

ADOLESCENT SERVICES

Post-Secondary Education Program

42-4

Policy

The Department of Children and Families may offer funding for a post-secondary education (PSE) program to youth who:

- are committed to DCF as abused, neglected or uncared for, or dually committed, as of the youth's 18th birthday;
- have obtained a high school diploma or its equivalent; and
- demonstrate an interest and ability to pursue an accredited PSE program.

Funding shall be based on available DCF budget appropriations.

Definition

"Post-secondary education program" or "PSE" means a program that leads to an academic college degree or certification in a vocation or employment training.

The PSE Program shall be administered by the DCF Education Division.

Eligibility for PSE Funding

To be eligible for assistance for post-secondary education funding, the youth shall:

- be adjudicated abused, neglected 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 approval for and completed a Graduate Equivalency Diploma (GED);
- demonstrate adequate social skills and appropriate behavior, as assessed by the Adolescent Specialist and the case history;
- have signed a [DCF-779](#), "Notice at Age of Majority and Agreement For Services Post Majority (SPM)," prior to the youth's 18th birthday in order to continue receiving services beyond age 18;
- maintain compliance with DCF through an individual post-majority contract;

AND EITHER:

- begin in a full-time PSE program immediately after receiving a high school diploma or GED; and
- have an approved PSE plan;

OR

- successfully complete CHEER before the youth's 21st birthday; and
 - have an approved PSE plan.
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Eligibility for PSE Funding (continued)

Exceptions may be granted in cases in which a youth who has an Individual Education Plan (IEP) or is an English Language Learner graduates from high school after his or her 21st birthday or due to other extraordinary circumstances.

A youth and his or her Adolescent Specialist shall work together to pursue an appropriate educational plan that meets the youth's educational needs and goals, including his or her cultural and linguistic needs.

Youth shall be made aware of the funding limits for the post-secondary education program and encouraged to remember these funding limits when selecting a program.

Ineligibility for PSE Funding

DCF shall not pay PSE expenses for any youth who:

- was a Voluntary Services client placed in out-of-home care by DCF as of the youth's 18th birthday;
- is residing in a living arrangement not authorized by DCF;
- is married;
- 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 division of the armed forces of the United States

or

- has already benefited from the PSE program and was unsuccessful in two PSE programs.

Youth who have been adjudicated delinquent, and are not dually committed, and are under the supervision of DCF Juvenile Services may be eligible for post-secondary employment and training services, but they shall not be eligible for funding for college course work.

Cross reference: Juvenile Justice Policy, [Chapter 59](#)

Voluntary Community Service Program Participation

Only youth who have been accepted into and deferred their matriculation at an accredited college or university are eligible to participate in a formally-recognized volunteer community service program for up to one year immediately following high school graduation.

All volunteer programs shall be approved by PSE staff.

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**Voluntary
Community
Service
Program
Participation
(continued)**

Youth shall be eligible for subsidies available under the CHEER policy but shall be exempt from the reduction formula during the volunteer year as long as they are in compliance with the Voluntary Community Service Program. If the volunteer program provides any funding for living expenses, this funding shall be subtracted from allowable line items.

If a youth successfully completes his or her volunteer experience, he or she may continue with DCF and pursue the deferred PSE program as long as he or she remains eligible for PSE.

**Post-
Secondary
Education
Plans -
Academic**

For any youth interested in pursuing post-secondary education, the DCF Adolescent Specialist shall submit a Post-Secondary Education (PSE) plan to a Post-Secondary Education Consultant. Plans shall contain the following materials and be submitted no later than July 15th prior to the youth's senior year of high school:

- Smarter Balanced Assessment results (SBA), if applicable;
- CAPT Science score;
- SAT and ACT scores;
- official high school transcript;
- for approved GED youth, all relevant testing and available scores;
- most recent Individualized Education Plan (IEP) or 504 Plan, if applicable;
- most recent psychological or achievement evaluation conducted;
- a youth-prepared summary with a proposed education plan that identifies the following:
 - type of program;
 - field of study or major;
 - career goal; and
 - length of program and projected completion (e.g., certificate program, 18 months; computer programming, associate's degree, two years; criminal justice, bachelor's degree, four years);
- list of schools to which the youth intends to apply or has applied; and
- an approved Preliminary PSE plan.

