Minnesota Education and Training (ETV) Program: Preparing foster youth for college success

Intended primarily for youth and caseworkers, school counselors, foster parents, and others supporting a youth in foster care.

Tuition support  College Aid  Education  Training Vouchers  Scholarships  Post-secondary options

Department of Human Services

Child Safety and Permanency Division
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Education and Training Voucher program overview
The Minnesota Education and Training Voucher (ETV) program is funded by the federal government and administered by the Minnesota Department of Human Services. Implemented in 2003, ETVs provide funds for eligible youth to attend accredited colleges, universities, vocational, technical or trade schools. Students can receive up to $5,000 per ETV award year to help pay for approved school and living expenses. ETVs supplement a student’s efforts to obtain financial assistance to help pay for the cost of post-secondary education. ETVs do not have to be paid back. All states have an ETV program. The guidelines help students and those working with them to plan for post-secondary education, describe the ETV program, and expectations of students participating in the program.

Importance of post-secondary education
Foster care youth need to know that there is a world of possibilities for them as they enter adulthood. A youth’s planning and support team of caseworkers, family members, foster parents/caregivers, guardians ad litem, school staff, and others can play a significant role in guiding them to successful educational experiences after high school by increasing their expectations of what they can accomplish through education, and by adequately preparing themselves. Data proves that foster care youth need to be prepared academically, and have a network of support, for post-secondary success.

The Midwest Evaluation of Adult Functioning of Former Foster Youth found the following outcomes of youth at age 21: “Compared with their peers, these young adults are on average less likely to have a high school diploma, less likely to be pursuing higher education, less likely to be earning a living wage, more likely to have experienced economic hardships, more likely to have a child outside of wedlock, and more likely to have become involved with the criminal justice system.”

Foster care youth often report that few people in their lives expect them to attend and succeed in post-secondary education. These students are seldom provided the kind of guidance and stable supports needed to prepare for and navigate higher education.

Students in extended foster care (EFC), ages 18-21, have done better than youth not in extended foster care. Per the Minnesota National Youth in Transition Database (MNYTD), youth in EFC at ages 18 and 21 received financial aid, were enrolled/attending school and completing high school/GED, at higher rates than youth not in EFC.

Planning for post-secondary education

Independent living plan: County and tribal caseworkers have a responsibility to prepare foster care youth for successful adult living. An independent living plan is required by Minnesota Statutes, section 260C.212, subd. 1 (b) (12) (i), for youth age 14 or older, that includes planning for post-secondary education. Youth under state/tribal guardianship and those under permanent custody of a social service agency are the highest priority in preparing for adult living. Instilling a vision of post-secondary education can start at any age, with concrete planning starting in middle school.

Learning plan: School districts must assist all students by no later than grade nine to explore their educational, post-secondary, career interests, aptitudes and aspirations. This includes developing a plan for a smooth and successful transition to post-secondary education or employment per Minnesota Statutes, section 120B.125.

Review post-secondary educational resources on pages 24-25 that can be used in developing the above plans with youth and their planning and support team.

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2 Supporting Success: Improving higher education outcomes for students from foster care, Casey Family Programs.
Important dates

- **July 1–June 30**: ETV award year.
- **July 1–June 1**: Due date for submission of ETV applications. Eligible students submitting complete applications during this period are awarded ETVs, as long as funds are available.
- **By Jan. 31**: Fall semester grades/transcripts and spring semester class schedules are to be submitted for students to continue to use their ETVs.
- **June 26**: Last day to submit request for additional ETV funds.
- **June 26**: Last day to submit requests for payment or reimbursement of approved expenses.
- **Oct. 1**: First day to submit a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) application. The first step of the financial aid process is to complete the FAFSA annually. Students can use “prior-prior year” tax information (from two years prior) to complete the FAFSA as follows, go to the:
  - FAFSA website
  - [Federal Student Aid](https://www.fafsa.gov) FAFSA process and materials
  - [FAFSA for undocumented students](https://www.highered.mn.gov/hes/FinAid/FAFSA/UndocumentedStudents.html), Minnesota Office of Higher Education.

Connect with ETV program staff

- Contact Jill Von Holtum, ETV program coordinator, Minnesota Department of Human Services, at 651-431-4663, or Dhs.Etvcoordinator@state.mn.us.
- Contact Lutheran Social Service (LSS) ETV program staff:
  - Kelsey Gubrud, primary contact, 320-231-7075, ext. 5, or Kelsey.Gubrud@lssmn.org.
  - Marilyn Wagoner, support staff, 320-231-7075, ext. 6, or marilyn.wagoner@lssmn.org.
  - Angela Mateski, supervisor, 320-231-7075, ext. 1, or Angela.Mateski@lssmn.org.
- Go to the [ETV website](https://www.highered.mn.gov/hes/FinAid/ETV/) for the following information:
  - **Program info**: Includes a brief description of the program, and a link to additional information about the program, including an [ETV video](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9F4jA37g85k), information about applying for college, financial aid, tuition waivers, scholarships, etc.
  - **Eligibility**: Lists eligibility criteria for first time and renewal applicants.
  - **Benefits**: Provides a link to [ETV Expense Guidelines](https://www.highered.mn.gov/hes/FinAid/ETV/Expenses.html).
  - **Apply**: Provides a link to the [ETV online application](https://www.highered.mn.gov/hes/FinAid/ETV/Apply.html), [ETV Program Guidelines](https://www.highered.mn.gov/hes/FinAid/ETV/Program.html), orientation information, a list of required documents to attach to the application, and application due date periods.

