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PRESS RELEASE

A joint message from the Oregon Higher Education Coordinating Commission and the Oregon Department of Human Services

Media Contacts: Sunny Petit, ODHS Press Secretary, sunny.petit@dhsosha.or.us, 503-716-2871 (cell); Endi Hartigan, HECC Communications Director, endi.hartigan@state.or.us, 971-701-4032 (cell)

Expanded Federal Pandemic Relief Aid Announced for Young People who Experienced Foster Care in Oregon

Salem, OR – Today, the Higher Education Coordinating Commission’s Office on Student Access and Completion (OSAC) and the Oregon Department of Human Services (ODHS) Child Welfare Division are pleased to announce expanded funds to support progress toward postsecondary education goals for young people who are experiencing or experienced foster care at age 14 or older and who are not yet 27. These funds were included in the bipartisan passage of the [2021 Federal Consolidated Appropriations Act](#), following foster youth advocacy at the national level. Oregon has flexibility in implementing the services under [federal guidance on the fund expansion](#) available through the U.S. Office of the Administration for Children and Families.

The pandemic relief aid temporarily expands funding for two programs: the Chafee Educational Training Vouchers (ETV), and the Youth Transitions Program in Child Welfare. The Chafee (ETV) Grants, administered through ODHS in partnership with OSAC, offer funding to support postsecondary education studies to eligible students who hold a high school diploma or GED® credential who are current or former foster children. Typically, the Chafee Grants are available for young people up until age 26 who experienced foster care at age 14 and older, and are available only during an approved registration period. **With the new funding, eligible young people could receive a grant up to \$12,000 up until age 27.** The grant is available to newly eligible students and to students who may have paused their studies due to the pandemic.

Eligible students may receive a maximum of \$5,000 through the OSAC and financial aid awarding process. **Students who are eligible for the expanded Chafee grant of up to \$5,000 have been identified and will be contacted by email by OSAC.**

Additional funds of up to \$7,000 per student, administered by the Youth Transitions Program through the Child Welfare Division, have also been expanded to help eligible young people access housing security, transportation costs, and technology needs through the pandemic. These funds will be distributed until exhausted. **Students who wish to request the additional funds of up to \$7,000 need to contact Youth Transition Programs at**

ILP.Central@dhsosha.state.or.us.

Rebecca Jones Gaston, Director of the ODHS Child Welfare Division, expressed her optimism about the expansion: “This is important recognition that young people in foster care who may have already aged out, or may be ready to, need extra support for the compounded effects that face this population, especially during COVID-19. We are proud of our staff, partners and community for helping create an Oregon-specific plan to quickly offer assistance.”

Below are the important eligibility changes with the new funding:

- The age of eligibility for Chafee services under the new law is until a young person turns age 27. Young people (up to their 27th birthday) with a high school diploma or GED® credential and pursuing postsecondary education who experienced foster care when they were age 14 or older and meet other grant eligibility criteria are eligible for Chafee ETV Grant funds.
- Chafee ETV Grant funds can pay up to \$12,000 per student, including costs other than Cost of Attendance, to help students remain in school. Young adults may still be eligible for funds to support their college or training success even if they had to pause their educational plans due to COVID-19. Costs for basic needs like food, housing, transportation, as well as supplies (laptop, internet, etc.) can be covered under this grant.

Students with questions may contact ILP.Central@dhsosha.state.or.us. Questions about the Chafee Grant funding may contact Shannon Donivan-Johns, Deputy Director of OSAC, at 541-517-1085 or shannon.donivan-johns@hecc.oregon.gov.

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The State of Oregon's Higher Education Coordinating Commission (HECC) envisions a future in which all Oregonians—and especially those whom our systems have underserved and marginalized—benefit from the transformational power of high-quality postsecondary education and training. For more information, go to www.Oregon.gov/HigherEd