



## Spring 2020 Webinar

# Florida Department of Children and Families Tuition Exemption Waiver

# Presenters



Dr. Steve J. Rios  
Senior Director



Racquell "Racqui" Perry, Esq.  
Program Associate



# Objectives

- Present information about key terminology related to waivers
- Provide overview of DCF tuition and fee exemption
- Present basic data about use of DCF waivers in Florida
- Discuss challenges related to waiver processing
- Present research on how Florida colleges process DCF waivers
- Discuss potential ways to process waiver

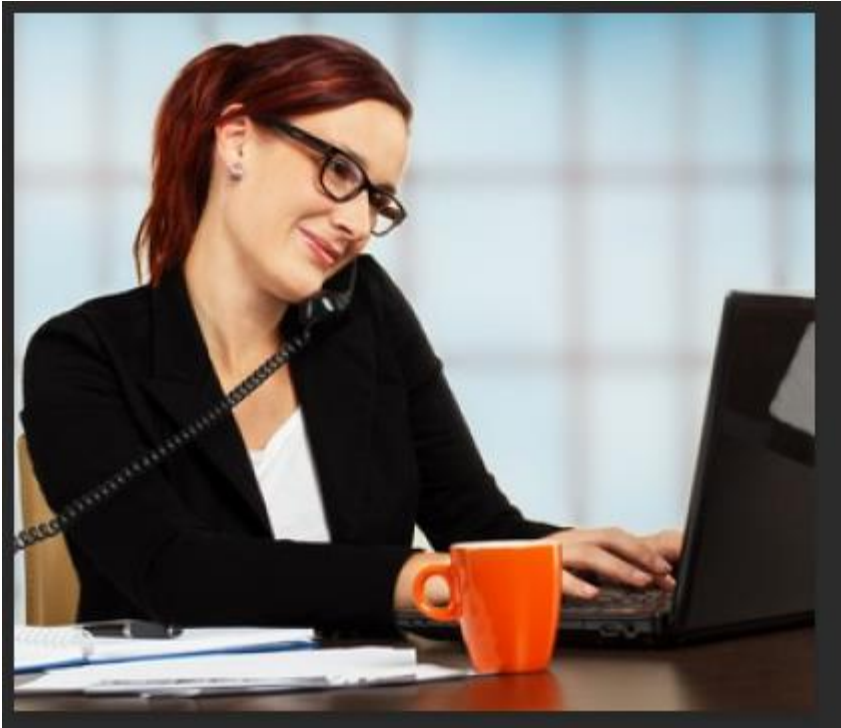


# Terminology

- **Foster care liaison:** A campus-based staff person, sometimes called a “coach”, at your institution who is responsible for intra-campus communication regarding the waiver, processing the waiver accurately and coordinating student success support for the recipients. Throughout the guide, we refer to this person as the “foster care liaison”.
- **Program:** A program or initiative in place to support the academic progress of students using the waiver. We recognize that not most institutions have not established program dedicated to this population. Many institutions serve this population through other student success programs for vulnerable student populations.
- **The waiver.** The administration of the tuition and fee exemption occurs through the Tuition Exemption Form, often also referred to as a “waiver”.



# Sources for Tuition Exemption Form Procedure Guide



- Developed using information from a survey conducted by Educate Tomorrow in July 2019 with 14 institutions administering the tuition exemption for former foster youth.
- Common practices and recommendations were extracted from those interviews to develop a Guide.



# DCF Tuition and Fee Exemptions

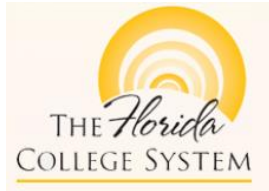
The State of Florida provides tuition and fee exemptions to eligible students. The waiver is authorized at state public universities, public colleges, and technical colleges run by local school districts. Fee exemptions may be available to a student who:

- is or was in the custody of the Department of Children and Families when he or she reached age 18;
- was adopted from the Department of Children and Families after May 5, 1997;
- is or was at the time of reaching age 18 in the custody of a relative under [s. 39.5085, F.S.](#);
- is or was at the time of reaching age 18 in the custody of a non-relative under [s. 39.5085, F.S.](#); or,
- was placed in a guardianship by the court after spending at least six months in the custody of the department after reaching 16 years of age.

