

ADOLESCENT SERVICES

Post-Secondary School Education Expenses

Policy 42-20-20

Policy The Department of Children and Families may provide financial assistance for post-secondary school education (PSE) expenses within available DCF budget appropriations and in accordance with this policy. Students pursuing a post-secondary school program may be eligible up to age 23 or the end of the academic year during which his or her 23rd birthday occurs.

Definition **"Post-secondary education program"** means college, technical school or a state-accredited job training program.

**Admission
Criteria** To be eligible for assistance for post-secondary school education expenses, the proposed student must:

- be adjudicated neglected, abused or uncared for and committed to DCF by the Superior Court for Juvenile Matters at the time the child turns 18 years old;
- have obtained a high school diploma or received an approval prior to completion of a Graduate Equivalency Diploma (GED);
- exhibit adequate social skills and demonstrate appropriate behavior, as assessed by the adolescent Social Worker and the case history;
- have signed a DCF-779, "Notice at Age of Majority," prior to his or her 18th birthday in order to continue receiving services beyond age 18;
- maintain compliance with the Department through an individual post-majority contract;
- begin full-time post-secondary education for the first semester/trimester/quarter (excluding summer sessions) immediately after receiving his or her high school diploma or GED; and
- must have an approved post-secondary education plan.

Legal reference: Conn.Gen.Stat. [§46b-121](#) and [§46b-129](#).

ADOLESCENT SERVICES

Post-Secondary School Education Expenses

Policy 42-20-20

Part-Time Admission Criteria

Students may attend courses on a part-time basis each semester with the approval of the Commissioner if:

- the student presents with or develops a health or mental health need;
 - the student has been identified as special education and/or the student has had a 504 Accommodation Plan and continues to need special accommodations; or
 - the Commissioner has approved a special exception;
- AND
- the student otherwise meets the criteria set forth in this policy.

Students approved for part-time studies shall take a minimum of two credit-earning classes per semester/trimester/quarter.

Remedial Courses

Students may enroll in remedial courses for the first semester/trimester/quarter of attendance. Subsequent to this, students may enroll in remedial courses but must also enroll for a minimum of 12 non-remedial course credits for each semester/trimester/quarter of attendance that counts towards the awarding of the educational program's goal (e.g., certificate, degree).

Students may enroll in remedial courses in a post-secondary education program during the summer that immediately follows his or her high school graduation or after earning a GED in addition to or in lieu of enrolling in remedial courses during a regular academic school year.

Note: Participation in a GED program in lieu of high school requires the prior permission of the Commissioner.

Vocational Education Students

Students who enroll in vocational education programs shall meet all the requirements of this policy. Vocational education programs are generally two years in length. A student shall begin a vocational education program immediately after high school graduation but no later than his or her 21st birthday. Exceptions may be granted in cases in which a special education student or an English Language Learner graduates from high school after his or her 21st birthday in accordance with an Individualized Education Plan or due to other extraordinary circumstances.

ADOLESCENT SERVICES

Post-Secondary School Education Expenses

Policy 42-20-20

Clients Who are Ineligible for Post- Secondary Education Expense Funding

DCF shall not pay post-secondary education expenses for any student who:

- was a Voluntary Services client placed in- or out-of-home by DCF as of his or her 18th birthday,
- is adjudicated delinquent only;
- is residing in a living arrangement not authorized by DCF;
- is married; or
- is on active duty with any of the armed forces of the United States.

Note: For purposes of this policy, "active duty" is defined as a full-time occupation as part of a military force.

Educational Planning Requirements

Planning for students interested in securing post-secondary education shall be initiated early during the junior year of high school as a joint cooperative effort involving the student, his or her caregiver, the Social Worker, the school counselor and, where appropriate, the surrogate parent and members of the Planning and Placement Team (PPT).

