

Passport to Careers Program

Assistance to Former Foster Care or
Unaccompanied Homeless Youth



Frequently Asked Questions

About the Program

1. What is the Passport to Careers Program?

- a. The 2018 Legislature passed [SB 6274](#), a law to help more Washington students—specifically those who have been in various types of foster care or who have experienced unaccompanied homelessness—to prepare for careers.
- b. The expanded Passport to Careers program continues to provide college promise scholarships with support services, and adds support for pre-apprenticeships and apprenticeship programs.

2. What are the two paths to a career?

- a. **Passport to College Promise Program:** Students who have been accepted into a participating college and who are working toward a first bachelor's degree, associate degree, or certificate may receive:
 - i. A scholarship that assists with college costs, including tuition, fees, room, board, books, personal expenses, and transportation, plus the cost of reasonable additional expenses if approved by the college financial aid office.
 - ii. Priority consideration for the [State Need Grant](#) and [State Work Study](#) programs.
 - iii. Potential additional support services provided by their college through staff called [Designated Support Staff \(DSS\)](#).
- b. **Passport to Apprenticeship Opportunities:** Students who prefer to enter the trades have two options:
 - i. A [pre-apprenticeship is a preparation program](#) recognized by the state [Apprenticeship and Training Council](#). Pre-apprenticeship programs provide practical experience, education, preparation, and the development of skills for entry into state-approved apprenticeship programs.
 - ii. [An apprenticeship is a training program](#) approved by the Apprenticeship and Training Council or a similar federal entity. Apprentices are paid to work while a master craftsman teaches them the skills needed to be an expert in the field. An apprenticeship may also include classroom lessons. There are apprenticeships for nearly any job: from high-tech manufacturing to health care. Youth who are at least 16 years old may qualify for apprenticeships.

Eligibility for Passport

3. What are the overall Passport to Careers program qualifications for both former foster youth and unaccompanied homeless youth?

- a. Meet the criteria for former foster youth (see #4 below) or unaccompanied homeless youth (see #5 below) outlined below.
- b. Be enrolled or will enroll at least half-time in an [eligible college](#) or registered pre-apprenticeship or [apprenticeship program](#) by your 22nd birthday.
- c. Maintain Washington residency (see #7 below).
- d. Meet the following additional criteria if in the Passport to College track:
 - i. Be working toward your first bachelor's degree, associate degree, or certificate. You may not pursue a degree in theology and receive the scholarship.
 - ii. Continue to make satisfactory academic progress as defined by the college.

4. In addition to the overall qualifications, how do I qualify for the program as a former foster youth?

- a. If you apply in 2018, you must have been in the care of a qualifying foster care placement (see #4c below) in Washington State after age 15. If you apply in 2019, you must have been in care after age 14; in 2020, you must have been in care after age 13.
- b. You must have been placed in one of these three types of qualifying foster care:
 - i. State foster care system that is out-of-home care. Includes dependents from other states who are placed in Washington, and dependents from Washington placed in other states under the [inter-state compact program](#) (see [RCW 26.34](#)).
 - ii. Federal foster care program under the [federal unaccompanied refugee minors program](#) (see [Title 8 U.S.C. Sec. 1522](#) of the immigration and nationality act).
 - iii. [Tribal foster care system](#) that is an out-of-home placement under a dependency order from a tribal court.

5. In addition to the overall qualifications, how do I qualify for the program as an unaccompanied homeless youth?

- a. You must have been an unaccompanied homeless youth (see #6 below) during the 2018-19 academic year, and must apply for Passport after July 1, 2019.
- b. You will be asked to provide verification from your high school or [school district McKinney-Vento liaison](#); the director or designated staff member of an emergency shelter, transitional housing program, or homeless youth drop-in center; or other similar professional case manager or school employee.
- c. If you have no formal connection with such a professional, you may contact the Passport to Careers program at passporttocollege@wsac.wa.gov or 888-535-0747.

6. What does “unaccompanied homeless” mean?

- a. You must have been a youth or young adult experiencing homelessness (see #6b below) while not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian. The Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) uses the [housing questionnaire](#) to help determine the services a student may be eligible to receive under the McKinney-Vento Act.
- b. "Homeless" or "homelessness" means without a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence as set forth in the federal [McKinney-Vento homeless](#) assistance act. This includes children and youth who meet any of the following criteria:
 - i. Are sharing the housing of others due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason; are living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to the lack of alternative adequate accommodations; are living in emergency or transitional shelters; or are abandoned in hospitals.
 - ii. Have a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings.
 - iii. Are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings.
 - iv. Are migratory children living in one of the above circumstances.