Note: The exemption remains valid until the student reaches 28 years of age. See [§ 1009.25\(1\)\(c\), \(d\), Fla. Stat.](#)

For questions regarding eligibility or how to obtain a tuition and fee exemption form, CF-FSP 5220, contact your local Community Based Care Lead Agency or call Florida's Independent Living Resource Center, operated by daniel, at 1-844-ILYOUTH (844-459-6884).





## College Students Using DCF Tuition Exemptions

Academic Year 2017-2018

College	Number	College	Number
North Florida Community College	8	College of Central Florida	75
Northwest Florida State College	47	Chipola College	20
Palm Beach State College	259	Daytona State College	207
Pasco-Hernando State College	115	Florida SouthWestern State College	120
Pensacola State College	139	Florida State College at Jacksonville	255
Polk State College	153	Florida Keys Community College	9
St. Johns River State College	52	Gulf Coast State College	42
St. Petersburg College	227	Hillsborough Community College	285
Santa Fe College	219	Indian River State College	151
Seminole State College of Florida	117	Florida Gateway College	36
South Florida State College	31	Lake-Sumter State College	38
Tallahassee Community College	208	State College of Florida, Manatee-Sarasota	113
Valencia College	301	Miami Dade College	465
Eastern Florida State College	117	North Florida Community College	8
Broward College	392		
<b>Florida</b>		<b>4,201</b>	

Source: Florida Department of Education, 2016-2017 Student Database.

Note: These numbers include adopted, relative-care and non-relative care students using the exemption.





# University Students Using DCF Tuition Exemptions

Academic Years 2016-17 / 2017-18

University	2016-17	2017-18
Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University	107	163
Florida Atlantic University	91	137
Florida Gulf Coast University	41	94
Florida International University	105	143
Florida Polytechnic University	*	*
Florida State University	68	96
New College of Florida	*	*
University of Central Florida	141	191
University of Florida	53	71
University of North Florida	33	54
University of South Florida	82	162
University of West Florida	64	71
<b>Total</b>	<b>785</b>	<b>1,182</b>

Source: State University System of Florida, Academic years 2015-2016 and 2017-2018

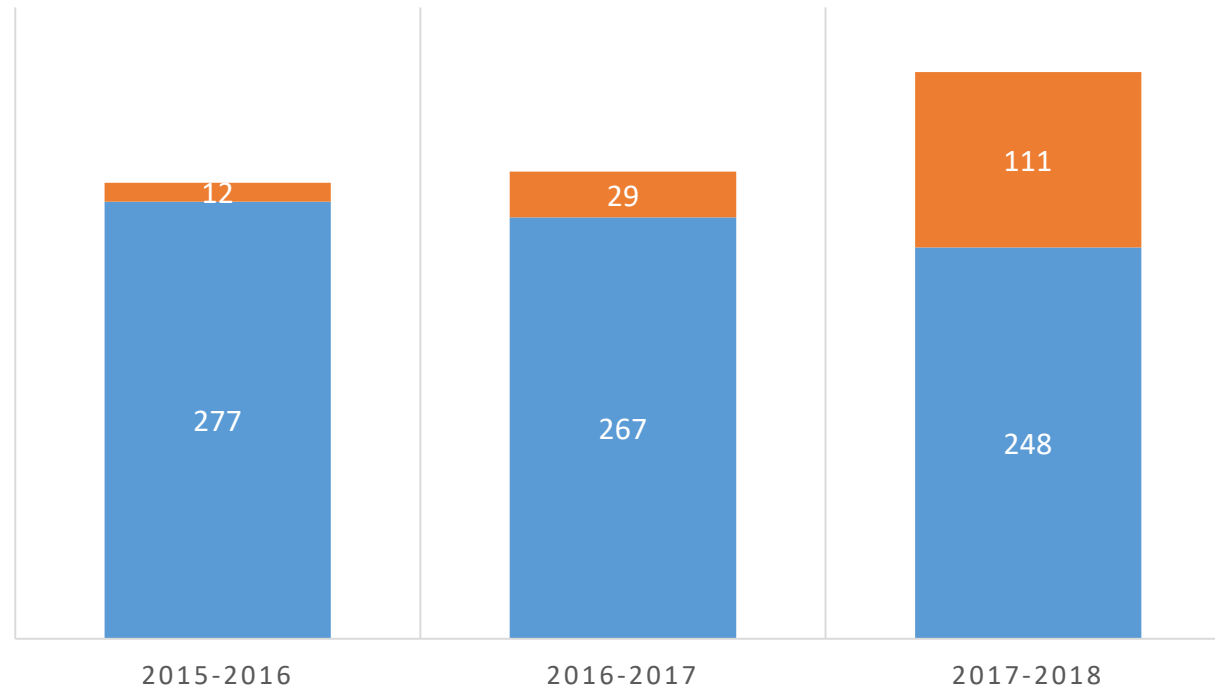
Note: These figures include students who were adopted from foster care or were in relative or non-relative care.





