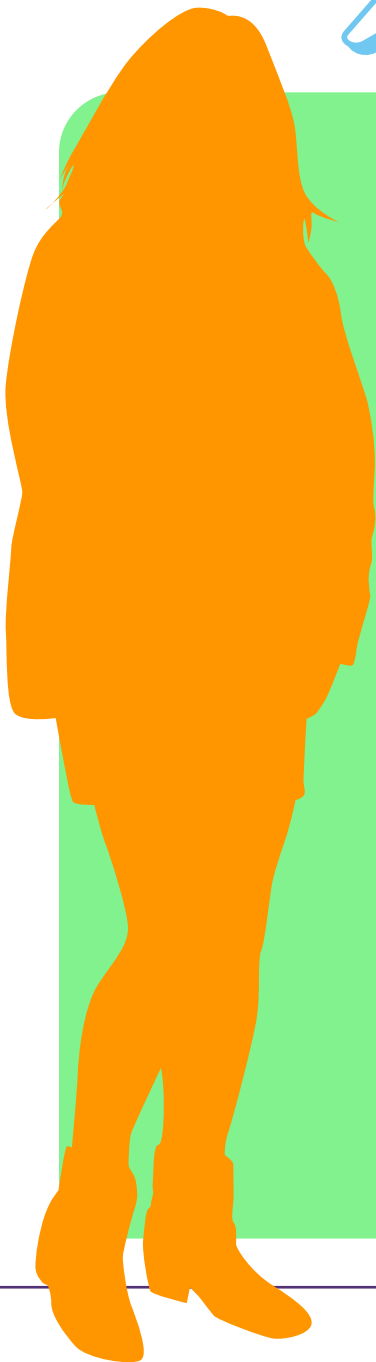




What Do I Need to Know About Planning for College or Work?

What do I need to know about planning for college or work?



Plan for Your Future

You have the right to explore different pathways to prepare for a successful future. This guide will help you learn about supports and resources available throughout New York State for college and vocational training.

Section 1

[How do I figure out what I want to do in the future? What is right for me?](#)

Learning about your skills, interests and abilities is the first step in exploring and preparing for your future.

Section 2

[I am not sure if I want to go to college or to a job training school. How do I figure it out?](#)

If you are thinking about going to college, begin the conversation with your school guidance counselor, family member, caseworker, agency staff, or another trusted adult in your life.

Section 3

[I am ready to start exploring my options. Are there resources that can help me?](#)

There are a variety of college and career planning resources that will help you begin your journey.



NEED TO KNOW SERIES

What Do I Need to Know About Planning for College or Work?

Section 4

[How do I pay for college or job training?](#)

There are many resources to assist you in paying for college or a job training program. Resources such as scholarships, grants, and loans are available to assist with funding.

Section 5

[Are there services that can help me while I am in college?](#)

Need support while in college? There are a variety of programs that can help—not only financially but provide other supports to you as you embark on your academic journey.

Pro Tips

- College is called “higher education”, so if you see these words used, know it is the same as college.
- What is vocational training? If you’re learning a skill that could lead to a specific job, like how to repair cars or how to be a chef, you’re getting vocational training. Vocational means “related to a career”. A vocation is a job or career, so something vocational is related to a specific kind of work.

Section 6

[Where do I live while I am in college?](#)

There are several options of places to live while in college. Many colleges offer dormitory options that are located right on campus, which are referred to as residential buildings. They provide a bed, dressers, and bathrooms that are all available to you! There are perks to living on-campus like being able to access your classes and friends without having to travel, creating new friendships, and support from Residential Advisors and Residential Directors who live on campus as well. College offers meal plans that you can choose from, regardless if you live on campus or in the community. Other options for living could include an apartment on or off campus or staying where you currently live.

Section 7

[I have a disability. Are there services that can help me while I am in college or while going to a vocational training program?](#)

There are several resources available if you have a disability and are considering a college or vocational program. This section will explore resources and accommodations that may be available to you based on your needs at your institution.



What Do I Need to Know About Planning for College or Work?

Section 1.1

How do I figure out what I want to do in the future?
What is right for me?



