

Washington State Passport to Careers



Frequently Asked Questions

Have you been in foster care? Or were you homeless without a parent or guardian?

Are you wondering what the future holds? The [Passport to Careers](#) program will help:

- Figure out what job would be a good fit for you.
- Provide money to pay for college or training to help you get that job.
- Provide money for living expenses while you are in college or job training.

This document includes information about:

Passport Program Overview	Applying for Financial Assistance
Eligibility	Other Questions
Residency	

Additional information is available on the [Passport website](#).

1. What do the two Passport to Careers paths provide?

- Passport to College: Students who have been accepted into a participating college and are working toward a first bachelor's degree, associate degree, or certificate may receive:
 - A scholarship that assists with college costs, including tuition, fees, room, board, books, personal expenses, and transportation.
 - Potential support services provided by their college's [Passport Designated Support Staff \(DSS\)](#).
- Passport to Apprenticeships: Students who want a job in a skilled trade, which can include many types of jobs from aerospace manufacturing to health care, have two options:
 - A [pre-apprenticeship is a preparation program](#) recognized by the state [Apprenticeship and Training Council](#). Pre-apprenticeship programs provide preparation for entry into state-approved apprenticeship programs.
 - [An apprenticeship is a training program](#) approved by the Apprenticeship and Training Council or a similar federal entity. Apprentices are paid to work while a master craftsman teaches them the skills needed to be an expert in the field. An apprenticeship may also include classroom lessons. There are apprenticeships for nearly any job, from high-tech manufacturing to health care. Youth who are at least 16 years old may qualify for apprenticeships.



2. What are the overall Passport program qualifications for both former foster youth and unaccompanied homeless youth?

- a. Meet the criteria for former foster youth (see #3) or unaccompanied homeless youth (see #4) outlined below.
- b. Be enrolled at least half-time in an [eligible college](#) or registered pre-apprenticeship or [apprenticeship program](#) by your 21st birthday.
- c. Maintain Washington residency (see #6).
- d. Meet the following additional criteria if in the Passport to College track:
 - i. Be working toward a certificate, associate degree, or first bachelor's degree. You may not pursue a degree in theology and receive the scholarship.
 - ii. Continue to make satisfactory academic progress as defined by the college you attend.

3. How do I qualify for Passport to Careers as a former foster youth?

- a. You must enroll in an eligible college by age 21.
- b. You must have been in foster care at any point after age 13.
- c. You must have been placed in one of these **three types of qualifying foster care**:
 - i. **State foster care in Washington**, or part of the [interstate compact program](#).
 - ii. [Federal foster care](#).
 - iii. [Tribal foster care](#) system.

You can find out more about your legal foster care status by contacting your [Regional Education Liaison](#). They can provide you with a letter documenting your foster care status.

4. How do I qualify for Passport to Careers as an unaccompanied homeless youth?

- a. You must have been an unaccompanied homeless youth (see #5) during the prior academic year or later, prior to turning 21.
- b. You will be asked to provide your college financial aid office with verification that you experienced homelessness. This can be a letter from your high school or [school district McKinney-Vento liaison](#); the director or designated staff member of an emergency shelter, transitional housing program, or homeless youth drop-in center; or other similar professional case manager or school employee.
- c. If you have no formal connection with such a professional, you may contact the Passport to Careers program at passport@wsac.wa.gov or 1-888-535-0747 for assistance verifying your eligibility using a housing questionnaire.



5. What does “unaccompanied homeless” mean?

- a. You must have been a youth or young adult experiencing homelessness (see #5b below) while not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian.
- b. **Homeless** or **homelessness** means without a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence as set forth in the federal [McKinney-Vento homeless assistance act](#). This includes children and youth who meet any of the following criteria:
 - i. Are sharing the housing of others due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason; are living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to the lack of alternative adequate accommodations; are living in emergency or transitional shelters; or are abandoned in hospitals.
 - ii. Have a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings.
 - iii. Are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings.
 - iv. Are a migratory child living in one of the above circumstances.

Residency

6. Do I have to be a Washington state resident and a citizen of the United States?

- a. Generally, you are required to meet [state residency requirements](#) to receive financial aid from the state of Washington; however, if you are unable to establish state residency because you were an unaccompanied homeless youth in another state, or you were placed in state foster care under the interstate compact, your residency may be determined by the [Washington Student Achievement Council \(WSAC\)](#).
- b. If you are not a U.S. citizen or eligible non-citizen, or do not have DACA status, you may be eligible via the [WASFA application process](#) (see #7).