## Career and Technical College Students Using DCF Tuition Exemption

2015-'16 to 2017-'18



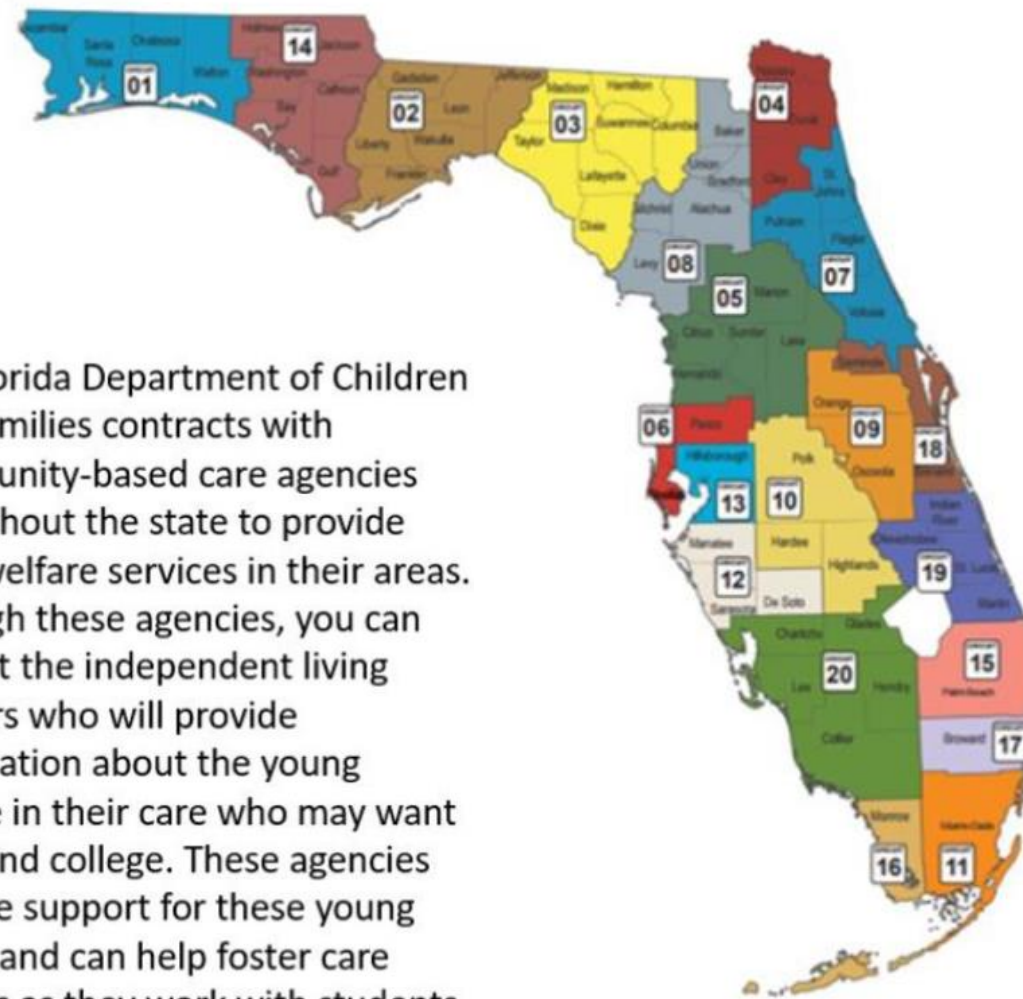
DCF custody  
Relative Care or Adoptive Home