Pro Tip

A “major” is a specific subject area that students specialize in, for example majoring in Education (to become a teacher) or Business. You may also choose to declare your major as undecided. The resources in this section can help assist you as you begin exploring your career path.

Prepare for a successful future by thinking about the things that interest you, and then find a career that fits those interests.

Obtaining your high school diploma or General Educational Development (GED) diploma is the first step to success. Many jobs require education beyond high school. Vocational training (learning a specific job skill) or college gives you more options in the job market and gives you a better chance of getting a job. You do not need to have it ALL figured out, but it helps to start the conversation about how you would like your future to look.

You will also need a resume, which is a list of your education and training, work experience, abilities, interests, and community service. Additionally, many employers may ask for personal, school, or work-related references from someone who knows you. A reference is someone who can talk about your skills and the kind of person you are. Reach out to your caseworker or professional you trust to help assist you with creating a resume and creating a list of references.

If you have your GED you can still apply to college and vocational programs using your GED.

The best place to start is to explore how your interests, skills, and abilities can connect to a career path. The resources on this page will help you get started.



NEED TO KNOW SERIES

What Do I Need to Know About Planning for College or Work?

Section 1.2

Have any resources?

Here are some resources to assist you in exploring and preparing for your career:

- Check out **CareerZone** on the New York State Department of Labor website <https://careerzone.labor.ny.gov> where you can learn about yourself and career interests, build a resume, and explore careers in these fields:
 - * Arts and Humanities
 - * Business and Information Systems
 - * Engineering and Technology
 - * Health Services
 - * Natural and Agricultural Sciences
 - * Human and Public Services
- Looking for information about getting your GED? Many colleges in New York offer GED programs and some offer programs that result in 24 college credits.
Go to <https://www.collegegedprograms.com/locations/new-york-ged.html#24-credit-programs> for more information.
- Check out <https://www.hesc.ny.gov/prepare-for-college/your-high-school-path-to-college/checklists/freshman-checklist.html> to view college preparation checklists for your freshman, sophomore, junior, and senior years in high school.



NEED TO KNOW SERIES

What Do I Need to Know About Planning for College or Work?

Section 1.3

Here's a sample of some helpful steps:



1

Get Prepared

Work with a guidance counselor/trusted adult/caseworker to start a conversation about college.

2

Explore Careers

Research/explore careers.

3

Research Colleges

Research/explore colleges that offer desired majors or that have a degree program like Humanities or Liberal Arts that lets you take a variety of courses that will help you get a feel for different majors.

4

Tour Colleges

Do you want to explore a variety of college campuses? You may prefer an in-person tour, but you can also access campuses virtually across the United States. Check out <https://www.youvisit.com> to explore colleges and universities that interest you. Be sure to click the Students & Parents option.

5

Apply to Colleges

Apply to colleges.

6

Graduate from High School

Graduate from high school.

7

Accept Offer

Accept college admission or decide on a college if you have multiple acceptances.

8

Go to College

Start your college experience!

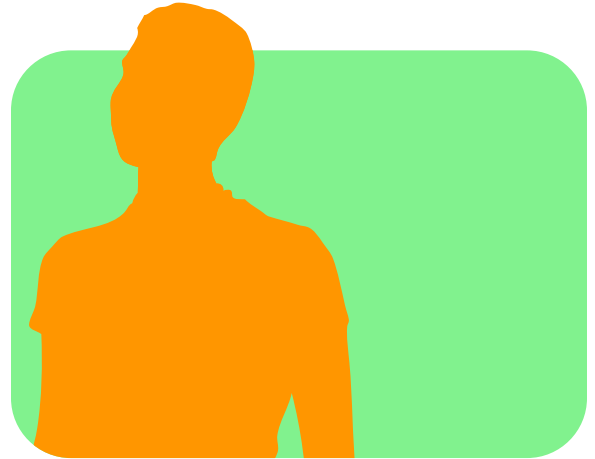


NEED TO KNOW SERIES

What Do I Need to Know About Planning for College or Work?

Section 2.1

I am not sure if I want to go to college or to a job training school. How do I figure it out?