Eligibility

**First-time applicants** are eligible to apply for the ETV program after meeting the following criteria:

- Under age 26 when their complete application is submitted
- Graduated from high school or received a General Educational Development (GED) diploma
- Accepted into an accredited federal Pell Grant eligible institution of higher education
- Awarded financial aid, such as the federal Pell Grant, [Minnesota State Grant](https://www.highered.mn.gov/hes/FinAid/State-funded.html)
- One of the following:
  - In foster care placement, made by the responsible county or tribal social service agency, for 30 consecutive days or more between their 17th and 18th birthdays
  - Adopted, including customary adoptions, from foster care after their 16th birthday
  - In foster care on or after age 16 when the court ordered transfer of permanent legal and physical custody to a relative
  - Under state guardianship or tribal guardianship at age 18.
Renewal applicants apply each year they need funds for undergraduate or graduate education, if they meet all of the following criteria:

- Have not reached their 26th birthday
- Have not participated in the ETV program for five years
- Continue to attend an accredited federal Pell Grant eligible institution of higher education
- Continue to be eligible for financial aid, such as the federal Pell Grant, Minnesota State Grant
- Are making satisfactory progress toward completing their education
- Have a 2.0 or better cumulative grade point average.

Attending post-secondary school out of state

Students can attend post-secondary schools in another state and apply to the Minnesota ETV program. They will not be eligible to receive the Minnesota State Grant, and may not receive a tuition waiver if under Minnesota state or tribal guardianship at age 18. Students:

- **Apply to the Minnesota ETV program** when attending post-secondary school in another state for any of the following reasons:
  - They were previously awarded an ETV from Minnesota.
  - They are in Minnesota extended foster care.
  - Their residence is in Minnesota.
- **From another state apply to the Minnesota ETV program** if they left extended foster care, moved to Minnesota to live, enrolled in a post-secondary school, and have not been awarded an ETV through another state.
- **Apply to another state’s ETV program** if they left Minnesota extended foster care, moved to another state to live, and enrolled in a post-secondary school, and have not been awarded an ETV through Minnesota.
- **Must continue to apply to the program that awarded them an ETV**, even if they move to another state.

ETV application process

Students apply to the ETV program each year they need funding for post-secondary education by completing an online application on the ETV website. ETVs are awarded to eligible students submitting a complete application in the due date period, as long as funds are available.

Applications

There are two different applications: One for first-time applicants and one for renewal applicants.

**For a first-time application:**

- Select if applying for the first time or if previously applied and did not receive an ETV award.
- When this application is submitted, the required Verification of Eligibility form is emailed to the county or tribal agency caseworker listed on the application. The form must be completed by the county or tribal agency responsible for a youth’s placement before ETVs are awarded.
- Renewal applicants do not complete this application as the Verification of Eligibility form will be emailed to the caseworker listed on the application. This form is not required for this application.

**For renewal application:**

- Select if previously applied and received an ETV award
- Information from the previous application will auto-fill into the renewal application
- Applicants must review and update the information
- First-time applicants should not complete this application as the required Verification of Eligibility form will not be emailed to agency staff to complete.
Due date period
Complete applications are accepted July 1 to June 1 annually. Being complete means an application and budget are filled out or updated, all required supporting documents are attached, and for first-time applicants, the Verification of Eligibility form is completed, and for eligible students, confirmation of tuition waiver.

Assistance
Agency staff and adults working with youth are encouraged to assist them in completing the application. Department ETV staff are also available to provide assistance, or meet with agency staff, youth, foster parents/caregivers, and others to provide program information and/or assist students in completing their application.

ETV awards
The maximum amount for the ETV award year of July 1 to June 30 is $5,000, or $2,500 for one semester. The total amount of financial aid accepted, including ETVs, cannot exceed a student’s cost of attending school.

Determining awards
Department ETV staff determine an award based on each students’ unmet need, which is the amount left after subtracting expenses from financial aid. Students are awarded ETVs based on their unmet need, not to exceed the amount of need or maximum ETV award amount; no ETV awards are made if there is a negative need.

The following is an example of an award determination:
$10,000 total expenses - 8,000 total financial aid
= $2,000 unmet need

The maximum ETV award is $2,000.

Award notification
Applicants not awarded ETVs are notified by email of the reason(s).

Applicants awarded ETVs are notified by email. The email includes the award letter, award worksheet, and orientation information, as follows:

- **Award letter:** Lists the ETV award amount, time period of the award, and any conditions regarding an award.
- **Award worksheet:** The worksheet is a computer generated form listing information from the applicants’ final budget, including expenses, financial aid, and unmet need used to determine the ETV award amount.
- **Orientation information:**
  - First-time recipients receive information on orientation session and instructions on how to sign up for a session. Orientation information can also be found on the ETV website.
  - Renewal students receive forms and instructions to use their ETVs for approved expenses.
- For students in extended foster care, their caseworker is copied on the email.
- The contact person listed on the application will also be copied on the email, if students checked “yes” to the question, “Can the contact person be included in all emails ETV staff send to you?”
- Students should review all information in the email and contact department ETV staff if they have questions.
- All students should save ETV and orientation documents for future reference.
Revising ETV awards
ETV awards may be revised for reasons listed below. ETV staff reviews information submitted and may decrease or increase an award, if funds are available.

Contact department ETV staff at dhs.etvcoordinator@state.mn.us for students who believe not all expenses were included in their budget when their award was determined; send an email with the type(s) and amount of expense(s) not included.

Contact LSS ETV staff at kelsey.gubrud@lssmn.org for students:
- Not awarded the maximum ETV amount; submit a Request for Additional ETV Funds form and a revised award worksheet with expenses. LSS ETV staff notifies students by email.
- **Transferring schools** during the award year: If the new school meets ETV eligibility, email an award worksheet with the new school expenses, school acceptance letter, financial aid award letter, and class schedule.

Using ETV awards
ETVs can pay for school-related and living expenses. ETVs are not sent to students or their post-secondary school. Instead all funds are sent to Lutheran Social Service to manage for students. The **ETV Expense Guidelines** list all expenses that can be paid for by ETVs. Students awarded ETVs in fall semester for the award year can use their ETVs for approved expenses July 1 to June 30. Those awarded ETVs for spring semester can use their ETVs for approved expenses Jan. 1 to June 30. ETVs cannot pay for expenses that occurred before or after the award period. See Appendix C.

Removing ETV awards
ETV awards can be removed from students for the following reasons:
- First-year students did not complete an orientation session
- Withdrawing from school
- Not responding to ETV staff contacts within one week after the second attempt
- Not submitting grades, class schedules or other documents as required or requested by ETV staff
- Having a cumulative grade point average (GPA) under 2.0 for two consecutive semesters
- Not submitting or completing an academic plan with LSS ETV staff, as requested
- Suspended from financial aid
- Transferring to a post-secondary school that does not meet ETV eligibility
- Award amounts not used by the end of the award period are returned to the program.