The number of students using the tuition and fee exemption are Florida Technical Colleges and Centers is increasing. For this reason, and because it is part of our legislative mandate, the Positive Pathways Program has been strengthening its ties to the Career and Technical Education Division of the Florida Department of Education.



# Community-based Care Lead Foster Care Agencies

LEGEND			
Circuit	Region	Counties	Lead Agency
1		Escambia, Okaloosa, Santa Rosa, Walton	Families First Network
2	Northwest	Franklin, Gadsden, Jefferson, Leon, Liberty, Wakulla	Big Bend CBC, Inc.
14		Bay, Calhoun, Gulf, Holmes, Jackson, Washington	Big Bend CBC, Inc.
3	Northeast	Columbia, Dixie, Hamilton, Lafayette, Madison, Suwannee, Taylor	Partnership for Strong Families
4		Clay	Kids First of Florida, Inc.
4		Duval, Nassau	Family Support Services of North Florida, Inc.
7		St. Johns	St. Johns County Board of Commissioners
7		Flagler, Putnam, Volusia	Community Partnership for Children, Inc.
8		Alachua, Baker, Bradford, Gilchrist, Levy, Union	Partnership for Strong Families
5		Central	Citrus, Hernando, Lake, Marion, Sumter
9	Orange, Osceola		CBC of Central Florida
10	Hardee, Highlands, Polk		Heartland For Children
18	Seminole		CBC of Central Florida
18	Brevard		Brevard Family Partnership
6	SunCoast	Pasco, Pinellas	Eckerd Community Alternatives
12		DeSoto, Manatee, Sarasota	Sarasota Family YMCA, Inc.
13		Hillsborough	Eckerd Community Alternatives
20		Charlotte, Collier, Glades, Hendry, Lee	Children's Network of Southwest Florida
15	Southeast	Palm Beach	ChildNet, Inc.
17		Broward	ChildNet, Inc.
19		Indian River, Martin, Okeechobee, St. Lucie	Communities Connected for Kids
11	Southern	Miami-Dade	Our Kids of Miami-Dade/Monroe, Inc.
16		Monroe	Our Kids of Miami-Dade/Monroe, Inc.



The Florida Department of Children and Families contracts with Community-based care agencies throughout the state to provide child welfare services in their areas. Through these agencies, you can contact the independent living workers who will provide information about the young people in their care who may want to attend college. These agencies provide support for these young adults and can help foster care liaisons as they work with students receiving the tuition exemption.



# Four Core Elements for Institutions Developing a Waiver Process

1. Identification of students
2. Collecting the waiver
3. Processing and posting credit to student's financial account
4. Outreach by foster care liaison to former foster youth



# Identification of Students

1. Determine a methods to identify students who are eligible for the DCF waiver.
  - Student that self-identify, though the FAFSA, as someone who has been in DCF, he **may** be eligible for the waiver.
  - Financial aid can pull a report for follow-up.
  - Foster care liaison can cross-check the information and follow-up with students
2. Other methods:
  - Admissions application can include a question asking if the applicant has spent time in foster care.
  - Foster students can be referred institution's student services program of foster care liaison
  - Students may initiate contact upon learning about available services
  - Reach out through school media
  - Reach out with mass email



# Waiver Collection & Verification

1. Identify a central point of contact (the foster care liaison) and the department responsible for collection and intake of waiver and serving students.
2. Verify with community-based care lead foster care agency (CBC administers the student's Postsecondary Education Services and Support (PESS) stipend and ensures they are eligible for the waiver.)
3. While some institutions process the waiver through admissions as their first point of contact, it is recommended that the foster care liaison is the first point of contact for all students with the waiver in order to engage the student early on and provide necessary support, services and resources.