If you are thinking about going to college, start the conversation with your school guidance counselor, family, caseworker, a staff person, or another trusted adult in your life. Consider these conversation topics:

- **How do I know what the required courses are for my chosen major?**

This is good to know as you start planning your courses with the guidance counselor that are completed during high school.

- **What college should I choose?**

Deciding on the right college based on your needs and desired career is important.

Fun Fact

About 80% of college students change their major while in school! It is totally fine to choose a major and then change it while you're in the program.

- **What is the application process for college? Does the school participate in the Common Application?**

The Common Application is a single online college application form used by over 900 colleges and universities. Instead of filling out the same general information—like your address, GPA, and extracurriculars (including sports, student government, community service, employment, arts, hobbies, and educational clubs)—a dozen times, you only have to do it once. Follow this link to learn more: <https://www.commonapp.org/>

- **How do I pay?**

Paying for college/vocational training

- **Where do I live and eat?**

Room and board (where you live and meals) or other living arrangements

- **How can I be supported at college?**

Supports that are available to you during the college/vocational experience



What Do I Need to Know About Planning for College or Work?

When it is time to start looking at colleges, here are some things you want to keep in mind:

- **Campus and class size**—Why? You may feel more comfortable with smaller class sizes or not, it is all up to you!
- **Location of the campus**—Do you want to stay in New York State? Travel? Or live close to friends and family?
- **Academic programs** (If you aren't sure what you want to major in, look for colleges that offer some flexible majors like Liberal Arts and/or Humanities so that you can work on learning your interests during your time in college)
- **Campus life** (athletics, clubs, etc.)
- Explore the **diversity** of the college and student body.
- **The tuition costs and room and board costs** (if living on campus) or housing and food costs (if living off campus)

Here is a resource to help you when thinking about college:

The New York State Youth In Care Corner specifically addresses your needs when exploring college. On this website, you can find resources on applying for college and vocational training, what to expect in college or vocational programs, and how to pay for it. This website also has podcasts and videos of youth speaking about their experience navigating the higher education system. Visit the Youth In Care Corner by going to <https://youthincare.ny.gov/>.





What Do I Need to Know About Planning for College or Work?

Section **2.3**

What if I'm interested in vocational training?



First, let's define it!

Vocational training is education that prepares students for work in a specific trade, a craft, as a technician, or in professional vocations such as engineering, accounting, nursing, medicine, architecture, or law. Some of these jobs include being a nurse, carpenter, and an electrician.

- **Does the school offer the program you want?** A good place to start is: <https://www.trainingproviderresults.gov>
There you can search for training programs near you and see how many people from the program finish and get jobs.
- **What is the total cost (include tuition, books, uniforms, lab fees, etc.)?**
- **Is financial aid available?** Financial aid is money to help pay for college or vocational training. Grants, work-study, loans, and scholarships help make college or vocational training affordable.
- **Are there other tools or supplies you must purchase?**

When looking at vocational (skills-based) opportunities, here are some things to keep in mind:

Think about whether you need more training for the job you want. Maybe you can learn the skills you need on the job. To find out, look at ads for the kinds of jobs you're interested in. Call those employers and ask what kinds of training and experience would be helpful. You can also ask if they recommend any particular programs.



What Do I Need to Know About Planning for College or Work?

Section **3.1**

I am ready to start exploring my options. Are there resources that can help me?



You may have many questions about how to begin planning for college or vocational training. The answers are out there, you just need to ask!

Here are some resources to get you started:

- **The New York State Youth In Care Corner** specifically addresses your needs when exploring college, also known as higher education. On this website, you can find resources on applying for college and vocational training, what to expect in college or vocational programs, and how to pay for higher education. This website also has podcasts and videos of youth speaking about their experience navigating the higher education system. Visit the Youth In Care Corner by going to <https://youthincare.ny.gov/>.
- **Do you want to explore a variety of college campuses?** You may prefer an in-person tour, but you can also access campuses virtually across the United States. Check out <https://www.youvisit.com/> to explore colleges and universities that interest you. Be sure to click the Students & Parents option.
- **Looking for a vocational training program?** Job Corps is a free Residential Education and Job Training program that helps eligible young people ages 16-24 complete their high school education, trains them for meaningful careers, and assists them with obtaining employment. Job Corps provides room and meals during your vocational training for up to three years. Job Corps also provides aging out support services, such as help finding a job, housing, childcare, and transportation. Not sure if Job Corps is right for you? Check out their website at <https://www.jobcorps.gov>.



