

## Education and Training Vouchers in Florida

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August 2022

The Chafee Education and Training Voucher (ETV) program is a key financial support for young people currently or formerly in foster care to attend college or participate in vocational training programs.<sup>1</sup> Historically, students could receive up to \$5,000 a year to pursue postsecondary education or vocational training. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, federal legislation raised the annual maximum to \$12,000 from October 2021 through September 2022.

Florida does not have a distinct ETV program. Instead, Florida uses its ETV funds to supplement its primarily state-funded Postsecondary Education Services and Support (PESS) program.<sup>2</sup> Although the eligibility criteria and program rules are similar to other states' ETV programs, instead of receiving a maximum of \$5,000 a year, eligible young people receive a monthly financial payment of \$1,256.

This snapshot of Florida's PESS program uses data from 2006–16. Findings include the annual number and amount of PESS awards, characteristics of recipients and their chosen schools, and preliminary statistics on postsecondary education persistence. For more information about the ETV program in Florida and other states, please see the full report: *Do Education and Training Vouchers Make a Difference for Young Adults in Foster Care? A Study of Ten States* (<https://urbn.is/3PF89XL>).

### Overview of Florida's PESS Program

- Between 2006 and 2016, Florida paid 12,381 PESS awards to 5,023 young people (an average of 1,126 awards a year).<sup>3</sup>
- Twenty percent of all PESS-eligible young people attended college and used a PESS award.

FIGURE 1

#### PESS Use and College Enrollment among PESS-Eligible Young People in Florida in 2011 and 2012

■ Enrolled with a PESS award ■ Enrolled without a PESS award ■ Didn't enroll in college



<sup>1</sup> Many states provide funding through other programs, making ETV funding less necessary (e.g., through state-funded tuition waivers, grants, and scholarships, etc.).

<sup>2</sup> "Independent Living: Postsecondary Education Services and Support (PESS)," Florida Department of Children and Families, accessed June 1, 2022, <https://www.myflfamilies.com/service-programs/independent-living/postsecondary-education-services.shtml>.

<sup>3</sup> We use the term "award" throughout, but not all states have award data. Four states (Colorado, Illinois, Missouri, and Ohio) only provided data on all ETVs awarded, regardless of whether they were used or not. Four states (Florida, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Tennessee) only provided data on the ETV awards used. Two states provided data on both used and awarded ETVs. In those states, 75 percent and 89 percent of the ETVs awarded were used. This means that states providing only data on used ETVs will have a lower count of ETVs.

## Who Is More Likely to Use a PESS Award?

In Florida, data include 12,746 young people currently or formerly in care who were eligible for their first PESS award between 2011 and 2012.<sup>4</sup> **Of those young people, 4,088 (33 percent) went to college by age 21.**<sup>5</sup> Table 1 shows which young people who attended college by age 21 were most likely to do so with a PESS award. PESS recipients were, on average, 19.5 years old when they were first awarded a voucher. In Florida, eligible young women were just as likely to attend college with a PESS award as young men.<sup>6</sup> Of all eligible women attending college, 62 percent went to college with a PESS award compared with 60 percent of men (table 1).

TABLE 1

### Likelihood of Attending College by Age 21 with a PESS Award

Examining PESS use for PESS-eligible young people attending college

Characteristic	Total PESS-eligible young people who attended college by age 21 (n)	College w/ PESS	College w/o PESS
<b>All students</b>	4,088	61%	39%
<b>Gender</b>			
Female	2,499	62%	38%
Male	1,617	60%	40%
<b>Race/ethnicity<sup>a</sup></b>			
Asian	-	-	-
Hispanic	474	63%	37%
Black	1,835	67%	33%
White	1,754	54%	46%
All other	-	-	-
<b>Last discharge reason<sup>b</sup></b>			
Reunification	27	13%	88%
Emancipation	3,164	72%	28%

**Note:** To match the terminology present in the child welfare administrative data, this fact sheet uses the term Hispanic to describe people of Latin American descent.

<sup>a</sup> Counts and metrics for racial and ethnic subgroups with fewer than 50 young people are not shown.

<sup>b</sup> Reunification and emancipation reflect the two most common discharge reasons for this population, but young people may also discharge to other exits not included here, such as guardianship or adoption. Data on all exit types can be found in the supplementary notebook.

<sup>4</sup> This analysis uses data from three main data sources: (1) child welfare placement data for young people who were in out-of-home placements at or after age 16; (2) National Student Clearinghouse data on enrollment and graduation for these young people; and (3) data on ETV receipt and use. This analysis is descriptive, and statistics presented here should not be interpreted as program impacts. It is part of a broader evaluation of the ETV program in California, Colorado, Illinois, Florida, Missouri, New Jersey, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, and Tennessee.

<sup>5</sup> The National Student Clearinghouse (NSC) data may undercount enrollment for two reasons. In some cases, there are mismatches between the NSC and child welfare data. Also, NSC does not include many technical schools, so some enrollments in technical schools will not be counted.

<sup>6</sup> All findings discussed in this fact sheet are statistically significant at least at the 90 percent confidence level. Analysis details including p-values can be found in the full ETV report.

Young people who identify as Black were more likely to have attended college with a PESS award (67 percent) than young people in any other racial or ethnic group (table 1). Young people emancipated from care attended college with a PESS award at higher rates than those who were discharged through reunification (table 1). More data on the child welfare characteristics of young people who receive PESS in Florida can be found in the full ETV report.

