



North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services Division of Social Services

325 North Salisbury Street • Raleigh, North Carolina 27699-2409
Courier # 56-20-25 MSC 2409

Michael F. Easley, Governor
Director
Carmen Hooker Odom, Secretary

Pheon E. Beal,
(919) 733-3055

July 3, 2003

Dear County Director of Social Services

Education and Training Vouchers (ETV) Attn: LINKS liaisons and Foster Care supervisors

After consultation with the Child and Family Services Committee, the Division of Social Services plans to take advantage of a new funding resource to assist young adults to attend accredited or licensed post-secondary education or vocational training programs. This program will begin on or after October 1, 2003 and provides up to \$5000 per year for qualified students. This money can be used for any costs associated with the youth attending the school such as tuition, fees, books, room and board, transportation, or repayment of student loans.

In order to qualify for these funds, students:

- Must have aged out of foster care at age 18 and now be between the ages of 18 and 21 or may have been adopted after their 16th birthday and now be between the ages of 18 and 21;
- Must be a full time student at an accredited post-secondary educational program or an accredited/licensed vocational training program, or accepted for enrollment in the next term; and
- Must be making satisfactory progress toward completion of the course of study.

Qualification for these funds does not interfere with a student's eligibility for other educational funding such as the Pell Grant. These young adults do not have to be participating in a VPA/CARS agreement to qualify for this program.

The language of the enabling legislation allows states to use their current Chafee (LINKS) funds as Education/Training Vouchers. In addition, the language of the enabling legislation allows students who are receiving Education/Training vouchers before their twenty first birthday to remain eligible to receive these vouchers until their 23rd birthday! Therefore we want to use some of our current Chafee money to provide "Education/Training Vouchers" to all our eligible twenty year old students prior to their 21st birthday, thus assuring their continued eligibility.

We have heard from LINKS liaisons in 51 counties, and have a list of approximately 50 twenty year old college students. Letters were mailed to County Directors who had eligible young adults who were going to have their 21st birthday imminently, to assure that funds were provided to "grandfather" them in under this program. Between now and October, or the beginning of the ETV program, we ask that you provide token amounts (approximately \$100) which are

designated as Education Training Vouchers, spending this on education-related expenses for the 20 year olds who aged out of your custody and to request reimbursement on the attached

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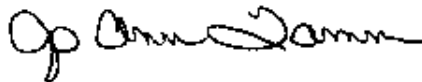
form. This action will assure that these students remain qualified past their 21st birthdays. Reimbursement will be handled in the same way as the Special Funds program, and will use the same EFT process. After the ETV program is funded, all eligible young adults 18-21 will be included. At that point we hope to have a contract with Orphan Foundation of America, who will administer that portion of the grant and will assure that eligible students receive the maximum amount possible.

We are very excited about the way that this grant is written, and the opportunities that will be afforded to these young adults. By including young adults who were adopted after their 16th birthday, we anticipate that barriers to some adoptions will be removed. By allowing young adults to continue to receive this assistance until they are 23, we anticipate that more youth will finish 4 year programs. By not counting these vouchers as "income" in terms of qualifying for other educational assistance, young adults will have more choices of programs of higher learning. By allowing use to pay off student loans, some students will be able to significantly reduce their debt load.

We hope that you are as excited about this program as we are and will encourage your foster care staff to seek out and register eligible young adults who aged out of your care and who are now in college or vocational school.

If you have questions about the Education/Voucher program, please contact Joan McAllister, program coordinator of the LINKS program at (919) 733-2580.

Sincerely,



JoAnn Lamm
Program Administrator
Family Support and Child Welfare Services Section

JAL/jm

Attachments:

- Authorization for Funds Access/Eligibility Criteria (2 page form)
- Request for Reimbursement Education Training Voucher

Cc: Pheon Beal
Sherry Bradsher
Family Support and Child Welfare Team Leaders
Family Support and Child Welfare Program Representatives

FSCWSS-01-2003