Orientation
Orientation sessions are an opportunity for students to meet LSS ETV staff, get information on what expenses are cover, and how ETVs pay for expenses. Orientation information is emailed to recipients and are on the ETV website under the Apply tab. The following guidelines apply:

- **First-time recipients** are required to attend an orientation session before they can begin using their ETVs. They receive an orientation packet at the session with the necessary forms. They can complete and submit the forms at the session or submit to LSS ETV staff later. They can invite their caseworker, foster parents/caregivers, family members, and/or other supportive individuals to the session. Students not completing a session will lose their ETVs.

- **Renewal recipients** can attend an orientation session but it is not required. They can use the ETVs after receiving their award letter and submitting the required forms to LSS ETV staff. Documents needed to access ETVs are emailed with the award letter and worksheet.
Student responsibilities

As ETV program recipients, students have the following responsibilities:

- **Orientation:** First-time recipients must attend a session before using their ETVs.

- **Program guidelines:** Understand program rules, including what expenses ETVs pay for and how expenses are paid or reimbursed. Review ETV program and expense guidelines. Contact ETV staff with questions and to request additional assistance.

- **Maintain attendance in school, as follows:**
  - ETVs pay for approved expenses of students attending school. ETVs cannot pay for expenses after students withdraw from school, even if they have funds available.
  - Students should contact LSS ETV staff before withdrawing, transferring schools or graduating to discuss using their ETVs to pay for, or be reimbursed for, approved expenses.

- **Maintain academic progress, as follows:**
  - Meet academic progress standards set by the school.
  - Maintain a minimum cumulative grade point average of 2.0 and complete all classes to move toward successfully completing a degree or certificate in the time period set by the school.
  - Develop an academic plan with school staff for students with a cumulative GPA under 2.0. This must be provided to the ETV program, or develop a plan with LSS ETV staff. The plan outlines the issues impacting school performance, how student plans to resolve issues, and steps to ensure future academic success.

- **Maintain financial aid eligibility:**
  - Students not awarded or suspended from financial aid are not eligible for ETVs until they are reinstated.
  - Contact LSS ETV staff after reinstatement.

- **Additional responsibilities include:**
  - Review award email, including the award letter and worksheet, for award amount, use of ETV funds to pay for housing expenses, and any conditions on the award.
  - Respond to ETV staff contacts within one week after the second attempt at contact, or risk not being awarded ETVs, or having ETVs removed.
  - Maintain an active email account and check it frequently.
  - Submit a copy of grades and class schedule after each quarter or semester completed. Failure to submit either form will result in stopping all payments, reimbursements, and use of ETVs until the information is received by LSS ETV staff.
  - Submit all Check Request forms for payment/reimbursement by June 26 each year.

- **Contact LSS ETV staff if any of the following occurs during the ETV award year:**
  - Change in address, email address and/or phone number.
  - Changed name during the award year.
  - Financial situation changes.
  - Financial aid is increased, suspended or terminated.
  - Change in school, such as adding/dropping a class, withdrawing/transferring schools.
  - Amount of ETV funds available.
  - Leave or are discharged from extended foster care.
  - Need support to maintain school attendance.
  - Need assistance connecting to school and/or community resources.
Staff responsibilities

The Minnesota Department of Human Services receives federal funds and manages the ETV program, and contracts with Lutheran Social Service (LSS) of Minnesota–Willmar to implement it.

Department ETV staff is responsible for the following activities:

- Managing the ETV program.
- Coordinating programming with LSS ETV staff.
- Organizing program training and other information sessions.
- Attending meetings with students and agency staff, as requested, providing ETV program information, and preparing post-secondary resources.
- Sending program information emails to county, tribal and private agency social service staff.
- Answering questions about the ETV program and application.
- Revising ETV forms and developing program documents.
- Assisting students with the ETV application.
- Receiving and reviewing ETV applications, contacting applicants, and determining awards.
- Sending award letters and orientation information to ETV students.

Students’ contact with department ETV staff usually ends when they receive their award letter and complete orientation.

Contact information: Minnesota Department of Human Services, P.O. Box 64943, St. Paul, Minn. 55164-0943, at dhs.etvcoordinator@state.mn.us, or 651-431-4663; Fax: 651-431-7522.

Lutheran Social Service (LSS) ETV staff is responsible for the following activities:

- Receiving all students’ ETV funds and assisting them in developing budgets.
- Tracking how each student spends their ETVs.
- Organizing and delivering orientation sessions around the state.
- Answering questions and maintaining contact with students after orientation and through the ETV award year.
- Processing requests for payment and/or reimbursement of approved expenses.
- Receiving, reviewing and approving requests for additional funds.
- Completing or collecting academic plans of students with a cumulative grade point average under 2.0. Providing support for students to complete academic plan tasks.
- Assisting with issues that may interfere with post-secondary attendance and performance.
- Locating post-secondary and community supports, as requested by students.
- Receiving required documentation after each term completed to confirm students are attending school, and to approve continued use of ETVs.
- Sending students care packages during finals week.
- Coordinating with county and tribal agency staff of students in extended foster care.
- Meeting with students, if requested.
- Tracking students’ school status, graduation and employment after graduation.
- Sending emails to students with program information and updates.
- Submitting quarterly and year-end reports to the department.

Students’ contact with LSS ETV staff starts when they receive their award letter, and continues to be the primary contact during the school and ETV award year.

Contact information: Lutheran Social Service of Minnesota, 1601 Hwy. 12 E, Suite 6, Willmar, Minn. 56201; Fax: 320-231-7037. See page 4 for individual contact information.
Appendix A: Application preparation checklist

ETV program staff suggest that students do the following tasks before opening the application to ensure they are submitting a complete application.

___Confirm with county/tribal agency caseworker eligibility for the ETV program. Students must meet one of the following eligibility criteria to apply: In foster care for 30/more consecutive days between their 17th - 18th birthdays, or left foster care at age 16 for adoption or transfer of custody to a relative, or under state/tribal guardianship at age 18.

