


DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES  
SOCIAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION  
311 WEST SARATOGA STREET  
BALTIMORE, MARYLAND 21201

**DATE:** October 15, 2012

**POLICY #:** SSA# 13-12

**TO:** Directors, Local Departments of Social Services  
Assistant Directors, Services

**FROM:** Carnitra D. White, Executive Director  
Social Services Administration 

**RE:** Maryland's Tuition Waiver Program and  
Education and Training Voucher Program

**PROGRAMS AFFECTED:** Out-of-Home Placement

**ORIGINATING OFFICE:** Resource Development, Placement and Support Services

**ACTION REQUIRED OF:** All Local Departments

**REQUIRED ACTION:** Compliance with the Policy Directive

**ACTION DUE DATE:** October 30, 2012

**CONTACT PERSON:** Anita T. Wilkins, Manager  
Resource Development, Placement and Support Services  
Social Services Administration  
(410) 767-7119  
[awilkins@dhr.state.md.us](mailto:awilkins@dhr.state.md.us)

Jacqueline C. Powell, Education/Health Policy Analyst  
Resource Development, Placement and Support Services  
Social Services Administration  
(410) 767-6948  
[jpowell@dhr.state.md.us](mailto:jpowell@dhr.state.md.us)

**PURPOSE:**

This policy directive seeks to provide case workers with information that will assist foster care and former foster care youth with how to access Maryland's Tuition Waiver for Foster Care Recipients and the Education and Training Voucher (ETV) programs. This policy directive also provides direction on how to apply the Education and Training Voucher.

**BACKGROUND:****Maryland Tuition Waiver for Foster Care Recipients**

Pursuant to Section 15-106.1 of the Education Article of the Maryland Annotated Code, Maryland's Tuition Waiver for Foster Care Recipients is available to foster care youth who are enrolled as a candidate for an associate or bachelor's degree at a Maryland public institution of higher education. The youth must be enrolled on or before he or she reaches the age of 25.

In order to be eligible for the Maryland Tuition Waiver for Foster Care Recipients program, a youth must have:

1. A. Been placed in out-of-home placement by the Maryland Department of Human Resources; and  
B. Resided in an out-of-home placement in Maryland at the time he or she graduated from high school or successfully completed a general equivalency examination; or
2. Resided in an out-of-home placement in Maryland on his or her 13<sup>th</sup> birthday and was adopted out of an out-of-home placement after his or her 13<sup>th</sup> birthday; or
3. Been the younger sibling of a youth who meets the qualifications stated either in 1 or 2 and was adopted concurrently out of an out-of-home placement by the same adoptive family.

The youth must complete and file the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) by March 1<sup>st</sup> of each year. This application is available at [www.fafsa.gov](http://www.fafsa.gov).

The tuition waiver provides exemption from paying tuition and mandatory fees at a Maryland public institution of higher education. The referenced youth must be enrolled as a candidate for an associate's degree or bachelor's degree at a Maryland public institution of higher education, on or before his or her 25<sup>th</sup> birthday. *The tuition waiver applies to any balance on tuition and fees minus any grants and scholarships received.* The youth continues to be exempt from paying tuition and fees until 5 years after first enrolling as a candidate for an associate's degree or a bachelor's degree at a Maryland public institution of higher education or the date that the youth is awarded a bachelor's degree, whichever one comes first. The tuition waiver *does not* apply to room and board and other expenses incurred as part of the overall cost of attendance.

**Maryland's Education and Training Voucher Program (ETV)**

The federal government makes available through an amendment of the Chafee Foster Care Independence Program additional funds for post secondary educational opportunities. The funds can only be used for qualified educational expenses. This program is known as the Education and Training Voucher Program (ETV).

Maryland's Education and Training Voucher Program is administered by the Orphan Foundation of America (OFA) and provides up to \$5,000 per federal fiscal year for college and vocational training for full time students. Part-time students may receive no more than \$2,500.

Foster care youth are eligible for ETV if they are:

- A current foster/kinship care youth, voluntarily placed or committed to the State of Maryland;
- A youth adopted from foster care after age 16;
- A youth who after age 16 entered into a kinship guardianship placement from foster care; or
- A former foster youth who left care at the age of 18, but is not yet 21.
- Additionally, foster care youth must be:
  - Age 18, 19, or 20 when making first application for ETV;
  - A high school graduate or a GED recipient; and
  - Accepted/enrolled at a college, university or vocational school that is accredited.