For any student interested in pursuing post-secondary education, the DCF Social Worker shall forward the following materials no later than October 1st of the student's senior year of high school, to a Post-Secondary Education Consultant:

- CAPT scores;
- SAT and ACT scores;
- official high school transcript;
- for approved GED students, all relevant testing and available scores;
- most recent 504 Plan, if applicable;
- proposed educational plan that identifies the type of program, length of program and area of study (*e.g.*, "associate's degree, 2 years, criminal justice;" "bachelor's degree, 4 years, psychology"); and
- list of schools to which the student intends to apply or has applied.

For students who are identified as special education students, the following additional materials shall be provided with the packet:

- most recent Individualized Educational Plan (IEP); and
- other current evaluations conducted within the past three years, including psychological and achievement testing.

ADOLESCENT SERVICES

Post-Secondary School Education Expenses

Policy 42-20-20

Educational Planning Requirements (continued)

A Post-Secondary Education Consultant shall review the packet and provide feedback to the Social Worker and Social Work Supervisor as to the appropriateness of the plan or suggested modifications to the plan.

If a proposed educational plan is not approved by the PSE Consultant, a case conference is required between the PSE Consultant and the Area Office staff. Disagreements shall be resolved by the Director of Educational Services or designee, in consultation with the Regional Administrator, and the decision shall be final.

General Education Diploma (GED)

Social Workers shall encourage all students to remain in and graduate from high school. GED students are eligible for post-secondary educational programs only if an exception is granted by the Commissioner.

To apply for an exception, the Social Worker shall prepare a memorandum for the Commissioner which shall be approved by the Area Office Director and the Regional Administrator. The following shall also be submitted:

- all school transcripts and testing scores up until the time the student left high school;
 - GED scores, when they become available; and
 - any practice reports or progress completed towards the GED; and
 - the anticipated post secondary education plan
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ADOLESCENT SERVICES

Post-Secondary School Education Expenses

Policy 42-20-20

Continuation Requirements

Following the first year of study, a student in a post-secondary education program is expected to complete a minimum of 24 non-remedial credits in each consecutive 12-month period, while maintaining a GPA of at least 2.0 (unless the student is on a pre-approved reduced schedule or has taken remedial courses during the 12-month period). Students taking remedial courses are expected to complete a minimum of 24 credits during any consecutive 12-month period and to maintain a 2.0 GPA for those credits.

If a full time student does not maintain at least a 2.0 GPA for an average of at least 12 course credits per semester/trimester/quarter, an educational consult shall be held between the PSE Consultant and the Area Office staff. If appropriate, the student may be given a second chance to re-enroll or select and enroll in a new program. If the student does not succeed in the second enrollment or program, he or she shall no longer be eligible for post-secondary education funds.

If a pre-approved part-time student does not maintain a 2.0 GPA for an average of six course credits or two classes per semester/trimester/quarter, a PSE consult shall be held.

Note: Two consecutive failed semesters will compromise the continued receipt of Federal Financial Aid.

A student who pursues a vocational certificate-awarding program and successfully completes such program shall be eligible for continued support if he or she elects to enroll in a second program. Any second program shall be determined by the Area Office Director to be a continuation of similar subject matter as the certificate program the student has completed (*e.g.*, CNA to LPN or RN program) or a subsequent program that will support the student in a career goal (*e.g.*, a student with a career goal of owning a beauty salon may opt to enroll in a certificate program within this field and then pursue a business program). The student must begin attending the second program immediately after completing the first program.

A student who enrolls in a degree-awarding program which results in an associate's degree may enroll in a bachelor's degree program. Any such program shall be determined by the Area Office Director to be a continuation of the program the student has completed.

Students are not eligible for post-secondary education expense assistance from DCF following completion of a bachelor's degree or outside the time frames identified in this policy. DCF shall not provide support for advanced degree programs, (*e.g.*, master's degree).

