

**Guidelines for the Hawaii State Higher Education Board Allowance program
and the Educational and Training Vouchers (ETV) Program**

[Interim procedures (Rev. 09/10)]

The intent of the State funded Higher Education Board Allowance program and the Educational and Training Vouchers (ETV) program, a federally funded initiative under the Chafee Foster Care Independence Act, is to help former foster youth complete their education/ training goals and make a successful transition to self-sufficiency by providing additional financial support for post-secondary education and training.

A. Eligibility / Requirements:

An individual may be eligible for benefits under these programs, if the individual was:

- In foster care placement under the placement responsibility of the Department of Human Services pursuant to Chapter 587, Hawaii Revised Statutes, until:
 - The age of 18 years was attained;
 - Legal guardianship or permanent custody was awarded to an individual(s); or
 - Adoption was finalized.
- Age:
 - Higher education board allowance benefits - applicant must be at least 18 years old and under 27 years old. Initial application must be filed before the end of the student's 21st year.
 - ETV - student must be under 22 years old. If adopted, adoption was finalized after 16th birthday. Youth participating in the ETV program on their 21 birthday shall remain eligible until age 23, provided they remain enrolled in a full time post-secondary education or training program; and are making satisfactory progress in their course of study.
- Accepted to attend / or attending an accredited institution of higher education.
- Part-time attendance is allowable for one [1] academic year. Part-time attendance means carrying the number of courses equivalent to one half of the number of courses the school considers as full time.
- Each student who applies for the higher education board allowance benefit must apply for federal scholarships and financial aid using the "Free Application for Federal Student Aid" (FAFSA). Applications for other scholarships should also be filed.

- Maintain a satisfactory level of performance in accordance with school and federal financial aid guidelines and be making satisfactory progress toward the completion of the program. In general, this means a “C” or 2.0 grade point average.
- Scheduled breaks – vacations, intersession: To be eligible to receive higher education board allowance payments during scheduled breaks in class attendance longer than three [3] weeks the student must participate in activities that will enhance community involvement, life skills, knowledge or employment readiness.
 - The student must provide the Department with the plan for intersession activity prior to the end of the regular academic / training session. Failure to provide this plan will result in termination of benefits.
 - Prior to the beginning of the next academic / training session documentation of participation in allowable activities must be provided to the Department. Documentation may consist of letters from the agency with which the student participated or pay stubs.
 - Allowable activities may include employment, active participation with the Hawaii Foster Youth Coalition [HFYC], volunteering or participation in community services activities.
 - Payment during a scheduled break shall not continue for more than three [3] months.
- Participation with an ILP purchase of services [POS] provider is required on a monthly basis for all students receiving higher education board allowance payments. The focus of these contacts shall be supporting the student’s progress with education / training, may include the provision/referral to other needed services including tutoring. This requirement may be waived in the following situations:
 - The student is participating in regular support or guidance sessions with appropriate staff at the institution of higher education, and written documentation of this participation is provided to the Department on a regular basis.
 - The student is over 21 years of age, has completed at least two [2] years of post secondary education/training at a satisfactory or better grade performance level, and continues to receive satisfactory or better grades.

B. Definitions:

“**Completed Application**” means an application that has all of the required information completed **and** all the required documents attached when it is filed with the Department. Eligibility and benefit determination will only be made on completed applications. If the

application is not completely filled in with all requested information or if there are any missing documents the application will **NOT** be reviewed and benefits will not be awarded

An applicant for higher education/ETV must complete all applicable portions of the application. This means that if the youth is only applying for higher education benefits [not higher education plus ETV] every portion except the **EDUCATIONAL and TRAINING VOUCHER [ETV] Request** portion must be completed. If the applicant is also applying for ETV funding, then every portion of the application, including the ETV request portion must be completed.

“Cost of attendance” in accordance with Federal definition, means the total cost for attendance at an institution of higher education, including the cost of: tuition and fees; room, board and clothing; books and supplies, including rental or purchase of equipment, material and supplies, including documented purchase of a personal computer; travel expenses and transportation, including driver’s education, insurance, bus passes; required residential training and special study projects; dependent care expenses. These are expenses required for school attendance. Other expenses may be considered, if they are directly related to the “cost of attendance.” The cost of purchasing a motor vehicle is **not** an allowable expense.

“Institution of higher education” as defined in Public Law 105-244 means a public or non-profit school accredited by a nationally recognized accrediting association that: awards a bachelor’s degree or not less than a two-year program that provides credit towards a degree; or provides not less than one year of training towards gainful employment; or is a vocational program that provides training for gainful employment and has been in existence at least two years. Additionally, the institution admits as regular students only persons with a high school diploma or equivalent, or admits as regular students persons who are beyond the age of compulsory school attendance.