# Processing the Waiver

1. Foster care liaison (as opposed to students) submits waiver financial aid/cashier office for billing before final registration deadline
2. Ensures credit is posted to the student's financial account.

## Potential Use of Retention Department

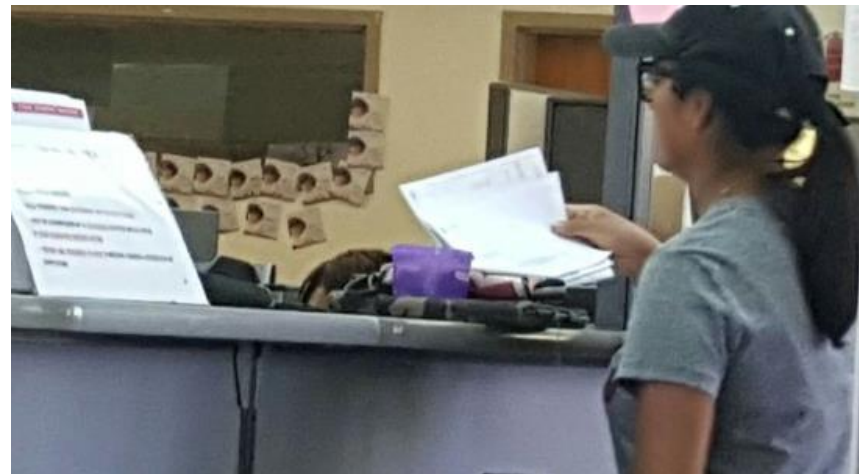
1. For returning students using the waiver, it is also suggested to utilize the retention department to check for students that have unpaid balances and notify foster care liaison

Overall suggestion – Explore potential of one time processing of waiver

- Miami Dade College
- St. Petersburg College



# Two Most Common Ways to Process Waiver



# Most Effective Method





# Outreach by Support Services Personnel

1. Once the foster care liaison is aware of students using the waiver, they can reach out through phone or email and arrange to meet with students.
2. The goal is quick engagement to provide support, ensure success and build community.



# Post Launch

## Cross-Campus Communication

Depending on the hierarchy of your institution, examples of the various departments that might be involved with the Waiver process include:

- Bursar's office
- Housing office
- Cashier's office
- Registrar's office
- Financial Aid office
- New Student / Orientation office
- Student Services or other departments where the program may reside