NEED TO KNOW SERIES

What Do I Need to Know About Planning for College or Work?

Section 3.2

Here are some additional resources to get your plan started:

- Youth Build
<https://youthbuild.org/>
- New York State BOCES
<https://www.boces.org/contact-a-boces/>
- New York Gear Up
<https://gearup.ny.gov/college-readiness>
- iFoster: Resources
<http://ifoster.org/>

Buffalo Region 1:

- Say Yes Buffalo
<https://sayyesbuffalo.org/>
- Eastern Monroe Career Center (EMCC)
<https://www.monroe.edu/domain/69>

Rochester Region 2:

- Education Success Foundation
<https://educationsuccessfoundation.org/>
- Rochester College Access Network
<https://rochestercan.org/>

Syracuse Region 3:

- On Point for College
<https://www.onpointforcollege.org/>

Albany Region 4:

- Brilliant Pathways
<https://brilliantpathways.org/>

Westchester Region 5:

- College Planning of Westchester
<https://www.collegeplanningofwestchester.com>

Long Island Region 5:

- Sunnyside Community Services
<https://www.scsny.org/programs/youth-and-family-programs/college-readiness>

New York City Region 6:

- Administration for Children's Services (ACS)
<https://www1.nyc.gov/site/acs/youth/education.page>
- College Now
<https://k16.cuny.edu/collegenow/>
- On Point for College
<https://www.onpointforcollege.org/>

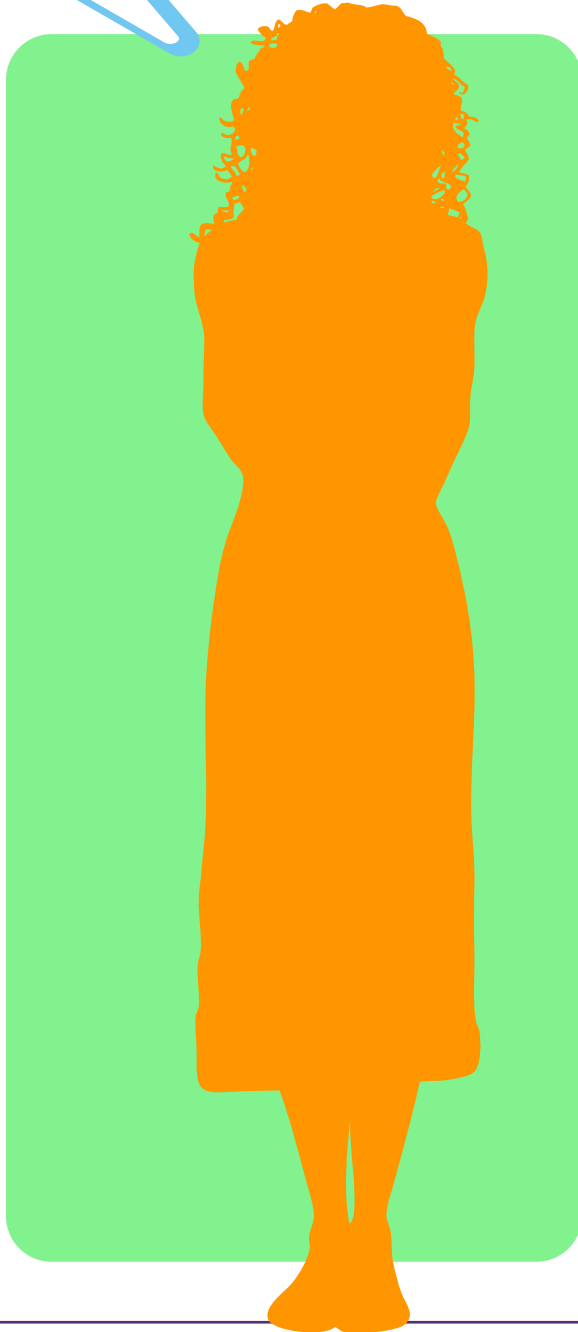


NEED TO KNOW SERIES

What Do I Need to Know About Planning for College or Work?

