The COVID-19 pandemic caused unexpected campus closures in mid-March. With the Fall 2020 school year approaching, some campuses have decided to resume in-person classes with heavy safety precautions to enforce social distancing, some are going completely remote, and some will be a hybrid of the two. Students need to make many decisions about if and how they want to resume their education in a way that is safe and meets their needs. Planning for the school year is complicated and young people need our help to make the best decisions possible.

This document includes recommendations for colleges and universities so that they can provide support to students with experience in foster care or homelessness.

1. Access to Financial Aid

- Send reminder emails to students that the FAFSA is available starting on October 1st.
- Host office hours in person or virtually for students experiencing homelessness or foster care.
- Conduct training for financial aid administrators regarding independent student determination statuses, and the unique needs of youth experiencing homelessness or foster care.
- Remove barriers to FAFSA completion with sensitivity to the unique needs of youth experiencing homelessness on their own or from foster care.
- Make students aware of the recent federal guidance that allows students who do not need to file taxes to verify their income through means other than the Verification of Non-Filing (VNF) and IRS Form W-2. Help them complete acceptable documentation.
• Provide outreach to students to let them know how to apply for any remaining Coronavirus Relief (CARES Act) funds, any future relief funds, or other emergency aid that is available.

2. Communicating with Students

• Create a dedicated webpage that has all information regarding COVID-19, classes, safety plans, etc. and include information for students experiencing or at risk of homelessness, or foster care.
• Conduct tailored outreach to students experiencing homelessness or foster care regarding assistance and supports that are available. Consider partnering with your financial aid office to conduct specific outreach to students who indicated independent status on the FAFSA.
• Use a texting application or Chatbox to communicate with students rather than email to make a more personal interaction.

3. Keeping Students Healthy and Succeeding in School

• Offer health kits (masks, sanitizer, thermometer, etc.) to students who are returning to campus.
• Request updated contact and address information from students before sending supplies.
• Make COVID-19 testing available on campus at no cost to students.
• Provide self-isolation space on campus if needed.
• Develop resource lists that are widely available on the campus website and in campus offices that include emergency assistance and support.
• Make sure food pantries are stocked and include hygiene items.
• Create a survey that asks remote students what they need in order to succeed in class.
• Record classes and provide transcripts to ensure all learning styles are accommodated.
• Provide flexible attendance policies and the option to use a webcam in case students cannot join class or cannot turn on their webcam because they cannot find a quiet place to tune in.
General Resources

- **Student Loan Information**: [https://studentaid.gov/announcements-events/coronavirus](https://studentaid.gov/announcements-events/coronavirus)
- **Navigating College During and Post COVID-19—A Tool for Young People**: [https://thinkofus.gitbook.io/command-center/resources](https://thinkofus.gitbook.io/command-center/resources)
- **Low Cost Computers/Laptops**: [https://pcsrefurbished.com/sales/salesHome](https://pcsrefurbished.com/sales/salesHome)
- **Studying During COVID-19**: [https://www.bestcolleges.com/blog/study-tips-at-home/](https://www.bestcolleges.com/blog/study-tips-at-home/)
- **Education Discounts for Students**: [https://www.bestcolleges.com/blog/coronavirus-student-discounts/](https://www.bestcolleges.com/blog/coronavirus-student-discounts/)
- **Various Resources for Students with Foster Care History**: [https://www.togetherwerise.org/covid-19/resources/](https://www.togetherwerise.org/covid-19/resources/)