

Washington State Passport to Careers



Frequently Asked Questions

Have you been in foster care? Or were you homeless without a parent or guardian?

Are you wondering what the future holds? The [Passport to Careers](#) program will help:

- Figure out what job would be a good fit for you.
- Provide money to pay for college or training to help you get that job.
- Provide money for living expenses while you are in college or job training.

This document includes information about:

Passport Program Overview	Applying for Financial Assistance
Eligibility	Program Expansion and Path Details (College vs. Apprenticeship)
Residency	

Additional information is available on the [Passport website](#).

1. What do the two Passport to Careers paths provide?

Passport to College

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:

- A scholarship, currently \$4,500 per year, to assist with college costs, including tuition, fees, room, board, books, personal expenses, and transportation.
- First-in-line consideration for [State Need Grant](#) and [State Work Study](#).
- Potential additional support services provided by their college through a [Passport Designated Support Staff \(DSS\)](#).

Passport to Apprenticeships

Students who want a job in a skilled trade, which can include many types of jobs from aerospace manufacturing to health care, have two options:

- A [pre-apprenticeship is a preparation program](#) recognized by the state [Apprenticeship and Training Council \(ATC\)](#). Pre-apprenticeships provide practical experience, education, preparation, and skill development for entry into state-approved apprenticeship programs.
- [An apprenticeship is a training program](#) approved by the ATC or a similar federal entity. Apprentices are paid to work while master craftsmen teach them the skills needed to be an expert in the field. An apprenticeship may also include classroom lessons.



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

- a. Meet the criteria for former foster youth (see #3) or unaccompanied homeless youth (see #4) 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 21st birthday.
- c. Maintain Washington residency (see #6).
- d. Meet the following additional criteria if in the Passport to College track:
 - i. Be working toward a certificate, associate degree, or first bachelor's degree. You may not pursue a degree in theology and receive the scholarship.
 - ii. Continue to make satisfactory academic progress as defined by the college you attend.

3. How do I qualify for Passport to Careers as a former foster youth?

- a. If you apply before July 2019, you must have been in care after age 15. As of July 1, 2019, you must have been in care after age 14; as of July 1, 2020, 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 [interstate compact program](#).
 - 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.

Find out more about your legal foster care status by contacting your [Regional Education Liaison](#). They can provide you with a letter documenting your foster care status.

4. How do I qualify for Passport to Careers as an unaccompanied homeless youth?

- a. You must have been an unaccompanied homeless youth (see #5) during the 2018-19 academic year and must apply for Passport after July 1, 2019.
- b. You will be asked to provide your college financial aid office with 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 passport@wsac.wa.gov or 1-888-535-0747, option 3.



5. What does “unaccompanied homeless” mean?

- a. You must have been a youth or young adult experiencing homelessness (see #5b 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 a migratory child living in one of the above circumstances.

Residency

6. 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.
- c. Residency and citizenship can also determine your financial aid application process (see #7).



7. How do I apply for financial aid if I'm going to attend a college to earn a certificate or degree, or enroll in a college-based pre-apprenticeship or apprenticeship program?

You must complete either the [FAFSA \(Free Application for Federal Student Aid\)](#) or the [WASFA \(Washington Application for State Financial Aid\)](#).

- a. If you are a U.S. citizen or eligible non-citizen, you must complete the FAFSA at <http://www.fafsa.ed.gov>. (Be sure to use this .gov website, which is free.) This application will be used to determine your eligibility for many federal and state government types of financial aid that will help you with college and apprenticeship costs and living expenses.
- b. If you are not eligible to file the FAFSA due to immigration status, you could qualify for financial aid from Washington State. The [WASFA](#) is a free application for state financial aid for students who are not eligible for federal aid because of immigration status, including undocumented students. To see if the WASFA is the correct application for you, answer the [questions on the WASFA application site](#). After you complete the WASFA, the college(s) you choose will review your information and determine your state financial aid eligibility.
- c. Visit the [Passport website](#) to find people and events that will help you fill out the FAFSA or WASFA. High schools and colleges also have staff that will help.

8. As a former foster youth, whose income do I report on my FAFSA or WASFA?

Former foster youth will most likely be able to file for financial aid as an *independent student*. This means only your income will be counted and you will not need a parental signature on the FAFSA or WASFA. A dependent student has to include their family income and have a parental signature.

- a. If you were in foster care or were a ward of the court for any length of time after turning 13, you can claim yourself as an *independent student*. Be sure to answer yes to the question on the FAFSA that asks you about your foster care status (see gold box below). The [FAFSA has specific questions](#) for you to answer as an independent student in these circumstances.
- b. If you are unsure if you were in foster care, contact your [Regional Education Liaison](#). Ask them to fill out a *Dependent/Ward of the Court Verification Letter*. Be sure to print and keep several copies, and keep an electronic copy if possible. Your college may ask for it.

FAFSA/WASFA Tip

If you were in foster care or were a ward of the court, look for this question and answer YES:

At any time since you turned age 13, were both your parents deceased, were you in foster care, or were you a dependent or ward of the court?