Section 4.1

How do I pay for college or job training?



There are so many resources to assist you in paying for college or a vocational (job) training program! There are **scholarships, grants, and loans**. What are these?

- **Scholarships are awards that do not have to be repaid.** They must be applied for and are usually awarded based on grades or other specific criteria. Scholarships may be offered one time or can be ongoing aid while in school. They may have requirements like maintaining a certain GPA or continued participation in a sport or club.
- **Grants do not need to be repaid.** They must be applied for and are given based on specific criteria, usually based on financial need, ethnicity, specific ability like sports, or a community activity like volunteering. These also may have some requirements.
- **Student loans must be repaid, usually with interest.** They must be applied for and are given by a bank or institution.

Pro Tip

Financial Aid is money that the federal government gives you based on your need and family income. This helps you to pay for college.



NEED TO KNOW SERIES

What Do I Need to Know About Planning for College or Work?

Section 4.2

Here are resources to help you explore financial aid:

Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)

Most colleges and universities base financial aid decisions on the **Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)**. The Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) is the starting point most colleges use for all financial aid decisions including grants, scholarships, work-study jobs, aid for international study, and student loans for eligible students to help to pay for higher education.

- **The FAFSA needs to be completed before attending college and is renewed each year.** The FAFSA can be used for any and all colleges, so you do not need to complete one for each college you apply to.
 - * To begin your FAFSA, check out <https://studentaid.gov/h/apply-for-aid/fafsa>. Generally the FAFSA application is available October 1, however this date is subject to change. Be sure to check the FAFSA website and/or FAFSA social media for the most up to date information.
 - * When filling out your FAFSA, you can claim the “Independent Student Status” if you were in Foster Care at 13 years old or older, or if you were adopted on or after your 13th birthday. This means that you do not need to enter parental income information, just your own income if you have a job. This makes you more likely to receive the maximum amount of money as well as other supports for paying for college.

Additional Resources

- **The Higher Education Services Corporation (HESC)** is in charge of the New York State Tuition Assistance Program (TAP). Once you finish the FAFSA, you will be directed to the New York State Tuition Assistance Program (TAP) page to apply for New York State aid. Remember, the FAFSA is federal money and TAP is state money. You are also more likely to receive the maximum TAP amount if you are claiming the independent student status on your FAFSA. For information about TAP go to <https://www.hesc.ny.gov/pay-for-college/apply-for-financial-aid/nys-tap.html>.
- **The Education and Training Voucher (ETV) Program** is a special financial assistance program available if you are currently in foster care, if you had been in foster care, if you were adopted/entered KinGap on or after the age of 16, or if you were in foster care on or after the age of 14. Eligible youth may receive up to \$5,000 per year to attend a college or vocational training program. ETV funds may be used for expenses not covered by other financial aid such as books, computer supplies, day care expenses, food, federal student loans repayments (remember the loans have to be paid back), transportation, and rent. ETV funds are on a first come-first serve basis, so it is a good idea to apply when you fill out your FAFSA. Your initial application (first time you apply) for ETV must be completed before you turn 21. The ETV application must also be renewed each year. ETV Funds can be used for five years or until you turn 23 years old. Visit <https://etv-nys.smapply.org/> for more information.



NEED TO KNOW SERIES

What Do I Need to Know About Planning for College or Work?

Section 4.3

- **The Foster Youth College Success Initiative (FYCSI)** provides the support you need, including but not limited to tuition, fees, books, transportation, housing, and other needed supports on campus. FYCSI is not a loan. To be eligible you need to:
 - * Be a current resident of New York State
 - * Have been in foster care or an orphan on or after your 13th birthday (undocumented youth are also eligible if they were in foster care or an orphan on their 13th birthday)
 - * Enrolled in a SUNY or CUNY college or university or a private college or university that has a Higher Education Opportunity Program (HEOP). You do not have to be enrolled in HEOP to receive FYCSI funds. *(See Section 5 for more information about HEOP and other opportunity programs.)*

Documentation that shows you are eligible will be required by the college or university. To apply for FYCSI you will need to fill out a consent form, which the New York State Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) will review and then inform your school of your eligibility. If you are an orphan, you will have to present official death certificates. Additionally, you need to contact the college or university Financial Aid Office or email the New York State Education Department (NYSED), at fosteryouth@nysed.gov with your first and last name, whether you were in foster care or an orphan on or after your 13th birthday, and your email address and phone number so NYSED can contact you with additional information or next steps, as needed. The FYCSI consent form can also be submitted through the TAP application. Visit <http://www.nysed.gov/postsecondary-services/foster-youth-college-success-initiative> for more information.