___Submit a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) after Oct. 1 for federal and state financial aid, grants, work-study and loans. Students are considered independent and do not have to provide their parental information if at any time after turning age 13 they were in foster care or were a dependent or ward of the court. The FAFSA is sent to the student’s post-secondary school to develop their financial aid award letter. See Minn. Office of Higher Education.

___Know what ETVs pay for and what students are to pay for at their post-secondary school. Review the ETV Expense Guidelines for what ETVs pay for in preparation for completing the ETV application budget. Create a post-secondary school budget to identify all school-related and personal expenses, and have a plan to pay for those not covered by financial aid or ETVs.

___Apply for scholarships in addition to the FAFSA and ETV to pay for expenses not covered by financial aid and ETVs, and to avoid taking out loans. See Appendix F.

___Confirm with agency caseworker state or tribal guardianship status at age 18. Request a tuition waiver, if eligible. Students under state guardianship, or an Indian child under suspension or termination of parental rights under guardianship of a tribe or tribal social service agency, at age 18 are eligible to receive a tuition waiver, if under age 21 and accepted to a Minnesota state post-secondary school offering waivers. Contact the school to request a waiver and what documentation is needed, such as a court order or letter from caseworker.

___Obtain required documents. Applicants must attach the following documents to the application in a format ETV staff can open and read. The FAFSA and Student Aid Report (SAR) are not the financial aid award letter, and neither should be attached to applications.

- **First-time applicants:** Post-secondary school acceptance letter, financial aid award letter and class schedule.
- **Renewal applicants:** Post-secondary school acceptance letter, if a student changed schools after their last ETV application, financial aid award letter, class schedule, and transcripts from the last school year completed. Transcripts must include the cumulative grade point average and number of credits earned since starting post-secondary education.

___Answer the following application essay questions:

- **First-time applicants:** Why do you want to go to college? What are your career goals? Who are supportive people in your life? How can the ETV program support you?
- **Renewal applicants:** Describe your most recent year of college, including academic performance, changes and accomplishments or difficulties. Who are supportive people in your life? How have they supported you during the past year? How can the ETV program continue to support you?

___Open, complete and submit an ETV application. Students submit complete applications and save incomplete ones for submission later. When all information is available, return to the saved application to complete and submit.
Appendix B: Online application instructions

Applicants have four hours to complete and submit or save the application; time remaining is shown on each page. If the time remaining does not change, the application may be disconnected from the internet, and it cannot be submitted or saved. If this happens, print what is entered, exit the application and start over. All questions on the application are required and must be answered. Click on the ETV Expense Guidelines box on the first and budget pages to open and review.

ETV application: Go to the ETV website and click on the “Apply” tab and then ETV online application, or click on ETV online application to open the landing page below.

First-time applicants, follow the process below:
- On the landing page, select “First Time Application” if applying for the first time, or applied previously but did not receive an award.
- Do not complete a renewal application.
- Click “First Time Application” and “Open application.”

Renewal applicants:
- On the landing page, select “Renewal Application” if previously received an award.
- Do not complete a first-time application.
- On the landing page, click “Renewal Application” and “Open application.”

Page 1: Application Type and Eligibility Criteria: Students must meet eligibility criteria to apply or reapply to the ETV program. There are no exceptions to the criteria.

First-time applicants:
- Select “New application” if starting an application, or “Returning to complete an application,” if an application was previously started and saved.
- Enter Social Security number.
- Complete the eligibility section, and click “Start application.”
Renewal applicants:

- Select “New application” if starting an application or “Returning to complete an application” if an application was previously started and saved.
- When either is selected, two Social Security number boxes appear. Enter Social Security number in both boxes.
- A green check mark will appear. Click on it and a “Get your info” box will appear.
- Click on the “Get your info” and information from your previous application will fill in the application.
- Complete the “Eligibility criteria” section and click on “Start renewal.”

Page 2: Student Information: All applicants answer or update all questions.

Page 3: Placement History

First-time applicants:
- Answer all questions.
- Under heading “My social worker or probation office is,” add a staff person’s name from the county or tribal agency responsible for placement, even if student left care.
- When first-time ETV applications are submitted, the above caseworker is immediately sent an automated email with instructions to complete an online Verification of Eligibility form.
- If there is no current worker, contact the agency to get a name and email address to add to the application. Incorrect email addresses delay determining ETVs.

Renewal applicants:
- Update all questions.
- All applicants must add an agency worker’s name and email address, as it is a required field.
- If the applicant no longer has an agency worker, an option is to enter ETV staff name/email address: Jill Von Holtum at jill.von.holtum@state.mn.us.

Page 4: Post-secondary Education: All applicants answer or update all questions, including the correct date for the “Anticipated Graduation/Completion Date.” It is used to determine ETVs.

Page 5: Essay

First-time applicants: Answer all essay questions.

Renewal applicants:
- Students completing their first renewal application have their first-time application essay auto-fill into this section. The renewal application questions are different and must be answered.
- Applicants not updating essays will be asked to do so, and it may delay receiving ETVs.
Page 6: Authorization and Agreement: All applicants read the documents and follow instructions.

- **Authorization for Release of Information** describes the information that can be shared about a student. If student approves, check the authorization button.
- **Participation Agreement** outlines student’s responsibilities as an ETV participant. If student approves, check to agree.
- **Click on the Notice of Privacy Practice** button to open the form. Review how private information about students and their participation in the ETV program may be used and disclosed, and how to obtain this information.

Page 7: School Year Budget:

- The ETV award year is July 1 to June 30
- Budgets are completed for the time period students are attending school during the award year
- Only the expenses that will occur in the award year should be added to the budget
- ETVs cannot pay for expenses that occurred before or after the award year.

All applicants do the following:
- **School year budget**: Check all months student plans to attend school during the award year. Months should match the school start and graduation dates in the post-secondary section.

**Expense section:**

- Click on the [ETV Expense Guidelines](#) tab to review all expenses ETVs pay for and rules for each expense.
- Click on the name of each expense to open an informational message/definition as seen below when the tuition tab was selected. Review the information to add expense amounts.