ADOLESCENT SERVICES

Post-Secondary School Education Expenses

Policy 42-20-20

Requirements for Financial Assistance

In order to qualify for post-secondary education financial assistance from the Department, a student shall:

- have a post-secondary education plan (filed in the Education section of the Uniform Case Record) that has been reviewed and approved by a PSE Consultant;
- demonstrate the ability and desire to pursue post-secondary education;
- if age 18 or over, voluntarily agree to continue to receive services from DCF and understand that most services and funding from DCF shall terminate upon reaching age 21, and all funding shall terminate at age 23, or earlier if the conditions for receipt of post-secondary education expenses are not met;
- complete the U.S. Department of Education's Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) no later than 90 days prior to the expected award of a high school diploma or GED and annually thereafter;
- complete, if required by the post-secondary educational facility, the institution-specific financial aid application; and
- apply or compete for appropriate grants and scholarships to offset costs. **Note:** DCF shall not provide financial assistance unless such efforts by the student are reflected in the total funding request.

A youth who requests post-secondary education funding shall provide documentation to his or her Social Worker of:

- enrollment/registration at an accredited institution;
- Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) submission receipt;
- any institution-specific application(s) for financial aid;
- copy of Student Aid Report (SAR);
- high school transcript;
- copy of the financial aid award letter; and
- copies of all grant and scholarship applications and corresponding award determination letters.

ADOLESCENT SERVICES

Post-Secondary School Education Expenses

Policy 42-20-20

DCF Funding Limits Until 21st Birthday

DCF funding for the costs of attendance at a post-secondary educational institution is limited to an amount not to exceed the maximum cost of attendance at a Connecticut State University. Students who choose to attend vocational programs or colleges that exceed the DCF funding limit shall be solely responsible for any and all additional funding costs.

A student who is residing in a congregate care setting or a foster home is not eligible for the room and board portion of the costs of attendance because the room and board portion shall be paid to the congregate care provider or foster home.

Note: At the time this policy was promulgated, the maximum funding for cost of attendance is based upon Central Connecticut State University's "Financial Aid Cost of Attendance Budget" for an undergraduate, in-state, full-time, on-campus student for the current state fiscal year. Contact the Central Office PSE team for the current maximum funding available.

Costs of attendance include:

- tuition and fees;
- room and board (on campus); and/or CHAP rent and stipend (off campus);
- books, equipment, supplies and materials required of all students in the same course of study.

Post-secondary education students who meet the criteria and have exceeded the funding amount may, within available appropriations, be eligible for the following with Area Office Directors approval

- where appropriate, a computer;
- accommodations related to a student's disability that are not funded by another source; and
- 2 round-trip transportation expenses to be used to visit caregivers during educational breaks if attending an out-of-state institution.

Note: Students who have not exceeded the tuition funding limit for that academic year and wish to take additional courses during the winter or summer sessions may do so with the Area Office Director's permission.

Note: Students are also eligible for case management services and health care coverage as approved by a DCF Health Care Advocate to age 21 under the terms set forth in DCF Policy 42-20-30.

ADOLESCENT SERVICES

Post-Secondary School

Education Expenses

Policy 42-20-20

DCF Funding Limits Until 21st Birthday (continued) Students and Social Workers shall work together to pursue an appropriate educational plan that meets the student's educational needs and goals. Students shall be made aware of the funding limits for post-secondary education programs and encouraged to keep this in mind as they select a program.

Note: A post-secondary education student who is the custodial parent of a child may be eligible for additional subsidies.

Cross reference: DCF Policy 42-20-40, "Adolescent Parents' Program."

Requesting Financial Assistance

The Social Worker shall complete the DCF-632, "Financial Assistance Required for Post-Secondary Education." The DCF-632 shall be submitted with a copy of the financial aid award letter from the school to which the student applied and was accepted, and the student's Student Aid Report (SAR).

The Social Worker shall submit the form for signature to:

- the Social Work Supervisor;
- the Program Manager; and
- the Area Office Director.

Note: All information must be submitted prior to signatures.

The Social Worker shall forward a copy of the completed [DCF-632](#) to Child Welfare Accounting (CWA) once approved.

Medical Coverage for Out-of-State Students

A Social Worker who has a student planning to attend a post-secondary educational program out of state shall contact a DCF Health Advocate to coordinate medical coverage and providers in that state.

Social Workers shall submit the [DCF-MA1](#) to the Health Advocate.

