expressed in the federal policy manual outlining policy questions and answers regarding implementation of federally funded child welfare programs and services.
- Outreach to eligible youth, particularly adopted and American Indian and Alaska Native youth.
- Creative outreach strategies (e.g., flyer in California Medical [Medicaid] statements).
- Education of financial aid offices regarding ETV funding, especially the requirement of not counting an ETV against other federal aid.
- Education of institutions of higher education regarding serving youth in foster care.
- Strategies for disbursement of funds.
- Supporting youth in budgeting when funds are disbursed directly to them.
- Educational materials for financial aid offices distributed nationally by the Department of Education in cooperation with HHS.
- Ability to use both Chafee ETV Program and overall CFCIP funds to conduct statewide outreach to eligible youth (for both programs).

**Explore how to leverage state ETV funds to deliver support services to recipients, especially those at risk of leaving their program prior to completion.**

States reported that many Chafee ETV Program youth drop out or are otherwise unable to continue with their postsecondary education program. Many young people encounter significant challenges as they attempt to balance work, life, and school

demands. These challenges, encountered by youth involved with the foster care system, as well as by college students in the general population, require that child welfare professionals and other stakeholders engage in strategic action to provide a full range of supports and services to promote success. Investment in support activities will benefit young people and contribute to the success of the Chafee ETV Program over all.

There is an emerging knowledge base on how to effectively support college students coming from foster care. Targeted support programs, such as the Guardian Scholars programs, Orphan Foundation of America, and the College Success Foundation are investing in support services that result in increasing rates of retention and program completion. More information is needed to determine how these practices, some of which include socioemotional supports, mentoring, monitoring of student progress, tutoring, and assistance with housing, employment, and financial aid, can be provided to Chafee ETV Program recipients in all states with some ETV funds designated for support service delivery.

## STATE

**Increase outreach to eligible youth in care, to youth who have left care, and to adopted youth ages 16 and above.**

Many states have reported difficulty with identifying and informing potential ETV recipients. States need to engage in targeted and creative efforts to reach those eligible for the vouchers, including outreach to social workers, case managers, and foster parents, as well as young people. One of the most effective outreach strategies includes the use of youth leadership groups and peer networks to get the word out. Additionally, states should also consider Web-based dissemination as another strategy for reaching youth and their families.

Since the number of adoptions of youth age 16 and above in the states described in this report (and na-

tionally) is extremely small, this should make outreach to this group relatively easy. While the states participating in this study do conduct some outreach, none has any specific structured approach for outreach to adopted youth. Maine seems to be the only state aware of enrolling of these youth and tracking their participation.

**Engage young people as full partners in the implementation, evaluation, and expansion of the Chafee ETV Program.**

Young people who have been involved with the foster care system have a unique perspective about the services and supports essential to preparing young people for productive adulthood. Young adults who have benefited from ETV, as well as those planning to pursue postsecondary education and training, can offer critical insights as states work to assess the effectiveness of their programs and look at the potential for program expansion. Engaging youth as full partners results in a “win-win” situation for all; young people have access to youth development opportunities and the states benefit from the firsthand knowledge of ETV’s primary stakeholders.

**Increase collaborative partnerships with state higher education systems, especially financial aid administrators and offices.**

The implementation of the Chafee ETV Program in the 50 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico has increased collaborations between child welfare and higher education systems. Although coordination with existing postsecondary programs and school financial aid offices is advised in the Administration for Children, Youth and Families Chafee ETV Program instructions,<sup>20</sup> effective collaborative practices need to be increased. States that have established close working relationships between their Chafee ETV Programs and their higher education systems and financial aid offices need to be identified and promising system approaches shared nationally. There still is some confusion about how ETV awards relate to or impact other financial aid. Students may receive inconsistent messages from their Chafee ETV Program or Independent Living staff and the postsecondary program’s financial aid office.

**CONCLUSION**

To advance these recommendations, it is important that advocates, administrators, and other foster care stakeholders promote assessment of program progress and effectiveness, the collection of important student outcome information and other important data, and the sharing of experiences. This will help both the child welfare and education systems (postsecondary and K–12) work together to utilize this critical resource for young people to achieve their postsecondary education and training goals.