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Post-Secondary Education Plans Vocational

- For any youth interested in pursuing post-secondary vocational training, the Adolescent Specialist shall submit a PSE plan to a Post-Secondary Education Specialist. Plans shall contain the following materials and be submitted no later than July 15th prior to the youth's senior year of high school:

- Smarter Balanced Assessment results (SBA), if applicable;
- CAPT Science score;
- SAT or ACT scores;
- official high school transcript;
- for approved GED youth, all relevant testing and available scores;
- most recent Individualized Education Plan (IEP) or 504 Plan, if applicable;
- most recent psychological or achievement evaluation conducted;
- proposed employment training plan that identifies the type of employment training program, including the length of the program and the area being pursued; and
- a list of employment training programs to which the youth intends to apply or has applied.

PSE Plans - Community Housing Employment Enrichment Resources Program (CHEER)

For any youth interested in pursuing the Community Housing Employment Enrichment Resources Program (CHEER), the DCF Adolescent Specialist shall submit a PSE plan to PSE staff. PSE staff shall forward the plan to the CHEER Coordinator. Plans must contain the following materials and be submitted no later than July 15th prior to the youth's senior year of high school:

- SAT and ACT scores;
- official high school transcript;
- for approved GED youth, all relevant testing and available scores;
- most recent 504 Plan, if applicable;
- youth prepared summary with a proposed education plan that identified the following:
 - trade of interest;
 - career goal; and
 - length of program and projected completion;
- list of employment training programs to which the youth intends to apply or has applied; and
- an approved preliminary PSE plan.

Cross reference: [DCF Policy 42-5, "Adolescent Services: Community Housing Employment Enrichment Resources \(CHEER\) ."](#)

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**Youth
Transitioning
to DMHAS**

Youth who have been accepted into a Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS) program shall be eligible for funding to pursue post-secondary education. However, these youth, like youth with physical diagnoses, shall factor their treatment needs into their PSE plans. DCF staff shall work with DMHAS to address and prioritize each youth's treatment needs while pursuing post-secondary education.

**Approval of
PSE Plans**

PSE plans shall be approved by a DCF PSE Consultant. If the youth also plans to participate in CHEER, the plan shall also be approved by the CHEER Coordinator.

If the PSE plan is not approved by either the PSE Consultant or CHEER Coordinator, a case conference shall be held between the PSE Consultant, CHEER Coordinator and the Area Office staff (DCF Social Worker, Supervisor and/or Program Manager).

Disagreements shall be resolved by the Superintendent of USD #2 or designee, in consultation with the Regional Administrator, and the decision shall be final.

**Part-Time
Attendance
Criteria**

A youth who otherwise meets the PSE program eligibility requirements, and who demonstrates a need, may request permission each semester from the Commissioner or designee to attend courses on a part-time basis.

Factors that shall be considered when determining whether part-time attendance is appropriate include, but are not limited to, whether the youth:

- presents with or develops a health or mental health condition;
 - was identified as a student in need of special education and related services prior to completing high school; or
 - had an accommodation plan developed prior to completing high school and continues to need accommodations in order to complete his or her post-secondary education.
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Remedial Courses

A youth who meets the PSE program eligibility criteria may enroll in remedial courses for the first semester/trimester/quarter of attendance in his or her post-secondary program.

Subsequent to this, youth 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).

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

PSE Program Funding Continuation Requirements

Following the first year of study, a youth in a post-secondary education program shall be 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 each semester (unless the youth is on a pre-approved reduced schedule or has taken remedial courses during the 12-month period). Youth taking remedial courses shall complete a minimum of 24 credits during any consecutive 12-month period and maintain a 2.0 GPA for those credits each semester.