Notification/Confirmation

The Social Worker shall confirm the level of the Department's financial participation in the educational plan to:

- the student, using the [DCF-633, "Statement of Financial Assistance – Post-Secondary Education;"](#)
 - the educational institution's financial aid office, using the [DCF-634, "Confirmation of Financial Assistance;"](#) and
 - the bookstore at the educational institution, using the [DCF-635, "Notification to Books."](#)
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ADOLESCENT SERVICES

Post-Secondary School

Education Expenses

Policy 42-20-20

Educational Review

The Social Worker shall conduct a semester/trimester/quarterly review to determine the student's progress in the educational program. The student shall maintain good academic standing and financial aid eligibility, and cooperate with DCF to remain eligible for continued financial assistance.

The review shall include the student's academic performance and financial status on a semester/trimester/quarterly basis to ensure on-going eligibility for financial assistance from the Department. The educational plan shall be updated in LINK to reflect the student's progress.

If there are concerns regarding the academic progress of a youth in post-secondary education, the Social Worker shall request a PSE consult to determine if additional supports are necessary.

Note: See "Continuation Requirements" within this policy.

Documentation The Social Worker shall document the following in LINK:

- all discussions and eligibility reviews;
- all educational consults;
- course grades and GPA;
- financial status;
- earned credits; and
- all new post-majority contracts that are approved.

Note: All relevant forms shall be filed in the Adolescent Services section of the Uniform Case Record.

Compliance

A student receiving post-secondary education expenses from the Department shall retain basic responsibility for maintaining eligibility by continuing to meet the requirements for financial assistance. Students who fall out of compliance with this policy shall immediately be issued a [DCF-800, "Notice of Proposed Denial, Suspension, Reduction, or Discontinuance of DCF Benefits"](#) by the assigned Social Worker.

Legal reference: R.C.S.A. [§17a-90-1 through -13](#).

Cross reference: [DCF Policy 22-4-3, "Fair Hearings."](#)

ADOLESCENT SERVICES

Post-Secondary School Education Expenses

Policy 42-20-20

Subsidies During Academic Breaks

A post-secondary education student may be eligible for an additional subsidy for housing and other living expenses from DCF during academic breaks when other housing is not available, including summer months. A student is not eligible for this additional subsidy during academic sessions.

This subsidy is an additional stipend which shall be prorated based upon the number of days the student is on an academic break and requires housing. The daily prorated amount is 1/30th of the total monthly funding limit.

See chart below for maximum subsidies.

Cross reference: DCF Policy 42-5-3,"Community Housing Assistance Program."

Housing and Living Subsidy During Academic Breaks

TYPE OF SUBSIDY	MONTHLY AMOUNT
CHAP boarding arrangement	\$278
Apartment rental reimbursement including heat (1 bedroom apt.)	\$754 - \$1,314*
Food	\$240
Utilities (excluding heating costs and including water, gas and electricity costs that are not for heating)	\$60
Telephone	\$35
Transportation	\$60
Clothing	\$54
Total	\$1,272 - \$1,813*

*Depending on geographic region; see next section.

Note: If actual costs are less than maximum subsidy amounts, the student is eligible only for the actual costs.

ADOLESCENT SERVICES

Post-Secondary School Education Expenses

Policy 42-20-20

Subsidies During Academic Breaks (cont'd)

If heat is not included in the student's rent, the amount for heat and rent combined may not exceed the allowable rental reimbursement rate.

A student may share housing with one or more roommates who have been approved by both the Social Work Supervisor and Program Manager. In such a case, the subsidy shall be pro-rated based on the regional rent allotment for the appropriate number of bedrooms.

To encourage shared housing, each student with one or more roommates shall be eligible for a subsidy that equals greater than 50% of the student's percentage of the monthly rent and utilities. If the student shares with one person, he or she shall be eligible for 60% of the maximum costs allotted; for two roommates, 50%; for three roommates, 45%. (However, the subsidy shall not exceed the regional rates set forth below.)

The rental reimbursement rate shall be set based upon the physical address of the student and not according to the location of the Area Office with which the student is affiliated. **See** chart below.