## How, When, and Where Are PESS Awards Used?

- Young people in Florida received PESS for an average of 2.6 years. Seventy-four percent received PESS for 2 years or more.
- Twenty-seven percent of PESS recipients received a voucher in their first year in college.
- Thirteen percent of PESS recipients first received PESS while they were still in care.

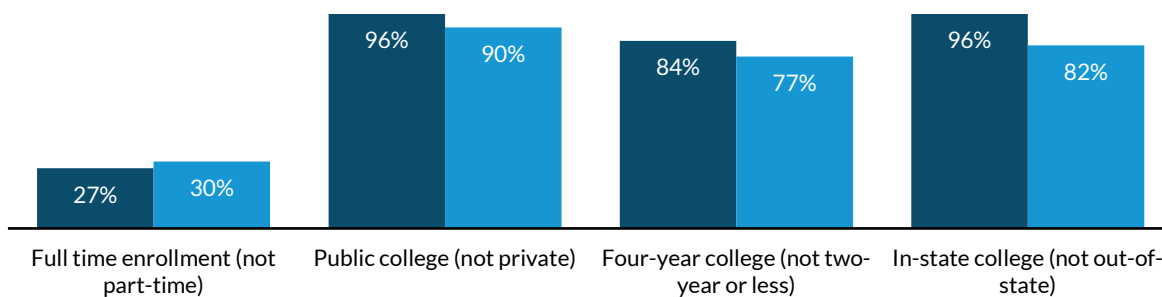
Figure 2 shows the types of colleges PESS-eligible young people attended, comparing the first admissions of young people who used an award with those who did not use an award. Although many young people enroll in multiple colleges, this figure only includes the first college in which a young person ever enrolled.<sup>7</sup> Compared with young people who attended college but did not use PESS, young people who used PESS awards were more likely to enroll in public schools and in four-year schools. Young people who used PESS awards enrolled in in-state schools at higher rates. PESS recipients enrolled in college full time at higher rates.

FIGURE 2

### Types of Colleges PESS Recipients Attended

Comparing first enrollments by PESS-eligible young people who did and did not use PESS

■ College w/ PESS ■ College w/o PESS



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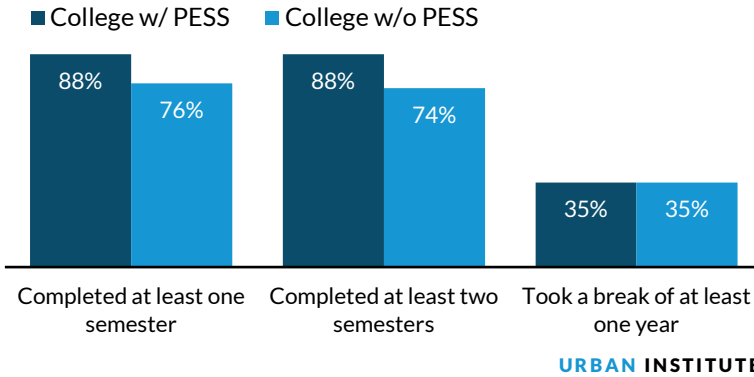
## Do Young People Who Use PESS Awards Stay in College?

Figures 3 and 4 display college persistence and graduation rates for two groups of PESS-eligible young people in Florida: those who attended college with PESS awards and those who attended college without them. All young people are observed in National Student Clearinghouse (NSC) data through age 24.

<sup>7</sup> This analysis is limited to young people who enrolled in college by age 21 (2,491 enrolled with a PESS award; 1,597 enrolled without). More data on college enrollment can be found in the full ETV report.

FIGURE 3

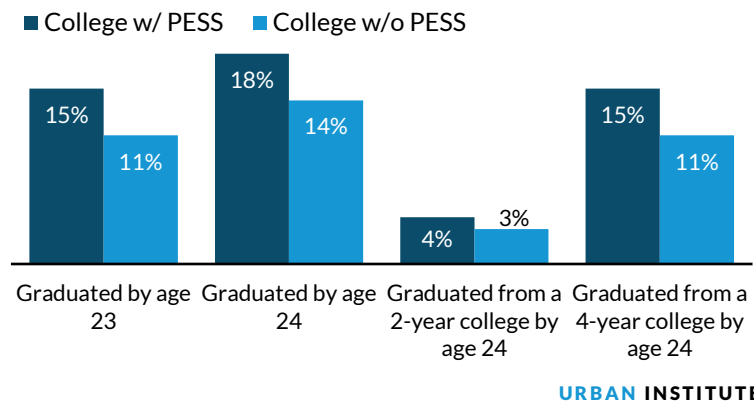
**College Persistence among PESS-Eligible Young People Who Attended College**



- PESS use was correlated with increased college persistence.
- Young people who used PESS enrolled in college for at least two semesters more often than young people who did not use PESS.

FIGURE 4

**Graduation Rates for Young People Eligible for PESS**



- PESS use is also correlated with increased college graduation rates.
- Compared with young people who did not use PESS awards, young people who use PESS in Florida had higher graduation rates by ages 23 and 24.

More data on college persistence and graduation can be found in the full ETV report.

## Acknowledgments

This snapshot was funded by the Administration for Children and Families (ACF), Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation (OPRE). The Urban Institute and its partner, Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago, are conducting this and other analyses for OPRE as part of the “Phase II Evaluation Activities for Implementing a Next Generation Evaluation Agenda for the John H. Chafee Program for Successful Transition to Adulthood” project. We thank OPRE for their support but acknowledge that the findings and conclusions presented in this brief are those of the authors alone and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of OPRE, ACF, or the Urban Institute.

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