Note: The consecutive 12-month period for a youth starts on the first month of the first semester in a PSE program. For example, for a youth who starts his or her first semester in September, the 12-month period ends in August the following year. For a youth who starts his or her first semester in January, the 12-month period ends in December of that year.

If a youth enrolled in a college, vocational or employment training program does not maintain good academic standing or compliance with program expectations, an educational meeting shall be held with the youth, the PSE Consultant and the Area Office staff (DCF Social Worker, Supervisor and/or Program Manager). At this meeting, if it is determined that the youth is non-compliant, a DCF-800, "Notice of Proposed Denial, Suspension, Reduction, or Discontinuation of DCF Benefits," shall be issued and a service agreement shall be developed with the youth. If appropriate, the youth may be given the opportunity to withdraw from the current program or track and select and enroll in another unrelated program.

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**PSE Program
Funding
Continuation
Requirements
(continued)**

If the youth does not succeed in the second program, he or she shall no longer be eligible for post-secondary education funds and the DCF-800, "Notice of Proposed Denial, Suspension, Reduction, or Discontinuation of DCF Benefits," shall be re-issued to the youth.

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

A youth who originally pursued a vocational education program after having completed high school or obtained a GED and successfully completes such a program, shall be eligible for continued PSE funding if he or she elects to enroll in a second program. Any second program shall be determined by the Program Manager to be a continuation of similar subject matter as the certificate program the youth has completed (*e.g.*, CNA to LPN or RN program) or a subsequent program that will support the youth in a career goal (*e.g.*, a youth 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 youth shall begin attending the second program immediately after completing the first program.

Note: Youth whose original track was a college degree program and who switched to a vocational education or employment training program have used the two PSE opportunities provided by DCF and are not eligible for any additional funding.

A youth 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 Program Manager to be a continuation of the program the youth has completed.

Youth are not eligible for PSE funding 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).

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PSE Funding Requirements

In order to qualify for PSE funding from DCF, a youth 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 strong 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 of post-secondary education are not met;
- complete the U.S. Department of Education's Free Application for Federal Youth 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 PSE program, the institution-specific financial aid application; and
- apply, or compete, for appropriate grants and scholarships to offset costs.

DCF shall not provide financial assistance unless such efforts by the youth are reflected in the total funding request.

A youth who requests PSE funding shall provide the following documentation to his or her Adolescent Specialist:

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

DCF Funding Limits Until 21st Birthday

DCF funding for the costs of attendance in a PSE program is limited to an amount not to exceed the maximum cost of attendance at a Connecticut State University. Youth who choose to attend programs or colleges that exceed the DCF funding limit shall be solely responsible for any and all additional funding costs.

The maximum funding for cost of attendance in a PSE program shall be based upon Connecticut State University's "Financial Aid Cost of Attendance Budget" for an undergraduate, in-state, full-time, on-campus youth for the current state fiscal year.

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**DCF Funding
Limits Until
21st Birthday
(continued)**

Costs of attendance include:

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

Youth who have exceeded the funding amount may, within available appropriations, be eligible for the following with the Area Office Director's approval:

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

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

Youth 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 Program Manager's permission.

Youth who are participating in a summer internship or bridge program where housing, stipends or living expenses are provided are only eligible for expenses not otherwise covered. These expenses should not exceed the CHAP rent or stipend line item amounts.

Youth are also eligible for case management services to age 21.

**Requesting
Financial
Assistance**

The Adolescent Specialist shall complete the [DCF-632](#), "Financial Assistance Required for Post-Secondary Education," annually prior to the start of the school year. The [DCF-632](#) shall be submitted with a copy of the financial aid award letter from the school to which the youth applied and was accepted, and the youth's Student Aid Report (SAR). The Adolescent Specialist shall submit the DCF-632 and supporting documents for review and approval to the Adolescent Social Work Supervisor, Program Manager and Area Office Director.

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**Requesting
Financial
Assistance
(continued)**

The Adolescent Specialist shall forward a copy of the completed DCF-632 to Child Welfare Accounting (CWA), once approved.

