

Using Research to Improve Postsecondary Educational Outcomes of Community College Students in Foster Care



We undertook a mixed-methods study to learn more about the experiences of Illinois community college students who are or were in foster care. Despite significant federal and state investments in programs that aim to promote postsecondary educational attainment among young people in foster care, our findings suggest that community college students who are or were in foster care are not receiving the supports they need to succeed in school from either the child welfare or education systems. [View the full report](#)

FINDINGS

- Finding 1:** Most young people in foster care who enroll in college are community college students (86%), and few of those who enrolled in community college graduated (8%).
- Finding 2:** Students struggled during high school and were under-prepared for college.
- Finding 3:** Students navigated the transition to college with little professional guidance and didn't fully understand how financial aid works.
- Finding 4:** Students want community colleges to tailor supports to address their unique needs, but community college administrators face barriers to providing those supports.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Recommendation 1:** Increase collaboration between education and child welfare systems.
- Recommendation 2:** Minimize school changes and other disruptions during high school.
- Recommendation 3:** Build caseworker capacity to support young people's college aspirations.
- Recommendation 4:** Increase access to information about financial aid.
- Recommendation 5:** Train community colleges personnel on the needs of students who experienced foster care.
- Recommendation 6:** Establish campus-based support programs and Single Points of Contact at community colleges.