AREA OFFICE	RENTAL REIMBURSEMENT SCHEDULE INCLUDING HEAT (MAXIMUM)
Bridgeport	\$ 873
Danbury	\$ 1,042
Hartford, Manchester, New Britain	\$ 798
Meriden, Middletown, Milford and New Haven	\$ 875
Norwalk and Stamford	\$ 1,314
Norwich	\$ 769
Torrington	\$ 773
Waterbury	\$ 754
Willimantic	\$ 769

Household Start-Up Assistance

DCF may provide household start-up assistance and a one-time housing security deposit for a young adult participating in a post-secondary education program if he or she has a documented need for any of the items in the following "Start-Up" sections for on- or off-campus housing.

ADOLESCENT SERVICES

Post-Secondary School

Education Expenses

Policy 42-20-20

Start-Up Furniture

The Department may provide an eligible student with a maximum of \$1,500.00, which must be used for the purchase of furniture. Examples include, but are not limited to:

- kitchen – table and chairs;
 - bedroom – bed frame, twin or full-size mattress and box spring and dresser; and
 - living room – sofa and coffee table.
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Start-Up Housewares and Household Supplies

The Department may provide an eligible student with a maximum of \$150.00 for the purchase of housewares and household supplies. Examples include, but are not limited to:

- pots, pans, utensils and dishes;
 - towels and sheets; and
 - cleaning supplies.
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Start-Up Food Supplies

The Department may provide an eligible student with a one-time payment voucher or a direct payment to a vendor not to exceed \$100.00 for the purchase of food staple items only.

Criteria for Eligibility after 21st Birthday through 23rd Birthday

A student reaching his or her 21st birthday may be deemed eligible to continue to receive financial assistance for post-secondary education until his or her 23rd birthday, or the end of the academic year in which his or her 23rd birthday occurs, if the student meets all other requirements of this policy including admission criteria.

In order to be eligible, the student must:

- already be attending an approved post-secondary education program;
- have a GPA of 2.0 or better; and
- have earned 12 credits per semester/trimester/quarter.

Note: Students who are eligible for services through the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS) may receive educational funding through DCF if they meet the requirements set forth in this policy.

Post-secondary education funding after age 21 is limited to the maximum costs of attendance (tuition, room, board, fees) as set forth in this policy, housing during academic breaks and start-up household expenses, if not already exhausted. The student may also be eligible for medical coverage.

ADOLESCENT SERVICES

Post-Secondary School Education Expenses

Policy 42-20-20

Waivers for Extraordinary Educational Experiences

A student who will otherwise be unable to participate in an extraordinary educational experience because the cost exceeds that maximum funding permitted under this policy may apply for a waiver from the funding limits.

The Social Worker shall submit the following documentation to Regional Administrator for approval:

- a concise summary of the rationale for requesting the waiver;
- the student's school transcript; and
- a description of efforts to seek funding from other sources.

If the Regional Administrator approves the waiver, it shall be forwarded to the Commissioner or designee for the final decision.

Discontinuation of Services and Transitioning from Care

Students who are not in compliance and are at risk of losing post-secondary education benefits shall be given written notice through the [DCF-800, "Notice of Proposed Denial, Suspension, Reduction, or Discontinuation of DCF Benefits."](#) The DCF-800 shall be issued to the student as soon as the student is deemed to be out of compliance by the Social Worker. If the student requests a Fair Hearing, DCF shall continue to pay expenses until a Final Decision is issued.

When a student is discontinued from benefits or voluntarily chooses to leave DCF care, the Social Worker shall make reasonable efforts to assist him or her with the transition. This includes scheduling an Administrative Case Review Conference for the purpose of helping the young adult review and finalize a transition plan as required in DCF Policy 36-5, "Contents of the Child in Placement Case Plan."

The [DCF-MA1, "Medical Assistance Form"](#) shall be completed by the Social Worker and forwarded to the DCF Medical Assistance Unit when the young adult passes from care.

Note: Funding for any transition period after post-secondary education services have been discontinued must be approved by the Area Office Director and shall not exceed 90 days.
