



Independent Living Training Vouchers

CHILD WELFARE LEAGUE OF AMERICA
440 First Street, NW • Third Floor • Washington, DC 20001-2085
202/638-2952 • Fax 202/638-4004 • www.cwla.org

ACTION

- Provide \$60 million for Independent Living Training Vouchers for youth leaving foster care at age 18 and those adopted from foster care at age 16 or older.

HISTORY

The Independent Living Training Vouchers program was authorized in 1999 but has never been funded. The voucher program is a component of the Chafee Independent Living Program, which helps older youth leaving foster care get the higher education, vocational training, and other education supports they need to become self-sufficient. If the voucher program were funded, up to \$5,000 per year would be available to a young person for the cost of attending college or vocational school.

When they become 18, many of these youth lose the support they received in foster care. Without the support of a family, they are on their own to obtain further education and preparation for employment, as well as health care, mental health care, and housing. Although youth in foster care have many strengths and talents and a desire to succeed, the bleak reality is that an overwhelming number are ill prepared for the responsibilities of adulthood. They encounter tremendous obstacles that put their emotional, economic, and personal security at risk. They may, for example, fall victim to violence or become parents before they are ready.

The vouchers will help America's youth leaving foster care at age 18, and those adopted from foster care at age 16 or older, realize their dreams. Given the opportunity, they are America's next doctors, lawyers, engineers, teachers, plumbers, truck drivers, and electricians. The vouchers will help them attend vocational and technical schools, as well as community colleges and four-year universities.

Some 17 states currently provide education and training assistance for college or vocational training to youth leaving foster care. With \$60 million, the Independent Living Training Vouchers could assist an additional 16,000 youth nationwide.

KEY FACTS

- Approximately 20,000 young people leave foster care each year when they turn 18.¹
- Children in foster care are twice as likely as others their age to drop out of high school.²
- Among youth who have recently aged out of foster care, 50% are unemployed. Among these youth, 12% report living on the street or in a shelter at least one night since discharge.³
- One to two years of community college significantly increases the likelihood of economic self-sufficiency.⁴
- A college degree is the single greatest factor in determining access to better job opportunities and higher earnings.⁵

SOURCES

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CWLA CONTACT

Tim Briceland-Betts

202/942-0256

bricebet@cwla.org