



The Facts



Corporate Office

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A Step Ahead College Prep and Computer Camp

Each summer SAF brings 20-25 foster youths from around the state to a college campus for three days to experience college life and receive training to help them prepare for postsecondary education. Youths selected for this program have demonstrated they have the desire and potential to go on to college. They are seniors or recent graduates heading off to college in the fall. Camp participants meet other students with the same background and develop a support network. In addition, the youths go home with a new computer to help them when they get to college.

If you know of a foster youth that you believe would benefit from this program, please contact us. This camp is paid for through SAF fundraising efforts.

If you would like to support this worthwhile program, contact Rhonda Safford at (406) 495-7750 or visit our Web site at www.SmartAboutCollege.org.

About Montana ETVs

• What is an ETV?

ETV stands for Education and Training Voucher. The Chafee ETV program, enacted in 2001, provides resources to meet the postsecondary education and training needs of youths aging out of the foster care system. This program – established in 2003 – makes vouchers of up to \$5,000 per year available to eligible youths attending institutions of higher education.

• What is the authorizing legislation behind the ETV Program?

The Chafee ETV Program was established by Congress as part of reauthorization of the Promoting Safe and Stable Families Act. ETVs are the sixth purpose of the Chafee Foster Care Independence Program. Congress does not need to reauthorize this amendment; it is a permanent change to the program. The funds, however, are discretionary and Congress must appropriate them each year.

• How are ETV Program funds allocated to the states?

Each state's annual allocation is based on its total number of children in foster care for the most recent fiscal year. The federal government will pay 80 percent of the total amount of funds expended by the state up to the amount of funds allotted to the state for the Chafee ETV program. In Montana, Student Assistance Foundation (SAF) provides the remaining 20 percent match for the state, often providing much more than the mandatory 20 percent.

• Who is eligible for the ETV Program?

Youths who have left foster care after reaching the age of 18 and have not yet turned 21, and former foster care recipients 21 years of age and younger, are eligible. Students participating in the voucher program at age 21, and making satisfactory progress toward completing their course of study or training, may continue to receive vouchers up to the age of 23. States may provide vouchers to youths who are adopted from foster care or a guardianship after turning 16.

• How long can students receive ETV Program funds?

Students may receive ETV funds as long as they are in good standing and making progress towards completing their program or graduating. In higher education this means earning no less than a 2.0 GPA two semesters in a row or passing marks in a technical/vocational program. Montana students must remain in at least a half-time status or the equivalent at a technical/vocational program.

• How does SAF let foster youth know these funds are available?

Strategies for outreach to eligible youth vary. They include outreach to people who work with adolescents such as child protection specialist, foster parents, high school guidance officers, college and vocational program counselors, financial aid officers, youth and alumni organizations, homeless shelters, and residential programs. Juvenile Court workers, court-appointed special advocates (CASAs) and other advocates are also informed about the ETV program in Montana. Outreach includes basic information regarding eligibility criteria, how to apply, the process for awarding vouchers, and communicating with students. Plus, SAF distributes brochures and postcards containing information about the program across the state.

Directory of useful Internet sites

Student Assistance Foundation
www.SmartAboutCollege.org

Montana Department of Health and Human Services
www.dphhs.mt.gov

Casey Family Services
www.casey.org

Children's Bureau, US Department of Health and Human Services
www.acf.dhhs.gov/programs/cb

Foster Care Alumni of America
www.fostercarealumni.org

National Independent Living Association
www.nilausa.org

National Child Welfare Resource Center for Youth Development
<http://www.nrcys.ou.edu/yd>

Orphan Foundation of America
www.orphan.org

To learn more

Student Assistance Foundation
Rhonda Safford
Foster Care Education Advocate
(877) COLG4ME toll free
(406) 461-1859 cell
(406) 495-7750 office
(406) 495-7852 fax
rsafford@safmt.org
Or log on to our Web site at
www.SmartAboutCollege.org.

• Who administers the Chafee ETV Program in Montana?

The Montana ETV program is administered through the Department of Public Health and Human Services. It is housed in the Child Family Services Division and the State Independent Living Program or CFCIP. States were required to include information about the ETV program as part of the CFCIP sections of the larger Child and Family Services plan established in June 2004. More information is available about the Montana program at www.statevoucher.org or www.SmartAboutCollege.org.

• Will receiving ETV funds affect other federal financial aid?

For the most part, no. The total aid package, including the ETV, may not exceed the total cost of attendance. The ETV-related amendment to the CFCIP states, "The amount of a voucher under this section shall be disregarded for the purposes of determining the recipient's eligibility for, or the amount of, any other federal or federally supported assistance, except that the total amount of educational assistance to a youth under this section and under other federal and federally supported programs shall not exceed the total cost of attendance, and except that the state agency shall take steps to prevent duplication of benefits under this and other federal and federally supported programs."

• What are some best or promising practices for our Montana ETV Program?

We have a clearly defined application process that is available via the Web, by phone or by e-mail. Lines of communication are open between the applicants/participants and SAF to ensure that youths understand and comply with all program components and establish a relationship with the ETV program. (A toll-free number is available for the foster care youths' use.) SAF assesses each application to ensure that ETV funds are based on their unmet need as calculated by their educational institution. The ETV funding is tailored to students' individual needs within the context of the overall financial aid package.

• How can schools help with the ETV Program?

Ongoing support and monitoring of students' progress to encourage them to graduate is critical. ETV recipients should be encouraged to access on-campus services including tutoring, TRiO programs, campus mental health, career services, etc. A probation and specialized support program for youth at risk of failure, or who are not making satisfactory progress toward completion of the educational program, is extremely helpful to these students.

• Are there any deadlines?

Applications for the ETV program are due Jan. 15 for spring and/or summer semesters. July 15 is the deadline for the fall and spring school year. This is the recommended method to apply for ETV for the full school year, in combination with completion of the FAFSA in February. Students attending schools with different start dates should complete the ETV application according to the deadline closest to the start date of the program.

• How, when and where are the ETV funds dispersed?

Once a COMPLETED application is received by the deadline, we strive to have the money at the school prior to commencement of classes. Each school has different tuition due dates for students. Typically, once a COMPLETE application is received by SAF, the disbursement for the new school year should be posted in August. The funds resulting from the processing of the Jan. 15 applications should be out by the end of January. The money is sent directly to the schools and is treated like any other financial aid. Check with your school to find out how and when the student will receive their refund checks for living expenses.