7. Do I have to be a Washington state resident and a citizen of the United States?

- a. Generally, you are required to meet [state residency requirements](#) to receive financial aid from the state of Washington; however, if you are unable to establish state residency because you were an unaccompanied homeless youth in another state, or placed in state foster care under the interstate compact, your residency may be determined by the Washington Student Achievement Council (WSAC).
- b. If you are not a U.S. citizen or eligible non-citizen, or do not have DACA status, you may be eligible if you meet the following three criteria:
 - i. Earned a diploma from a Washington State high school or obtained a GED or equivalent.
 - ii. Lived in Washington for at least three calendar years before earning the high school diploma or equivalent, and continuously since.
 - iii. Sign an affidavit (written promise) affirming eligibility and promising to become a permanent resident/citizen of the United States when eligible to apply.

Applying for Financial Assistance

8. How do I apply for financial assistance if I'm going to attend a college?

- a. You must complete the [Free Application for Federal Student Aid](#), commonly known as the FAFSA. You must be a U.S. citizen or eligible non-citizen to complete the FAFSA.
- b. If you are not eligible to complete the FAFSA due to your immigration status, you still may be eligible to apply for financial aid by completing the [Washington Application for State Financial Aid](#) (WASFA).

- c. Former foster youth and unaccompanied homeless youth may not have to provide parent or legal guardian income resources when filing the FAFSA or WASFA.
- d. Go to the [Foster Care to College Frequently Asked Questions](#) for more information.

9. How do I apply for financial assistance if I'm going into an apprenticeship program that is not associated with a college?

- a. You will apply directly to an organization that is contracted by WSAC to review your application and, if approved, distribute your financial assistance. As of November 2018, this contract is not yet awarded. When the contract is awarded, it will be announced on the [Passport program webpage](#).

10. Where can I find help with the application process?

- a. **Passport to College Promise Scholarship:** If you are in high school, or have not graduated from high school, and are age 13 to 21, a [regional SETuP provider](#) can help. There are six non-governmental organizations that provide services to help you succeed in school.
- b. **Apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship opportunities:**
 - i. Contact a Labor & Industry Apprenticeship Consultant or main office staff to find information about specific pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship programs.
 - ii. WSAC will contract with one or more organizations to provide you with help and financial assistance. When the contract is awarded it will be announced on the [Passport program webpage](#).
- c. **FAFSA or WASFA:** Attend a [College Goal Washington](#) event in your area, talk with your high school counselor, or contact the college financial aid office.
- d. If your college has its own separate applications for admission or financial aid, ask for help from the college admissions or financial aid office.

11. How will I receive my Passport to Careers program funds?

- a. Your financial need will be determined by the school or program you attend. Financial need is the difference between the costs associated with attending college and the amount you are asked to contribute. This amount is determined by your answers on the FAFSA. If you have financial need your Passport funds will be included in your financial aid package.
 - i. Funding for the Passport to College Promise Scholarship may include but is not limited to tuition, fees, room, board, books, personal expenses, and transportation.
 - ii. Funding for apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship programs may include but is not limited to occupational specific costs, tuition for classes, fees, work clothes, rain gear, boots, and tools.
- b. If eligible, you will be notified by Passport to Careers program staff.
- c. If approved for the program, notify the college financial aid office or your approved apprenticeship program of your eligibility.

Differences Between Passport to College and Apprenticeship Support

12. What has changed from the original Passport to College Promise Scholarship Program?

Eligibility Changes	Eligibility prior to June 2018	Eligibility starting July 2018	Eligibility starting July 2019	Eligibility starting July 2020
Education/ Training	Postsecondary enrollment at an eligible college.	Attending an eligible college, or pre-apprenticeship or apprenticeship program.		
Program Name	Passport to College	Passport to Careers: includes Passport to College Promise Scholarship and Passport to Apprenticeship Opportunities.		
Foster care	Dependent of Washington state	In state, tribal, or federal foster care systems in Washington State.		
Time in care	Spent one year in care after age 16 and in care at age 17.5.	In foster care after age 15.	In foster care after age 14.	In foster care after age 13.
Unaccompanied Homeless	Not Eligible		Verification of unaccompanied homeless event during prior academic year, before age 21.	
Residency	In general, the student resided in WA for other than educational purposes for one year prior to attending college, graduated from a WA high school, or earned a GED in WA.		Also includes homelessness or out-of-state foster care under the interstate compact as verified by WSAC.	

The 2018 Legislature expanded the Passport to Careers program to include services to federal and tribal foster youth and unaccompanied homeless youth. This expanded eligibility will be phased in between June 2018 and July 2020 (see changes highlighted in blue above). Students will be able to use their Passport to Careers support at eligible colleges and universities in Washington State, and in pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship programs.

13. Can I change my mind and switch between the Passport to College Promise Scholarship and the Apprenticeship Opportunities?

- a. Yes, but your total financial assistance cannot be more than you would have received to attend a public university with the highest annual tuition and state-mandated fees in the state for five years.
- b. You can only be enrolled in one of the programs at a time.

Note: Some apprenticeship programs require you to enroll at a community or technical college—those would offer financial aid through the Passport to College Promise Scholarship.