- Add the total amount of each expense for the time period attending school in the award year
- ETVs can pay for medical insurance premiums if students do not qualify for the Affordable Care Act
- Transportation expenses appear only if “Off campus” housing type is selected
- Car-related expenses appear only if “Car” is selected
- Extended foster care living settings:
  - Students in foster homes **can add** rent/deposit, utilities and food to the expense section
  - Students in supervised independent living settings, such as a dorm or apartment, **must add** rent/deposit, utilities and food to their budget
  - These expenses will be considered when determining ETV awards, even though ETV funds may not pay for them.

**Financial aid section:**

- Click on the financial aid type for information, or be directed to a website.
- Extended foster care living settings:
  - Students in foster homes not adding rent/deposit, utilities and food to the expense section do not add Foster Care Maintenance and Supplemental amounts to the financial aid section.
  - Students in supervised independent living settings **must add** Foster Care Maintenance and Supplemental amounts to the financial aid section.
• Financial aid awarded and not listed on the budget should be added in the ‘Other’ section. If necessary, more than one scholarship can be listed in one box to include all scholarships.
• Students awarded tuition waivers add the amount in the tuition waiver box. Contact the school for the amount if it is not listed on the financial aid award letter.

Page 8: Attachments: All applicants do the following:
• Attach only the documents listed on the application. Substitute documents will not be accepted.
• Document save only on submitted applications.
• Click on “Manage Attachments” for the “Attachment Manager” screen to appear. Click on “Add File” and “Browse” to the location of saved documents and attach each document.
• Click “Finish” when all documents are attached and return to the application.
Do not add a link to the school website as ETV staff cannot access it.
• Incorrect documents or those that cannot be opened and read will delay determining ETVs as students will be requested to submit correct documents to department ETV staff.

Submit or save application: All applicants do the following:
• Check either “I am the applicant” or “I am the parent/guardian” and “Print Form.”
• If a required question was not answered, the message box below will appear with the question. Answer the question and return to this page to submit or save the application.

Submit final application if application is complete.
• Applicants immediately receive this automated confirmation notice below:

Do not return to submitted applications to correct or add information as it will create a second submitted application. Contact department ETV staff to make additions, corrections and/or attach documents.
• First-time applicants’ agency workers are immediately sent an automated email with instructions to complete an online Verification of Eligibility form.
• Department ETV staff do the following after applications are submitted:
  • Receives email notifications when applications are submitted, and when the Verification of Eligibility forms are sent to and submitted by agency staff.
  • Sends applicants confirmation emails that their application was received, as follows:
    o Complete applications: Students receive ETV award emails.
    o Incomplete applications: Students receive instructions on completing their applications.
• Applications must be complete by midnight on June 1 for students to be considered for ETVs, as long as funds are available.
Save application for later if it is incomplete. The following will occur:

- Applicants are immediately sent an automated email with instructions on returning to complete their application. Their name appears in the “Student” section.
- Department ETV staff do not receive the email.

Verification of Eligibility form

First-time applicants: When first-time applications are submitted, the county or tribal agency worker listed on the application Placement History section is immediately sent an automated email with instructions to complete an online Verification of Eligibility form. The purpose of the form is for agency workers to confirm applicants’ ETV program eligibility, dates of placement, and current foster care status.

County/tribal agency staff must do the following:

- The form must be submitted before applicants are awarded ETVs
- For questions about the form or assistance in completing it, contact department ETV staff at 651-431-4663, or dhs.etvcoordinator@state.mn.us, for assistance.
Appendix C: Using ETV awards

ETV expense guidelines
All expenses that ETVs pay for are listed in the expense guidelines. The form includes the types of expenses and required documentation, and where payments are sent. First-year ETV recipients review the guidelines with LSS ETV staff at orientation to determine how to spend their funds. ETVs can pay or reimburse students in extended foster care living in supervised independent settings for rental deposit, rent, utilities and food exceeding the amount of monthly foster care maintenance and supplemental payments defined in Minn. Rules, section 9560.0521, subp. 10.

Award year dates
- **July 1 to June 1**: Applications are accepted during the due date period.
- **July 1 to June 26**: Time period students awarded ETVs can use them for approved expenses.
- ETV award letters list the time period students are awarded and can use their ETVs. Students can use their ETVs throughout the award period, unless they withdraw or graduate from their post-secondary program. Review the reasons for removal of ETVs section.
- **June 26**: Last date to submit Check Request forms for payment/reimbursement of expenses.

ETV forms
All students receive the following forms. First-year students receive them at orientation sessions, and can complete and submit them at a session. Renewal students receive their forms by email, and must submit them to LSS ETV staff by email, fax or mail before they can use their ETVs. Students are encouraged to keep the forms for reference during the ETV award year.

Forms two, three and four must be completed and submitted to LSS ETV staff before students can use their ETVs. The forms include:
- Form 1: ETV Staff Responsibilities and Contact Information
- Form 2: Student Responsibilities and Participation Agreement
- Form 3: Release of information
- Form 4: Vendor information
- Form 5: Check Request
- Form 6: Request for additional funds
- PowerPoint outlining ETV program rules, and instructions on using ETVs
- ETV Expense Guidelines

Steps to using ETV awards
Like other forms of financial aid, ETVs are divided into two semesters for students awarded more than $1,000 for an ETV award year; these students can use one-half of their ETV for fall semester, and the remaining funds for spring and/or summer semester, after submitting their grades and class schedule. ETVs not used in fall semester are carried over to spring semester for approved expenses of students continuing in school. Students awarded ETVs spring semester can use their award up to June 30. ETVs not used during the award year are returned to the program.

Unlike other forms of financial aid, ETVs are not automatically sent to students or their post-secondary schools. All funds are sent to the LSS ETV program to manage. First-year students meet with LSS ETV staff at orientation sessions to develop a plan for spending their funds. Renewal students are encouraged to determine how they will use their ETVs at the beginning of the school year. They can contact LSS ETV staff to discuss how to spend their funds.
All ETV students submit request forms for payment or reimbursement of approved expenses during the ETV award year. They should keep track of their ETV spending during the year. The last day for students to submit requests for payment/reimbursement is June 26.