Wording from the 2019-20 FAFSA. The WASFA will have a similar question.



9. As an unaccompanied homeless youth, whose income do I report on my FAFSA or WASFA?

If you were determined to be an unaccompanied youth who was homeless or was self-supporting and at risk of being homeless, you can claim yourself as an **independent student** on the FAFSA or WASFA. This means only your income will be counted and you will not need a parental signature on the FAFSA or WASFA.

FAFSA/WASFA Tip

If you were determined to be an unaccompanied youth who was homeless or was self-supporting and at risk of being homeless, look for this question and answer YES:

At any time on or after July 1, 2018, were you determined to be an unaccompanied youth who was homeless or self-supporting and at risk of being homeless, as determined by (a) your high school or district homeless liaison, (b) the director of an emergency shelter or transitional housing program funded by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, or (c) the director of a runaway or homeless youth basic center or transitional living program?

Wording from the 2019-20 FAFSA. The WASFA will have a similar question.

If you do not have a determination that you are homeless from any of the above-listed entities, but you believe you are an unaccompanied youth who is homeless or self-supporting and at risk of being homeless, answer “No” to the FAFSA questions concerning being homeless. Then contact your college’s financial aid office to explain your situation.

Homeless means lacking fixed or regular housing. You may be homeless if you are living in shelters, parks, motels, hotels, cars, or temporarily living with someone else because you have nowhere else to go. **Unaccompanied** means a youth or young adult experiencing homelessness while not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian. See #5 for more information.

10. I am no longer in foster care because my foster parents took legal guardianship of me a few years ago. However, my foster parents do not support me with their own financial resources. They still get a foster care check each month for me. How do I answer the question about foster care on the FAFSA?

If you were in foster care at any time after turning 13, answer “yes” to being in foster care on the FAFSA. If you are in a legal guardianship, answer “yes” to being in a legal guardianship, as well. Note: neither legal guardians nor foster parents are considered parents when completing the FAFSA. This means you do not list their income or household size on the FAFSA.



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

If you are participating in an apprenticeship program affiliated with an organization such as a trade union or job center, you will not need to file a FAFSA or WASFA but will apply directly to an organization that is contracted by WSAC to review your application. If you are approved, this organization will distribute your financial assistance. As of January 2019, this contract is not yet awarded. When the contract is awarded, it will be announced on the [Passport website](#).

12. 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 & Industries 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 website](#).
- 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, make sure you complete that application and, if needed, ask for help from the college admissions or financial aid staff. You can find a list of [designated support staff](#) members on the Passport website.

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

- a. Financial need is the difference between the costs associated with attending college and the amount you are asked to contribute. Your financial need will be determined by the college or program you attend based on your answers on the FAFSA or WASFA. 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, and tools. If you are working as an apprentice, you will earn wages to help pay for your living expenses.
- 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.



14. What scholarship and grant programs are available to me if I decide to attend college outside of Washington State?

If you choose to attend college outside of Washington State, you could potentially access assistance from the following programs:

- Federal [Pell Grant](#)
- [Education and Training Voucher \(ETV\)](#)
- WICHE's [Western Undergraduate Exchange \(WUE\) program](#). It reduces the cost of out-of-state tuition at participating colleges and universities in 16 western states.

Program Expansion and Paths (College vs. Apprenticeship)

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

The 2018 Legislature expanded eligibility to include more types of foster care. In addition to youth in Washington state foster care, youth in the federal refugee program, interstate compact program, and tribal foster care are now included. Unaccompanied homeless youth will also be eligible beginning July 2019.

Passport to Careers financial aid and support were also expanded to include more types of career preparation. In addition to certificate and degree programs at [eligible colleges](#) and universities in Washington State, the program now includes pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship programs. See the chart on the next page for a timeline of eligibility changes.

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

Yes, but you can only be enrolled in one of the pathways at a time. You cannot be working on a certificate or degree and also be enrolled in a pre-apprenticeship or apprenticeship program. The total financial aid you receive from the Passport to Careers program 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 (usually the University of Washington).



Passport Eligibility Expansion Timeline

Eligibility Changes	Eligibility prior to June 2018	Eligibility starting July 2018	Eligibility starting July 2019	Eligibility starting July 2020
Program Name	Passport to College	Passport to Careers Includes <i>Passport to College Promise Scholarship</i> and <i>Passport to Apprenticeship Opportunities</i>		
Education/ Training	Postsecondary enrollment at an eligible college	Attending an eligible college, or pre-apprenticeship or apprenticeship program.		
Foster Care	Dependent of Washington State	In state, tribal, or federal foster care systems in Washington State		
Time in Care	In foster care for one year 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 Washington for other-than-educational purposes for one year prior to attending college, graduated from a Washington high school, or earned a GED in Washington		Also includes homelessness or out-of-state foster care under the interstate compact as verified by WSAC.	

If you have questions about your specific situation, contact Passport staff at passport@wsac.wa.gov or call 1-888-535-0747 and select option 3.



Passport to Careers is a program of the Washington Student Achievement Council.