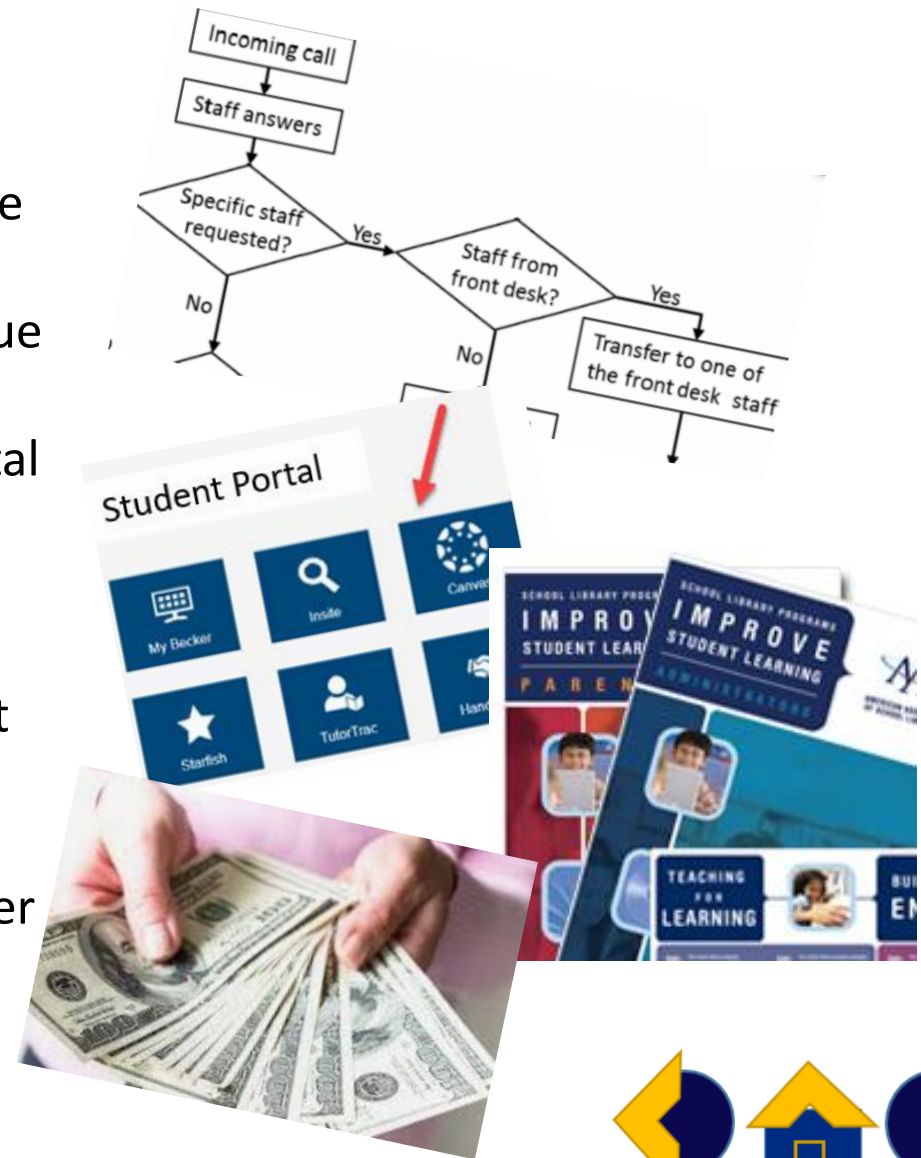
## Reviewing Your Process

Your institution should conduct an annual or periodic planning meeting to evaluate the process to determine what is working and what improvements as needed, as well as adjust for any changes that DCF may require.



# Recommendations to Enhance Processes

1. Map out the flow and the process and show all the stakeholders that are involved
2. Create a communication piece for students explaining the process
3. Make sure that orientation office has insight into this issue in case they receive questions
4. Create an ad or banner on your institution's student portal about your program.
5. Create systems internally so that the waiver is only collected once.
6. Hold an information session for your institution's student services and financial aid department to improve collaboration and understanding (or attend their meetings to discuss waivers and the role of the foster care liaison)



# More Recommendations

6. Develop a strong relationship with your local DCF community based care foster care agency
7. Try to align the waiver process with an existing program when possible
8. Use a student-focused approach to inform your process:
  - Talk to the students and get input about their needs.
  - Develop and hold student-led forums with staff and community partners.
9. Leverage systems you may be using for other tuition waivers like homeless and vets



# For More Information



Dr. Steve J. Rios  
Senior Director



Racquell "Racqui" Perry, Esq.  
Program Assistant



[www.PositivePathwaysFlorida.org](http://www.PositivePathwaysFlorida.org)  
[Pathways@EducateTomorrow.org](mailto:Pathways@EducateTomorrow.org)  
(305) 924-5881



# Join The Network!

To join, click [here](#)



## JOIN THE POSITIVE PATHWAYS NETWORK

Use the form below to join the Positive Pathways network. There is no cost and you will immediately have access to technical assistance from the Positive Pathways team and be able to network with like-minded professional throughout. Network members participate in monthly calls, regional workshops, and learn about vital issues about young adults from foster care. Join us today!

Name \*

First Name

Last Name

Email Address \*