To be eligible for the ETV program, youth must also complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) by or before March 1 in the year that the youth plans to attend an institution of higher learning.

Participation in the ETV program is renewable until the youth's 23<sup>rd</sup> birthday as long as the youth began receiving ETV funds before the youth turned 21.

**The Education and Training Voucher (ETV) is not a grant or scholarship. Therefore, it shall not be applied to outstanding college or university balances prior to application of the tuition waiver. The Education and Training Voucher shall be used for balances associated with room and board, books, school supplies, and living expenses.**

**ACTION:****Policy Objectives**

- To ensure that foster care youth, who are eligible for Maryland's Tuition Waiver for Foster Care Recipients and/or the ETV programs, apply for these programs so that they do not incur large debt due to applying for student loans in order to pay for tuition and fees to attend colleges, universities and, and vocational schools;
- To ensure that foster care youth are aware of Maryland's Tuition Waiver for Foster Care Recipients and the Education and Training Voucher (ETV) programs, and how to properly access both programs; and

- To ensure that Maryland public colleges and universities do not apply the Education and Training Voucher to outstanding balances prior to application of the tuition waiver.

**Guidelines for Applying for Maryland Tuition Waiver and the Education & Training Voucher**

**Maryland Tuition Waiver for Foster Care Recipients**

1. The DHR/SSA Education/Health Specialist shall contact the Independent Living Coordinators in May and November of each year to inform them that Maryland's Tuition Waiver list is being developed.
2. The Independent Living Coordinator shall ensure that youth are in the appropriate program assignment in MD CHESSIE by the date that is given by the Education/Health Specialist.
3. The DHR/SSA Education/Health Specialist shall send Maryland's Tuition Waiver list that is generated from MD CHESSIE to the Maryland Higher Education Commission in June and December.
4. The Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC) shall ensure that Maryland's Tuition Waiver list is disseminated to the financial aid offices at Maryland public colleges and universities.
5. Students shall complete and file the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) by ***March 1<sup>st</sup> of each year*** at [www.fafsa.gov](http://www.fafsa.gov).
6. Students must contact the financial aid office at their institution to alert them that they are eligible for the tuition waiver in order for the waiver to be activated.
7. The financial aid offices at Maryland public colleges and universities shall refer to Maryland's Tuition Waiver list that is provided to them by the MHEC to ensure that a student is eligible for the tuition waiver program.

NOTE: If the student's name is not on Maryland's Tuition Waiver list, the financial aid office shall contact DHR/SSA's Education/Health Specialist for verification.

**Education and Training Voucher (ETV) Program**

1. Students must complete and file the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) by ***March 1<sup>st</sup> of each year*** at [www.fafsa.gov](http://www.fafsa.gov).
2. Students should go to [www.statevoucher.org](http://www.statevoucher.org), click on Maryland, and complete the online application.
3. Once eligibility status is determined, the student should take the financial aid release form to the financial aid office of the institution.
4. The Financial Aid Office must submit documents to the Maryland ETV program on behalf of the student.
5. Youth must apply for the ETV program every year to remain eligible for the program.

**Responsibilities of Maryland Public Colleges and Universities' Financial Aid & Cashier's Offices**

1. Verify if the student is on Maryland's Tuition Waiver list. *(If the student's name is not on the list, the financial aid office shall contact DHR/SSA's Education/Health Specialist for verification).*
2. Apply the tuition waiver after grants and scholarships have been applied to outstanding balances associated with tuition and fees.
3. Apply the Education and Training Voucher (ETV) to balances associated with room and board. After room and board expenses are paid, any remaining funds should be given to the student. *ETV is not a grant or scholarship and shall not be applied before the tuition waiver.*
4. Accurately complete the ETV financial aid release form. This includes indicating the amount that the student will receive from grants, scholarships, and tuition waiver on the financial aid release form.
5. The cashier's office shall submit the ETV financial aid release form to the ETV program via fax, and keep the student abreast of all expenses incurred as a part of the overall cost of attendance.