NEED TO KNOW SERIES

What Do I Need to Know About Planning for College or Work?

Section 4.4

What are the steps for completing my FAFSA?



1

Get Prepared

Gather the documents you'll need at your high school and ask your school staff for help.

2

Complete FAFSA Form

Complete the FAFSA at <https://Studentaid.gov>.
Apply early (opens Oct. 1st) to maximize the money you can receive.

3

Review Student Aid Report

Make corrections, such as adding the college you choose to estimate aid amount.

4

Respond to Aid Offer

Accept the aid you need.

5

Receive Aid (Money)

Get your aid from your school.

6

Renew Your FAFSA Form

Reapply each year you attend college.

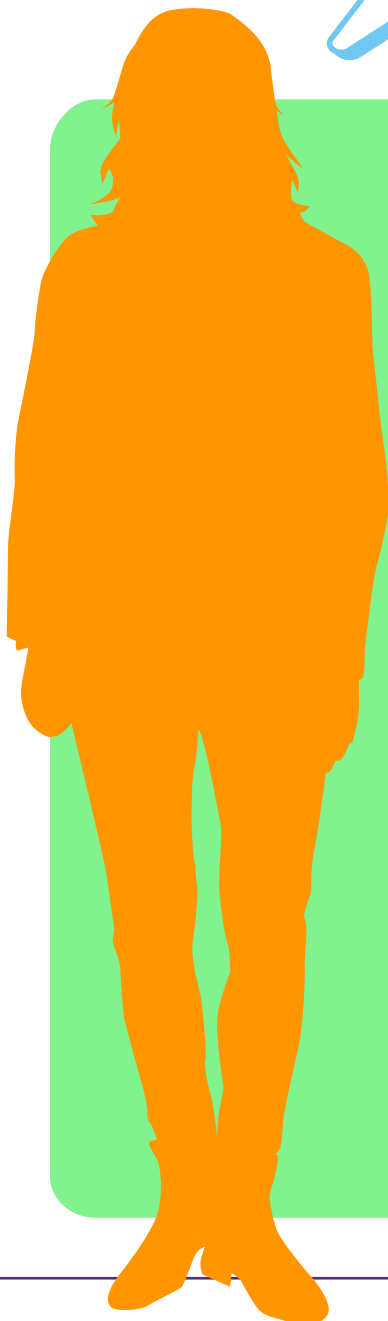


NEED TO KNOW SERIES

What Do I Need to Know About Planning for College or Work?

Section 5.1

Are there services that can help me while I am in college?



There are a variety of opportunity programs and supports at both public and private colleges across New York State. These programs not only help you financially, but also offer support programs, academic counselors, and opportunities to engage with the campus community. Whether you need to develop study techniques, explore wellness (health), or engage with your peers, these programs strive to support you in your journey!

Here are some resources to support you in college:

- **The State University of New York's Educational Opportunity Program (EOP)** provides admission (acceptance) to college for students who come from low-income families, need more help with school, and have the potential and motivation to succeed. This program is available at all state universities and colleges, as well as community colleges. This program provides academic support, financial aid, and a pre-entry summer program to students who are accepted. Be sure to apply within the application period of EOP before starting college to be eligible. For more information on SUNY's EOP visit <https://www.suny.edu/attend/academics/eop/>.



NEED TO KNOW SERIES

What Do I Need to Know About Planning for College or Work?