**Step 1: Students determine reimbursement payment method or direct payment to vendor.**

**Reimbursement:** Students pay for eligible expenses and request reimbursements by submitting a completed Check Request form with required documentation, listed in Expense Guidelines. There are two options to receive reimbursement, as follows:

**Option 1:** Direct deposit into a checking or savings account. Students selecting this option must complete form 4: Vendor Information and submit it with a voided check to LSS ETV staff.
- First-year students selecting this option submit the form and voided check at orientation
- Renewal students selecting this option mail, email or fax the completed form and a voided check to LSS ETV staff.

**Option 2:** Check sent by mail. The process is as follows:
- Payments are issued on Tuesdays and Thursdays.
- All students selecting this option complete form 4: Vendor Information
- First-year ETV students complete the form at orientation. Renewal students mail, email or fax the completed form.

**Direct payment to a vendor:** Submit a completed Check Request form with required documentation to LSS ETV staff.

**Step 2: Request payment or reimbursement of an approved expense, as follows:**
- Confirm payment occurred during the ETV award period and that funds can pay for it.
- One Check Request form should be completed for each expense. However, for monthly expenses such as rent, utilities, internet, phone and car insurance, advance payments of up to three months can be made directly to vendor.
- Attach the required documentation and receipts to the Check Request form
- Submit documentation and receipts to LSS ETV staff
- Submit Check Request forms and documentation for payment before bills are due.

**Step 3: Processing payment or reimbursement of an approved expense includes:**

- LSS ETV staff review submitted Check Request forms, documentation and receipt(s), and contact students if additional information is needed. Processing payments will be delayed if a form is incomplete and/or the required documentation is not attached.
- Students must respond to questions from LSS ETV staff, and provide information requested as soon as possible to process requests.
- Payments can take up to 14 working days after a completed request form is submitted.
- All requests for payment/reimbursement must be submitted before a student withdraws or graduates from school. ETV funds cannot pay for expenses after students withdraw or graduate from school, even if they have funds available.

**Step 4: Students can continue to use ETV funds if they do all of the following:**

- Continue to be enrolled in and attending school.
- Students are encouraged to use all of their ETV funds. They should contact LSS ETV staff if they have questions on how to spend their funds.
Submit a copy of grades after each period completed, and class schedule for the next period to LSS ETV staff. Failure to submit either form will result in stopping all payments, reimbursements, and use of ETVs until information has been received by ETV staff.

Appendix D: Definitions

The Minnesota Education and Training Voucher program uses the following terms and definitions.

**Affordable Care Act (ACA) for former foster care youth:** As of Jan. 1, 2014, youth leaving foster care on their 18th birthday or later are eligible for Medical Assistance up to age 26. The former foster care category for Medical Assistance (MA) also includes individuals who turned 18, or aged out of foster care, prior to Jan. 1, 2014. Go to the [MNsure website](http://www.mn.gov/mn/).

**Complete ETV application:** Complete means an application and budget are filled out or updated, all required supporting documents are attached to the application, and for first-time applicants, the Verification of Eligibility form, and for eligible students, confirmation of tuition waiver. Only submit applications when they are complete.

**Cost of attendance (COA):** The total amount it costs to go to post-secondary school. It includes tuition, fees, room and board, and allowances for books, supplies, loan fees, transportation and dependent care. It also includes miscellaneous and personal expenses, including an allowance for rental or purchase of a personal computer, costs related to a disability, and reasonable costs for eligible study-abroad programs. It is used to help determine how much financial aid a student will need to cover costs during an academic year.

**Customary adoption** means a traditional tribal practice recognized by a community and tribe which gives a child a permanent parent-child relationship with someone other than their birth parent(s).

**ETV recipient:** Student awarded an ETV. Also known as an ETV student.

**ETV award:** Funds that ETV recipients are awarded. Also known as ETVs or vouchers.

**ETV award letter:** Emailed to ETV students with the amount of their award, the time period of an award, and conditions of the award.

**ETV award worksheet:** Emailed to ETV students with their award letter. It is a computer generated form listing information from the applicants’ final budget, including expenses, financial aid, and unmet need used to determine the ETV award amount.

**ETV award year:** July 1 to June 30 annually.

**ETV Expense Guidelines:** Document that outlines the expenses ETVs pay for, what documentation is required for the expense to be paid and where the payment can be sent.

**ETV Program Guidelines:** Document that describes the program, provides application information and instructions, includes orientation information and outlines the payment process for students.

**Extended foster care:** Minnesota law allows youth who are in foster care on their 18th birthday to receive extended foster care services and payments. Six months prior to the child's 18th birthday, the responsible social services agency shall provide written notice to any child in foster care under this chapter who cannot reasonably be expected to return home or have another legally permanent family by the age of 18, the child's parents or legal guardian, if any, the child's guardian ad litem,
Financial aid award letter: Post-secondary school financial aid office sends students an award letter with the types and amounts of financial aid they are eligible to receive from federal, state and school sources. For more details, go to the Federal Student Aid website.

Financial aid package: After the FAFSA is submitted, information is sent to each post-secondary school a student indicated. The package consists of Federal Pell Grant, Minnesota State Grant and any other financial aid from the post-secondary school. Financial aid may also be supplemented with loan and work study funds. Review the changes that affect eligibility.

First-time recipient/student: Student awarded an ETV for the first time.

Five-year participation: Students can receive ETVs for five years, up to their 26th birthday. Students are encouraged to keep track of the years they participate in the program. Five years is defined as follows, students:
- Using any amount up to one-half of their ETV award during one semester will have it counted as one-half year of the five-year total of participating in the ETV program
- Using up to 100 percent of their ETV award during one semester will have it counted as one year of the five-year total
- Accessing any or all of their ETV award in both semesters (July 1-June 30 annually), will have it counted as one year of the five-year total.