“Independent Living Transition Plan (ILTP)” is more than a “personal statement.” The ILTP is a written plan developed by the youth with assistance from the DHS social worker, an independent living program [ILP] service provider, or other youth services worker that must include:

1. Educational, career and life goals and the plan for how the youth will obtain the necessary skills, knowledge, services to attain these goals;
2. Plan to ensure the successful completion of post-secondary educational/ vocational training. For students with less than "satisfactory" or "C" grades, the ILTP must include a plan to improve these grades, which may include tutoring, connection with guidance counselors, study groups, or other support systems. This is critical, since continued “less than satisfactory” grades will make a youth ineligible for higher education board allowances an ETV;
3. A projected budget for the current year/academic session; a budget for the total cost of the youth’s education; and a plan for obtaining continuing funding and support during the youth’s participation in higher education

C. Responsibilities:

1. Youth's responsibilities include, but are not limited to:
 - a. Application for additional sources of funding, including scholarships and grants. Applicant must file the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) in a timely manner so that the decision on the FAFSA will be received by the time the application for ETV is filed.
 - b. Completion & filing of the "Application for Higher Education Board Allowance and Education and Training Voucher (ETV)" (DHS 1616);
 - c. Provision of documentation required for determination of initial and continuing eligibility and award amount for ETV;
 - d. Development of an ILTP;
 - e. Provision of receipts and other documentation for the expenditure of the ETV funds; and
 - f. Compliance with the Department's program requirements.
2. The ILP Provider and/or DHS staff shall:
 - a. Assist youth in the development of the ILTP and completion of the ETV application; and
 - b. Provide continuing support and guidance while youth participates in the ETV program and the Department's higher education program.
3. DHS staff shall determine the eligibility for ETV and amount of award for eligible applicants.
4. Payee's responsibilities include but are not limited to:
 - a. Accepting the funds from the Department and disbursing funds to the youth in accordance with the approved plan for use of funds.
 - b. Obtaining receipts documenting the youth's expenditure of funds.

D. Application Process:

The "Application for Higher Education Board Allowance & Educational and Training Vouchers (ETV)" DHS 1616 (Exp. Rev. 07/09) is used to apply for both benefits. The student is to complete all portions of the application with the exception of the

“Determination” section. The “Educational and Training Voucher [ETV] Request” is to be completed only if ETV funds are being requested.

1. Initial application for higher education benefits must be submitted before the end of the youth’s 21st year.
2. Applications are to be filed for each academic session, usually every six (6) months, for planned expenses in the upcoming educational/training sessions.
3. Applications are to be submitted to the youth’s worker or Child Welfare Services Intake if the youth does not have an assigned worker.
4. Required documentation:
 - a. Letter of acceptance – for new and transfer students;
 - b. Current transcript that includes course credits and grades;
 - c. A written Independent Living Transition Plan (ILTP), which must include an annual budget that includes planned income, e.g., earnings, scholarships, loans, grants, and expenses including daily living and educational costs; and
 - d. Financial aid award letter is required to determine the cost of attendance and total amount of financial aid from all sources prior to the ETV funding.

E. Payee:

The payee for higher education board allowance and ETV benefits may be the:

1. Former foster parent, legal guardian or adoptive parent;
2. ILP provider or other intermediary contracted by the Department;
3. Accredited institution of higher education; or
4. Youth/applicant. The youth may be the payee if the youth is at least 21 years of age and has maintained at least two [2] years of post secondary education/training at a satisfactory or better grade performance level.

F. Disposition of Application:

In accordance with section 17-804-6(a) Hawaii Administrative Rules, the disposition of application shall be made no later than thirty calendar days following the date the completed application is received by the Department. The Department shall notify the applicant of the decision within 15 days following the date the Department makes the disposition on the application.

G. Amount of benefits:

Higher education board allowances are equivalent to the prevailing foster board rate. Currently this is \$529 per month. A student may receive a maximum of 60 months of benefits between the ages of 18 and 27 years.

ETV awards shall be provided only to the extent that federal funds are available for this purpose. ETV awards are issued to assist the student with expenses that are not covered by other sources and should not be requested for expenses that can be covered by existing programs, grants or organizations.

In accordance with Federal requirements, the award shall not exceed \$5,000 per year per youth. The usual amount of the ETV will be approximately \$2,000 per year due to the limited amount of Federal funds available and the number of youth applying for these benefits. In **exceptional** circumstances, the award may exceed \$2,000 with documentation of the youth's extreme need and approval of the CWS Section Administrator.

The amount of the award under this program shall be disregarded for purposes of determining the recipient's eligibility for, or the amount of any other Federal or Federally supported assistance, except that the total amount of educational assistance to a youth under this program and under other Federal and Federally supported programs shall not exceed the total cost of attendance, as defined in section 472 of the Higher Education Act of 1995.

H. Appeal/Hearing Process:

A youth who does not agree with the determination of the application has the right to an Administrative Hearing in accordance with chapter 17-602.1 Hawaii Administrative Rules and Departmental procedures.

I. Overpayments:

An overpayment shall occur when the youth receives higher education board allowance or ETV benefits to which the youth is not entitled. Overpayments shall be collected directly from the youth.