Section 5.2

- **The Higher Education Opportunity Program (HEOP)** is a program provided at private colleges and universities in New York State. This program serves New York State residents who need academic and financial support. This program provides academic support services including a pre-entry summer program, counseling, and tutoring for student success. For more information about HEOP, visit: <http://www.nysed.gov/postsecondary-services/higher-education-opportunity-program-heop>.
- **Going to college in NYC?** The City University of New York (CUNY) offers two supportive programs.
 - * **The College Discovery (CD)** program is provided at CUNY two-year colleges
 - * **The Percy Ellis Sutton Search for Education, Elevation and Knowledge (SEEK)** is provided at CUNY four-year colleges.

CD and SEEK provide academic, financial, and social supports to help students who otherwise might not be able to attend college due to their grades and financial challenges. More information on CD or SEEK can be found by visiting <https://www.cuny.edu/academics/academic-programs/seek-college-discovery/>.

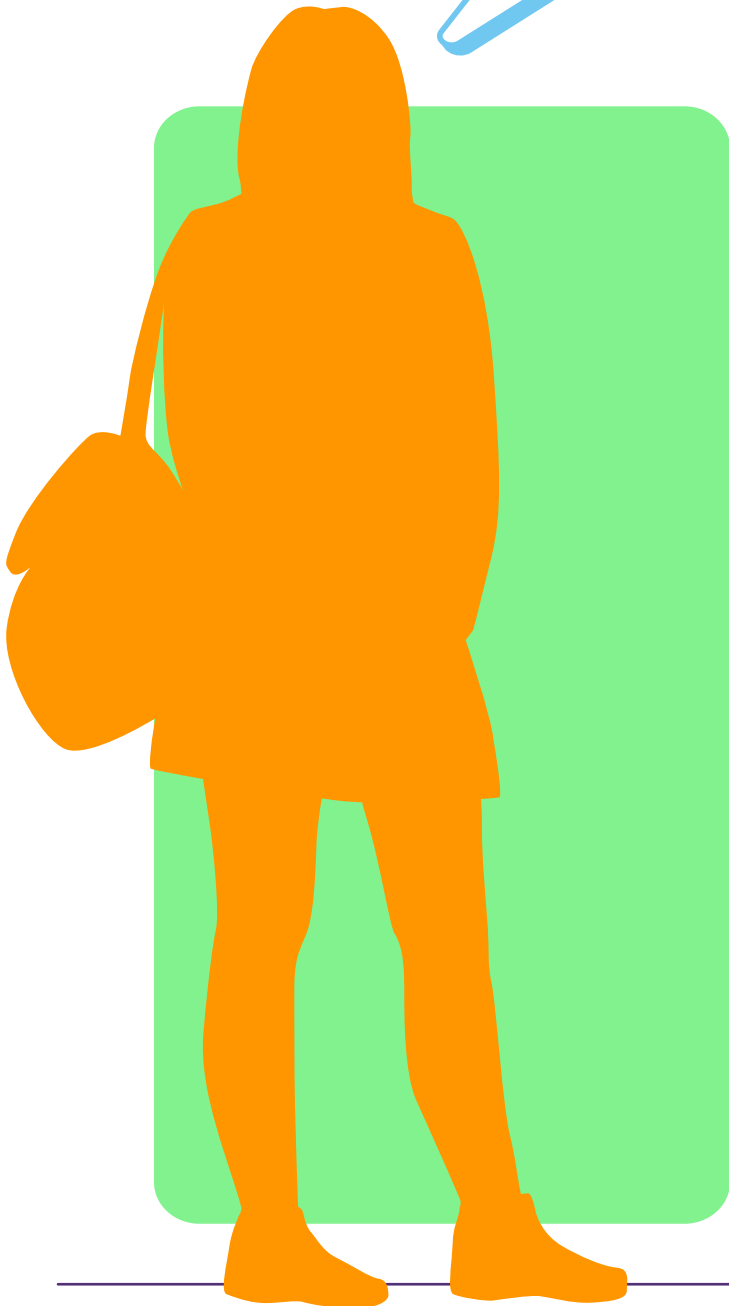




What Do I Need to Know About Planning for College or Work?

Section 6.1

Where do I live while I am in college?



It is up to you! College living can look different for every student. Some students choose to attend schools that are in their community and commute to the campus for classes and activities. Some students choose to live on campus and move away from their current home. Let this be a decision YOU make based on what works best for you!