Foster care: Children placed away from their parents/guardian and in 24-hour substitute care by a responsible social services agency that has placement and care responsibility, including, placement in foster family homes, foster homes of relatives, group homes, emergency shelters, residential facilities not excluded in this subdivision, child care institutions, and preadoptive homes. A child is in foster care under this definition regardless of whether the facility is licensed and payments are made for the cost of care. Nothing in this definition creates any authority to place a child in a home or facility that is required to be licensed which is not licensed. "Foster care" does not include placement in any of the following facilities: hospitals, inpatient chemical dependency treatment facilities, facilities that are primarily for delinquent children, any corrections facility or program within a particular correction's facility not meeting requirements for title IV-E facilities as determined by the commissioner, facilities to which a child is committed under the provision of chapter 253B, forestry camps, or jails. [Minn. Stat., section 260C.007, subd. 18]

Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA): Is used to determine how much a student and their family is expected to contribute for their education. The difference between the total cost of attendance and the family contribution is the financial need.

Independent student: Students are considered independent and do not have to provide their parental information if at any time since they turned age 13 they were in foster care, dependent or ward of the court. The financial aid administrator may require proof of foster care or state ward status. If a student believes they should be independent because of unusual circumstances, they should talk to the financial aid officer, who can change their status to independent.

Institution of higher education: Is defined in sections 101 and 102 of the Higher Education Act (HEA) of 1965, as amended. The term includes three different types of institutions:
1. Public and nonprofit institutions of higher education
2. Proprietary institutions of higher education
3. Post-secondary vocational institutions.
ETV funds can be used only at an accredited school, defined as:
- Awards a bachelor’s degree, or
- 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 for at least two years, and
- All of the following:
  - Admits as regular students only persons with a high school diploma or equivalent or persons who are beyond the age of compulsory school attendance
  - Be public, private, or nonprofit
  - Accredited or pre-accredited and is authorized to operate in a state.

**Monthly foster care maintenance:** Payments to cover the cost of a child's food, clothing, shelter, daily supervision, school supplies, and personal incidentals, and reasonable travel to the child's home for visitation. In the case of institutional care, the term includes the reasonable costs of administration and operation of the institution. [Minn. Rules 9560.0521, subp. 10]

**Renewal recipient/student:** Student awarded an ETV in a previous year.

**State guardianship:** Children are placed under guardianship of the commissioner of the Minnesota Department of Human Services when courts terminate parents’ rights (TPR). They remain under state guardianship until adopted or reach their 18th birthday. Other terms used are state ward or ward of the court. [Minn. Stat., sections 260C.317 and 260C.515]

**Student Aid Report (SAR):** A summary of information submitted on a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). Students receive this report after a FAFSA has been processed. If there are no corrections or additional information, a SAR will include the expected family contribution, which is the number used to determine eligibility for federal student aid.

**Transfer of permanent legal and physical custody:** The court may order custody to a relative in the best interests of a child. This transfer gives authority to another person who becomes a child’s legal and physical custodian. [Minn. Stat., section 260C.515, subd. 4]

**Tribal guardianship:** American Indian children under suspension or termination of parental rights, under guardianship of a tribe or tribal social service agency.

**Tuition waiver:** Students under state guardianship, or an Indian child under suspension or termination of parental rights, under guardianship of a tribe or tribal social service agency, at age 18 are eligible to receive a tuition waiver, if under age 21 and accepted to a Minnesota state post-secondary school offering waivers.

**Supplemental difficulty of care rate:** Payment in addition to the monthly foster care maintenance, based on an assessment by the responsible social service agency.

**Undocumented students** do not qualify for federal financial aid and are not able to submit a federal FAFSA. However, they can submit MN Dream Act applications to be considered for state financial aid. For more information, review the Minn. Office of Higher Education Dream Act website and fact sheet.

**Unmet need:** The amount of expenses remaining after financial aid is considered. It is used to determine ETV awards. ETV awards cannot exceed the amount of unmet need.
Appendix E: Frequently asked questions

What is the ETV award year?
The award year is July 1 to June 30 annually.

What is the maximum ETV award?
The maximum award is $5,000 for the ETV award year, and $2,500 for one semester.

Can students submit ETV applications anytime during the year?
No, applications must be submitted in the due date period of July 1 to June 1 at midnight. Awards are made to students submitting complete applications, as long as funding is available.

Is post-secondary education free for foster care and adopted youth?
No. Foster/adopted youth should apply for scholarships to pay for post-secondary education costs not paid for by grants and ETVs. Foster/adopted youth, and those under state or tribal guardianship, have access to the following educational benefits:

- **Independent status:** Students are independent and do not have to provide parental information if at any time since age 13 they were in foster care, dependent or ward of the court.
- **Tuition waiver:** Youth are eligible to receive a tuition waiver if they are under state guardianship or American Indian children under suspension or termination of parental rights, under guardianship of a tribe or tribal social service agency at age 18, under age 21, and accepted into a school offering tuition waivers.
- **SAT fee waiver:** Youth in foster care and under state or tribal guardianship are eligible.

Do all eligible students who apply to the ETV program receive an award?
No, ETV awards are determined by student’s unmet need, which is the amount left after subtracting expenses from financial aid. ETV awards cannot exceed the amount of need. Students whose financial aid exceeds their expenses do not demonstrate a need and are not awarded ETVs.

Are students eligible for the ETV program if they receive a tuition waiver?
Yes, students under state or tribal guardianship who receive tuition waivers are eligible to apply and receive ETVs, if financial aid does not exceed expenses.

Are there age requirements for the ETV program?
Yes, students must be under age 26 when they are awarded ETVs. Students can receive ETV funds for five years, up to their 26th birthday.

Can students use their ETV funds after their 26th birthday?
Yes, students can use their ETV funds through the end of their birthday month. They must submit complete requests for payment/reimbursement by the end of the birthday month. ETVs will be prorated up to their 26th birthday.

Do ETVs pay for a student’s expenses before and/or after the ETV award year?
No, ETVs cannot pay for expenses occurring before or after an award year.

Do students in extended foster care (EFC) have to list maintenance payments on their application budget?
Yes and no. Students in EFC and living in a foster home do not have to list the maintenance payments or housing and food expenses. Students in EFC and living in a supervised independent living setting must list their maintenance payments, housing and food expenses. All of their expenses and assistance are considered when determining awards.
Can ETV funds pay for rent deposit, rent, utilities and food expenses of students in extended foster care?
Yes, ETVs can pay or reimburse students in supervised independent living settings, such as a dorm or apartment, for only the amount exceeding their monthly foster care maintenance payments per Minn. Rule, section 9560.0521, subp. 10.

