

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ's)

The Education and Training Vouchers (ETV) Program is part of the Independent Living Program (ILP) for foster youth. The ILP provides eligible young people in foster care with the basic living skills, education, and employment preparation needed to become self sufficient. These questions are provided as a brief but by no means complete resource on ETV guidelines, processes, and resources.

Question: What is ETV?

Answer: The ETV Program provides funds to foster youth and former foster youth to help them pursue studies at colleges, universities and vocational training institutions. Based on available funds and youth need(s), students may receive up to \$5000 a year for college or vocational training. Students receiving funds prior to their 21st birthday may continue to receive ETV support until they turn 23 years old. The funds may be used for tuition, books or qualified living expenses.

Question: How do I know if I am eligible for ETV?

Answer:

Young people between 16 and 21 years old are eligible for ETV.

- Your most recent foster care placement must have been provided by the State of Virginia;
- You must be eligible for services under Virginia's Chafee Foster Care Independence Program (CFCIP), also known as the ILP, which is offered to all eligible foster care youth between ages 14-21;
- You are encouraged to have a written transitional independent living plan that is based on the your needs, regardless of your goal and placement;
- You must have your high school diploma or equivalent, or General Education Development (GED) certificate;
- Youth pursuing post secondary education should complete and submit the Federal Application For Student Aid (FAFSA). The FAFSA instructions and application can be found at <http://www.fafsa.ed.gov/>. Specific instructions to help in filling out the questions about the category "ward of the court" can be found at http://www.dss.virginia.gov/family/fc/education_training.html

Young people ages 21-23 are also eligible.

- If you are 21 to 23 you must meet all eligibility requirements above.
- You must begin participating in the voucher program before you turn 21 in order to be eligible to receive assistance up to age 23.
- You must continue your enrollment in a post-secondary education

or training program and continue to make satisfactory progress toward completion of that program.

Adopted youth

- If you were adopted from Virginia's foster care system after you turned 16 years old you too are eligible for the ETV Program as long as you meet the same eligibility requirements for foster youth who would have been otherwise eligible for services under Virginia's CFCIP.

Question: What education related expenses will ETV pay for?

Answer: ETV can only pay for the things associated with the "cost of education" as defined by the federal law. These things are:

- Tuition, fees
- Room, board
- Rental or purchase of required equipment, materials, supplies (including a computer)
- Books
- Transportation
- Required residential training
- Special study projects
- Child care
- Accommodations related to the student's disability, such as a personal assistant or specialized equipment that is not paid for by another source
- Expenses related to the youth's work experience in a cooperative education program
- Student loan fees or insurance premiums on the student loan
- Other educationally related expenses

Question: What are some examples of things ETV cannot pay for?

Answer: ETV cannot pay for items such as your cell phone bill, painting your car, traffic tickets/fines, personal loans, lost or stolen debit cards, and computer games. Generally, ETV cannot be used for those things unrelated to the cost of your education.

Question: I aged out of foster care in Virginia but have now changed my state of residency, which State is responsible for providing my Education and Training Voucher?

Answer: For a youth in foster care, the state with placement and care responsibility is responsible for providing a voucher to an eligible youth. The State in which a former foster youth resides is responsible for providing such an eligible youth with a voucher. This provision, however,

does not apply to a former foster care youth who already is receiving a voucher and moves to another State for the sole purpose of attending an institution of higher education. In that instance, we expect that the youth's original State of residence will continue to provide a voucher to the youth for as long as the youth remains eligible for the program.

Question: I was receiving ETV to attend college, but I am not taking classes this semester. I turned 21 during the semester. Am I still eligible for ETV through age 23?

Answer: If it is determined that that you are still enrolled, based on the academic institution's definition of "enrollment," in a post secondary education or training program and you have been making satisfactory progress toward completing the program, despite not actually taking classes at the time you turn 21, the you are still eligible for a voucher until age 23.

Question: I read that the ETV program requires states to describe how they will avoid duplication of benefits under this and any other Federal assistance program. Does this mean that an award of an education and training voucher disqualifies me from also receiving a Pell grant award?

Answer: No. A youth may receive both a Pell grant and a voucher. "Avoiding duplicated benefits" means that the youth cannot receive a combination of federal education assistance and vouchers that totals more than the actual cost of attendance, or otherwise claim for the same expense under multiple federal programs.

Question: I am getting ready to graduate from high school and I have not decided whether I want to go to a four year college or a training program. Exactly what is considered an "institution of higher education" under ETV?

Answer: The term "institution of higher education" in general includes three different types of institutions: **public and nonprofit institutions of higher education; proprietary institutions of higher education; and post secondary vocational institutions.**

A ***public or nonprofit institution of higher education*** must meet the following criteria:

- (1) admits as regular students only persons with a high school diploma or General Development Degree (GED), *OR* students above the age of compulsory school attendance in the State where the institution is located;
- (2) is authorized by the state to provide post secondary education;

- (3) provides an educational program for which the institution awards a bachelor's degree or at least a two-year program (e.g., an associate degree) that is acceptable for full credit toward such a degree *OR* provides at least a one-year training program to prepare students for gainful employment in a recognized occupation; and
- (4) is accredited by a nationally recognized accrediting agency or association, recognized by the Department of Education, or has been granted pre-accreditation status by the agency or association, and the Secretary has determined that there is a satisfactory assurance that the institution will meet the accreditation standards of the agency or association within a reasonable time.

A ***proprietary (for-profit) institution of higher education*** must provide a training program to prepare students for gainful employment in a recognized occupation

A ***postsecondary vocational institution*** must be a public or nonprofit school in existence for at least two years, which provides a training program to prepare students for gainful employment in a recognized occupation.

Certain institutions may not be considered an "institution of higher education" without obtaining special Secretarial approval if they have a high percentage of distance learning classes or students, incarcerated students and students without a high school degree, or have previously filed for bankruptcy or have been convicted of fraud using HEA funds. Schools outside of the United States cannot be considered institutions of higher education for the purposes of the Educational and Training Voucher program.

Question: If the State is paying for the "cost of attendance" for a student under the ETV Program, what are allowable transportation expenses? May the State use funds from the voucher program to pay for expenses related to a student's personal vehicle?

Answer: There is no statutory definition of allowable transportation expenses. If expenses related to the student's personal vehicle are not a part of the cost of attendance, they are not an allowable expense under the voucher program. However, in the latter instance, ETV may pay for costs, such as a youth's car insurance or car repairs that are reasonable and necessary for the youth to become independent or attend classes out of regular IL program funds.

If you have additional questions please email us at:

ILP.ETV@dss.virginia.gov