Be sure to talk with your caseworker about housing while in college, if you are, or will be, living in a Supervised Setting Program (SSP). An SSP includes community settings, college owned housing, and Supervised Independent Living Program (SILP) settings. Discuss all options with your caseworker and other supportive adults. Feel free to advocate for yourself and call the university's admissions office to ask questions about housing.

Ask your caseworker if your local department of social services (LDSS) offers the Foster Care Maintenance Payment to help cover your room and board while in college if you are not residing in an SSP. Be sure to talk to your caseworker regarding options available to you for housing during winter, summer, and holiday break periods (college breaks housing may be covered using FYCSI funds but must be arranged directly with the college).



NEED TO KNOW SERIES

What Do I Need to Know About Planning for College or Work?

Section 6.2

What are the different housing options when I'm in college?



Here are the types of college housing to consider and resources to help you explore your choices:

Campus/Dorm Living

Some colleges offer residential (dorms) living right on campus, which is paid for with room and board (cost if you live on campus and meal plans). There are perks to living on campus such as being able to access your classes and friends without having to drive, creating new friendships, and support from Residential Life Staff that live in the same building as you. Often when you live on campus you can use your meal plan to eat at a variety of places. Keep in mind that some colleges require first-year students to stay on campus in the residential buildings and do not allow them to live in a community apartment until their second year. Each college or university has a Residence Life department to help you navigate living on campus including advice about living with a roommate. Check out a sample of what a typical Residence Life department suggests as things to think about when living with a roommate from SUNY Oswego Residence Life <https://www.oswego.edu/residence-life-and-housing/living-roommate>.

Off Campus Living

- Apartments in the community
 - * Be mindful of rental terms and make sure the lease (rental agreement) covers the school year if you are relying on financial aid
 - * Check out https://ag.ny.gov/sites/default/files/tenants_rights.pdf for information about your rights as a tenant, including information about leases
 - * Check out <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/hpd/services-and-information/tenants-rights-and-responsibilities.page> if you are residing in New York City
- Apartments provided through the college
- Living with a trusted identified adult resource



NEED TO KNOW SERIES

What Do I Need to Know About Planning for College or Work?

Section 7.1

I have a disability. Are there services that can help me while I am in college or while going to a vocational training program?

If you are a youth with a disability, you have a right to attend a college that supports you and gives opportunities to prepare for a successful future. There are a few different resources that can help.

You may have a variety of needs, so please note that all colleges and universities, whether private or public institutions, provide disability services and have an office on campus that provides support. Reach out to their office to arrange the support that you need and ask questions.

Here are some resources to help you prepare for success:

- **ACCES and ACCES-VR (Adult Career and Continuing Education Services-Vocational Rehabilitation)** assists individuals with disabilities to achieve and maintain jobs and supports independent living. ACCES/ACCES-VR can offer financial support as well as a long list of support services, which can be found on their website. Visit <http://www.acces.nysed.gov/> for more information.
- **Disability Resource Centers** (State University of New York) are located on each of the 64 SUNY campuses and offer services for students with disabilities including testing accommodations, note-takers, alternate format texts, assistive technology support,





NEED TO KNOW SERIES

What Do I Need to Know About Planning for College or Work?

Section 7.2

interpreters, academic coaching, building access, and housing related accommodations. For more information on Disability Services within the SUNY system, visit <https://system.suny.edu/university-life/disability-services/>.

- Remember, SUNY is the State University of New York and CUNY is the City University of New York. Both are State schools! For the NYC area, CUNY Disability Services are located on each CUNY campus and features an Office of Disability Services that is managed by a director who coordinates accommodations and support services for students with disabilities. They also provide counseling and referrals and arrange needed aids and services including assistive technology services (for example, text to speech), note takers, readers, sign language interpreter services, distance learning networks, priority registration, and alternative testing arrangements. For more information on disability and accessibility services within the CUNY System, visit <https://www.cuny.edu/current-students/student-affairs/student-services/disability/>.
- Some colleges and universities offer programming and supports for youth with autism and learning differences. Go to <https://www.transitionsusa.org/> for more information.