Can students attend post-secondary schools outside of the U.S. and receive ETVs?
No, students must receive federal financial aid to apply for the ETV program. However, students can participate in study abroad programs that are connected with their post-secondary school.

Do students have to attend a Minnesota post-secondary school to receive ETVs?
No, students can attend schools in other states, if they meet ETV eligibility, to be awarded ETVs from Minnesota’s program. They would not receive the Minnesota State Grant or a tuition waiver.

Can students receive additional ETV funds during the award year?
Yes, students not receiving the full award amount of $5,000 for the school year or $2,500 for one semester can submit a Request for Additional ETV Funds form to LSS ETV staff, who determine if additional funds are awarded.

If a student received an ETV from Minnesota and moves to another state, do they continue to apply through Minnesota?
Yes, students must continue to apply to the ETV program in the state that awarded their ETVs.

Can students apply for an ETV if they are still in high school and taking post-secondary education courses?
No, students must be high school graduates or received a GED, accepted into an accredited institution of higher education, and awarded financial aid to apply for and be awarded ETVs.

Are students informed of the consequences of leaving school?
Yes, consequences are reviewed at orientation sessions and are listed in these guidelines.

If a student withdraws from school for a semester, do they lose their ETV award?
Students awarded ETVs for the school year and withdraw fall semester, can have a portion of their ETV funds held if they contact LSS ETV staff to confirm their plan to resume school attendance in spring. They cannot use their ETVs to pay for expenses when they are not in school. If they return to school spring semester, LSS ETV staff re-determines their award based on expenses and financial aid for the time period in school. If they do not return to school, their award is removed and returned to the program. Students awarded ETVs for spring semester and withdraw during the semester have their funds removed. They can submit a renewal application for the next award year.

Can students transfer post-secondary schools after they are awarded ETVs?
Yes, however, awards are determined by information in the application submitted, and do not transfer to the new school. An award for the new school will be determined if a school meets ETV eligibility and after the student submits to LSS ETV staff their school acceptance letter, financial aid award letter, class schedule, and revised budget. Awards may decrease or increase based on need and the amount of ETV funding available. Students planning to change schools should contact LSS ETV staff to discuss paying for expenses before withdrawing from their current school.

Are application essays used to determine ETV awards?
No, awards are based on students’ need. The essay questions provide information to ETV staff about academic and support issues.
Appendix F: Resources
Youth’s planning and support team should be informed of resources to help them prepare, choose, apply and pay for their post-secondary education.

Preparing for post-secondary education: Choosing a career path and developing skills needed to succeed in that path is a process, not a one-time decision. Consider using the following resources with youth to start post-secondary education preparation early. The following resources are from the Minnesota Office of Higher Education website (MN OHE), unless otherwise indicated:

- Interest assessment
- Explore your interests and careers
- College prep timeline
- Earn college credits in high school
- College preparation and admissions tests
- Recommended high school classes
- Within My Reach booklet for youth to plan for college

College Board resources:

- Get a step by step road map to college – Plans can be developed starting in eighth grade
- Explore careers
- SAT waiver brochure

Minnesota TRiO programs offer pre-college and post-secondary program information and support.

Choosing a post-secondary school:

- Identify what you want in a school
- Explore Minn. college options
- For-Profit Colleges: Do Your Homework, from the Office of Minnesota Attorney General
- Choosing a College booklet
- College Comparison worksheet
- Minnesota college and career schools map

Applying to a post-secondary school:

- Steps for Applying to College
- What you will need to apply
- Essay Writing Tips
- I Applied... Now What?
- Other applying for college resources

Paying for post-secondary school:

- What Does College Cost?
- About Financial Aid
- Financial Aid Basics booklet
- Grants and Scholarships booklet
- Reducing Textbook Costs
- Completing College on Time: Federal Pell Grant and Minnesota State Grant eligibility timelines
- Tips for Lowering the Costs of Higher Education
- Financial Aid You Don’t Repay
Scholarship resources:

- Scholarships offered by Minn. institutions
- Reduced Out-of-state Tuition Options
- Student Loan Advice
- Tuition waiver
- American Indian Tuition Waiver, University of Minnesota, Morris
- Minnesota Indian scholarship
- Resources for undocumented students
- Minnesota Education and Training Voucher (ETV) program has additional scholarship resources
- Scholar Snapp simplifies the scholarship application process by allowing students to automatically reuse their basic information for scholarship applications.
- Useful Online Resources includes scholarships for students of color and national scholarships.

Scholarships specific to foster and adopted youth:

- Foster Care to Success for students who spent one/more years in foster care
- All-Star Scholarship for students adopted from foster care at age 13 or older

Power of You for students graduating from eligible public high schools who plan to attend Minneapolis Community and Technical College (MCTC), Saint Paul College, and Century College.

Scholarships for social work programs:

- The Child Welfare Scholars/Title IV-E Stipend program provides financial support and educational opportunities for students committed to a career in public or tribal child welfare. Students interested in a career in child welfare should consider this program. Contact the schools directly for more information.

Schools offering bachelor-level programs include:

- Moorhead State University
- Minnesota State University Mankato
- St. Cloud State University
- Winona State University
- Metropolitan State University
- University of Minnesota Duluth

Schools offering masters-level programs include:

- University of Minnesota Twin Cities
- University of Minnesota Duluth
- Minnesota State University Mankato

- Social Service Association (MSSA) awards four scholarships to students seeking degrees in human service related programs. Applications accepted April 1-May 31:
  - Two John Moline Undergraduate Scholarships are given in the amount of $1,000 each to an undergraduate student enrolled in a human service related program.
  - The Diversity Scholarship is given in the amount of $1,000 to a student who is from a diverse background enrolled in a human service related undergraduate degree program.
  - The Graduate Scholarship is given in the amount of $1,500 to a graduate student enrolled in a human service related program.