FAFSA/WASFA Tip

You can claim yourself as an “independent student” on the FAFSA or WASFA if:

- You were in foster care or a ward of the court for any length of time after turning 13.
- You were determined to be an unaccompanied youth who was homeless or were self-supporting and at risk of being homeless.

The FAFSA has [specific questions for independent students](#) in these circumstances.



7. How do I apply for financial aid if I'm going to attend a college to earn a certificate or degree, or enroll in a college-based pre-apprenticeship or apprenticeship program?

- a. You must complete either the [FAFSA \(Free Application for Federal Student Aid\)](#) or the [WASFA \(Washington Application for State Financial Aid\)](#). You must be a U.S. citizen or eligible non-citizen to complete the FAFSA. If you are not eligible to file the FAFSA due to immigration status, you could qualify for financial aid from Washington State. The [WASFA](#) is a free application for state financial aid for students who are not eligible for federal aid because of immigration status, including undocumented students. To see if the WASFA is the correct application for you, answer the [questions on the WASFA application site](#).
- b. Homeless youth will most likely be able to file for financial aid as an independent student. This means only your income will be counted and you will not need a parental signature on the FAFSA or WASFA.

8. I am no longer in foster care because my foster parents took legal guardianship of me a few years ago. However, my foster parents do not support me with their own financial resources. They still get a foster care check each month for me. How do I answer the question about foster care on the FAFSA?

If you were in foster care at any time after turning 13, answer "yes" to being in foster care on the FAFSA. If you are in a legal guardianship, answer "yes" to being in a legal guardianship, as well. Note: you will not be asked to list the income or household size of your foster parents or legal guardians on the FAFSA.

9. Where can I find help with the application process?

- a. **Passport to College Promise Scholarship:** If you are in high school, or have not graduated from high school, and are age 13 to 21, a [regional SETuP provider](#) can help.
- b. **Apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship opportunities:**
 - i. Contact a Labor & Industries Apprenticeship Consultant or main office staff to find information about specific pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship programs.
 - ii. WSAC has contracted with ANEW to administer Passport to apprenticeships. See [ANEW's website](#) for information on how to enroll.
- c. **FAFSA or WASFA:** Attend a [College Goal Washington event](#) in your area, talk with your high school counselor, or contact the college financial aid office.

If you have questions about your specific situation, contact Passport staff at passport@wsac.wa.gov or call 1-888-535-0747 and select option 3.



10. How will I receive my Passport to Careers program funds?

- a. Your financial need will be determined by the college or program you attend based on the information you provide on the FAFSA or WASFA. For apprenticeships, [ANew](#) will work with you to determine financial need. If you have financial need, your Passport scholarship will be included in your financial aid package.
 - i. Funding for the Passport to College Promise Scholarship may include but is not limited to tuition, fees, room, board, books, personal expenses, and transportation.
 - ii. Funding for apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship programs may include but is not limited to occupational specific costs, tuition for classes, fees, work clothes, and tools. If you are working as an apprentice, you will earn wages to help pay for your living expenses.
- b. If eligible, you will be notified by Passport to Careers program staff.
- c. If approved for the program, notify the college financial aid office or your approved apprenticeship program of your eligibility.

Other Questions

11. Can I change my mind and switch between the Passport to College Promise Scholarship and the Apprenticeship Opportunities?

Yes, but you can only be enrolled in one of the pathways at a time. You cannot be working on a certificate or degree AND be enrolled in a pre-apprenticeship or apprenticeship program. The total financial aid you receive from the Passport to Careers program cannot be more than you would have received to attend a public university with the highest annual tuition and state-mandated fees in the state for five years (usually the University of Washington). Contact Passport to Careers staff to talk about your specific situation.

12. What scholarship and grant programs are available to me if I decide to attend college outside of Washington State?

If you choose to attend college outside of Washington State, you could potentially access assistance from the following programs:

- Federal [Pell Grant](#)
- [Education and Training Voucher \(ETV\)](#)
- WICHE's [Western Undergraduate Exchange \(WUE\) program](#). It reduces the cost of out-of-state tuition at participating colleges and universities in 16 western states.