## For More Information

Federal government instructions to the states on implementation of the Chafee ETV Program can be found at:

[www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/programs\\_fund/toolkit/state/etv.htm](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/programs_fund/toolkit/state/etv.htm)

To find information regarding a state's Chafee ETV Program, contact the state Independent Living Coordinator. A list of state Independent Living Coordinators, with contact information, can be found at:

[www.nrcys.ou.edu/yd/resources.html](http://www.nrcys.ou.edu/yd/resources.html)

Additional state level information about the Chafee ETV Program can be found at:

[www.nrcys.ou.edu/yd/state\\_pages.html](http://www.nrcys.ou.edu/yd/state_pages.html) and [www.statevoucher.org](http://www.statevoucher.org)

## Endnotes

- 1 Courtney, M. E. (2005, April). Youth aging out of foster care. *Network on Transitions to Adulthood Policy Brief*. Issue 19.
- 2 It was known as the “Promoting Safe and Stable Families Amendments of 2001” (P.L. 107-133).
- 3 Title 2, Section 201: “To make available vouchers for education and training, including postsecondary training and education, to youths who have aged out of foster care.”
- 4 Both *Institution of Higher Education*, and *costs of attendance* are specific terms defined by the Higher Education Act of 1965. To view these definitions and other information regarding the Higher Education Act, please go to [www.nrcys.ou.edu/yd/programs.html](http://www.nrcys.ou.edu/yd/programs.html).
- 5 American Public Human Services Association. *Medicaid Access for Youth Aging Out of Foster Care*. (2007). Accessed 8-27-07 at [www.aphsa.org/Home/Doc/Medicaid-Access-for-Youth-Aging-Out-of-Foster-Care-Rpt.pdf](http://www.aphsa.org/Home/Doc/Medicaid-Access-for-Youth-Aging-Out-of-Foster-Care-Rpt.pdf).
- 6 Actual number served by Chafee services.
- 7 In addition, 78 students received \$4,000–\$4,999; 95 students received \$3,000–\$3,999; 182 students received \$2,000–\$2,999; 76 students received \$1,000–\$1,999; and 27 students received \$0–\$999.
- 8 As of July 1, 2006. Needell, B., et al. (2007). *Child Welfare Services Reports for California*. Retrieved February 23, 2007, from University of California at Berkeley Center for Social Services Research, <http://cssr.berkeley.edu/CWSCMSreports/>.
- 9 For information on California’s legislative and programmatic developments related to supporting older youth in foster care and in transition, please visit: California Youth Connection ([www.calyouthconn.org](http://www.calyouthconn.org)), New Ways to Work ([www.newwaystowork.org](http://www.newwaystowork.org)), the Orangewood Foundation ([www.orangewoodfoundation.org](http://www.orangewoodfoundation.org)), and the California Project for Youth Permanency ([www.cpy.org](http://www.cpy.org)).
- 10 Please see [www.calyouthconn.org/site/cyc/section.php?id=6](http://www.calyouthconn.org/site/cyc/section.php?id=6) for specific information on current legislative proposals.
- 11 This number includes both emancipated youth and youth in care who have graduated or received their GED.
- 12 Each state’s allocation is based on the total number of children in foster care in the state; thus, Maine’s allocation was reduced based on a decreased total number of children and youth in foster care.
- 13 Some of the reasons for not continuing in the program include graduating, losing eligibility for the program, taking a semester off, joining the military, or beginning a job that offers tuition reimbursement or skills training.
- 14 This includes 1,874 youth age 13–15 who were eligible with 60.6% served and 2,337 youth age 16–20 eligible with 68% served.
- 15 Through mid-May of 2006.
- 16 Cognitive Coaching<sup>SM</sup> is a supervisory/peer coaching model that capitalizes upon and enhances cognitive processes. Visit [www.cognitivecoaching.com](http://www.cognitivecoaching.com).
- 17 Casey is currently transferring responsibility for administration of the ETV Program to the Chafee IL coordinator.
- 18 The Ansell-Casey Life Skills Assessment is a free online assessment for young people age 8 and above, their caregivers, and child welfare professionals and educators who serve youth. The assessment, as well as other tools and resources, can be found at [www.caseylifeskills.org](http://www.caseylifeskills.org).
- 19 Interestingly, none of the six states reported difficulty obtaining the 20 percent match required for the ETV Program. OFA provides match for the states whose ETV Program it administers and California has a state budget line item representing nearly a 60 percent match for federal funds. However, this is likely to be a need among other states.
- 20 ACYF-CB-PI-03-06, 07/08/03.





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