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## Illinois DCFS Offers Post-Secondary Scholarships to Current and Former Youth in Care

*DCFS Scholarship Program applications accepted until March 31*

CHICAGO – The Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) is currently accepting applications for the 2025 DCFS Scholarship Program. Through the program, a minimum of 53 academic scholarships will be awarded to current and former youth in care for the upcoming school year, with four awards reserved for the children of veterans and two awards presented to students pursuing degrees in social work in honor of Pamela Knight and Deidre Silas, two DCFS caseworkers who succumbed to injuries sustained in the line of duty.

Scholarship recipients receive up to five consecutive years of tuition and academic fee waivers if they attend an Illinois public university or community college including a monthly grant of \$1,577 to offset other expenses and a medical card. In 2024, DCFS awarded scholarships to 334 college-bound youth, the most in the agency's history.

"It is my priority as governor to ensure that all Illinois students, including youth in DCFS care, have the resources they need to pursue higher education," said **Governor JB Pritzker**. "After awarding a record-breaking 334 DCFS scholarships to young leaders last year, I am thrilled to share that we are once again opening applications for 2025. I highly encourage all current and former youth in care to apply."

"Transitioning from high school to college can be a stressful time for any young person, and even more so for the youth in our care who have already worked so hard to overcome obstacles in their young lives," said **Illinois DCFS Director Heidi E. Mueller**. "These scholarships will give our youth some peace of mind knowing that they won't have to worry about how to pay for school so they can concentrate on their education and pursuing their dreams."

The DCFS Scholarship Program is available to youth who have an open DCFS case, whose cases were closed through adoption or guardianship or who aged out of care at 18 or older.

"The DCFS Scholarship has been a significant support in my journey toward higher education," said **Makaya**, a 2024 scholarship recipient. It has alleviated the financial burden, allowing me to focus more on

my studies and less on how to pay for them. It has also provided me with opportunities to engage in extracurricular activities and further my education without the constant stress of financial constraints.”

Scholarship recipients are selected based on their scholastic record and aptitude, community and extracurricular activities, three letters of recommendation from non-relatives and a personal essay illustrating their purpose for higher education. Scholarships are awarded to students interested in pursuing education at trade schools, community colleges or traditional colleges or universities.

Applications are available online at <https://apply.mykaleidoscope.com/program/ILDCFS2025>. Students are encouraged to submit their applications in advance of the March 31 deadline.

Students or caregivers may call the DCFS Office of Education and Transition Services at 217-557-2689 or email [DCFS.Scholarship@illinois.gov](mailto:DCFS.Scholarship@illinois.gov) with questions about the application process or for more information.

*About the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) Currently celebrating 60 years as the nation’s first cabinet-level child welfare agency, DCFS is responsible for protecting children from abuse or neglect by responding to reports received by the Child Abuse Hotline 1-800-252-2873 (1-800-25-ABUSE) or [childabuse.illinois.gov](http://childabuse.illinois.gov) (non-emergency). With the goal of keeping children safe, DCFS strengthens and supports families with a wide range of services. In the event a child must be removed from the home, DCFS makes every effort to reunite them with their family. When the best interest of the child makes this impossible (less than 4% of the time), DCFS is committed to pursuing guardianship and fictive kin as primary options.*

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