An Adolescent Specialist who has a youth planning to attend a post-secondary program out of state shall contact a DCF Health Advocate to coordinate medical coverage and identify providers in that state.

The Adolescent Specialist shall submit the [DCF-MA1](#), "Medical Assistance Form," to the Health Advocate.

**Confirmation
of Funding**

The Adolescent Specialist shall confirm the level of PSE funding that DCF provide to:

- the youth, using the [DCF-633](#), "Statement of Financial Assistance – Post-Secondary Education, Employment Training;"
 - 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 Bookstore."
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**Educational
Review**

The Adolescent Specialist shall conduct a semester/trimester/quarterly review to determine the youth's progress in his or her PSE program. The youth 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 youth's academic performance and financial status on a semester/trimester/quarterly basis to ensure ongoing eligibility for financial assistance from DCF. Based upon this periodic review, the Adolescent Specialist shall update the PSE plan in LINK to reflect the youth's progress and the benchmarks achieved.

If concerns arise regarding the academic progress or program progress for a youth in a post-secondary education or employment training program based either on the periodic review or from other sources, the Adolescent Specialist shall request a PSE consultation immediately to determine if additional supports are necessary. (**See** "PSE Program Funding Continuation Requirements" section above.)

The Adolescent Specialist shall document the following in LINK:

- all discussions with the youth or others at the program the youth is attending;
- all eligibility reviews;
- all educational consults;
- course grades and GPA;

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**Educational
Review
(continued)**

- programs completed;
- financial status;
- earned credits; and
- all new post-majority contracts that are approved.

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

**Subsidies
During
Academic
Breaks**

A youth may be eligible for an additional subsidy (based on CHAP funding amounts) for housing and other living expenses from DCF during academic breaks when other housing is not available, including summer months. A youth 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 youth is on an academic break and requires housing and living expenses. The daily prorated amount is 1/30th of the total monthly funding limit. (**See** "Adolescent Services Practice Guide" for subsidy amounts.)

**Criteria for
Eligibility
after 21st
Birthday**

The Adolescent Services Specialist shall review the case of each youth who is approaching his or her 21st birthday for continued service eligibility. Youth who were approved for admission to a PSE program and began such program prior to his or her 21st birthday, shall be eligible for funding to complete the program in which he or she is enrolled until his or her 23rd birthday, or the end of the academic year in which his or her 23rd birthday occurs. Youth attending a college degree program shall meet the requirements of this policy to remain eligible for continued services until his or her 23rd birthday, or the end of the academic year in which his or her 23rd birthday occurs.

A youth who has an IEP until his or her 21st birthday shall be eligible for funding under this policy until his or her 23rd birthday.

In order to remain eligible, the youth must:

- already be attending an approved post-secondary education program;
 - have a GPA of 2.0 or better per semester; and
 - have earned 24 credits per calendar year.
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Criteria for Eligibility after 21st Birthday (continued)

Youth who are eligible for services through the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS) may receive educational funding through DCF up to age 23 if they meet the requirements set forth in this policy. Youth must be willing to comply and remain in compliance with treatment recommendations to receive post-secondary education funding from DCF.

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 youth may also be eligible for medical coverage.

Transition After PSE Program

For youth who have completed a college degree or vocational training program, a transitional period may be provided for up to 90 days and shall begin immediately following graduation and continue for a maximum of 90 days. (The most common request for a transition period is for youth who have completed a college degree or vocational/technical program and need time to secure full time employment.)

Discontinuation of Services and Transitioning from Care

Youth who are not in compliance and are at risk of losing DCF 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 youth as soon as the youth is deemed to be out of compliance by the Adolescent Specialist. The youth may request a Fair Hearing within ten days. DCF shall continue to pay PSE expenses until a Final Decision is issued by the Commissioner or designee.

Cross reference: [DCF Policy 42-7, "Adolescent Services: Adolescent Transition Planning."](#)