

Foster-Youth Eligibility Language

Sample wording that defines eligibility as current or former foster youth — the requirement for every scholarship featured on Thank a Teacher — plus dignified ways to verify it.

The core requirement

To be featured on thankateacher.net, a scholarship must be open exclusively to current or former foster youth. Eligibility may be narrowed further (by state, school, program, or field of study), but it may not be opened to students who were never in foster care.

Standard eligibility clause

Sample — core clause

Eligibility. This scholarship is open exclusively to applicants who are current or former foster youth. For purposes of this scholarship, that means an applicant who was placed in out-of-home care at any time on or after their [13th] birthday by order of a court or through a voluntary placement agreement with a child welfare agency, including foster family homes, relative or kinship care, group homes, residential care, or tribal foster care.

Optional additions

- **Age:** “Applicants must be between [16] and [26] years old as of [date].”
- **Enrollment:** “Applicants must be enrolled in, or accepted to, an accredited college, university, or trade or career school for [term/year].”
- **Geography:** “Applicants must be a resident of [state] or have been in foster care in [county/state].”
- **School:** “Applicants must be attending or have graduated from [school name].”
- **Academic:** “Applicants must be in good standing at their school.” (Consider whether a GPA minimum is necessary — many sponsors intentionally omit it.)
- **Program type:** “Certificate, apprenticeship, and licensure programs are eligible.”

Inclusive definitions worth keeping

- Include **kinship and relative placements** — many youth were placed with a grandparent or aunt.
- Include **tribal foster care** and placements made under the Indian Child Welfare Act.
- Include youth who were **adopted from foster care** or left care through guardianship, if you intend to.
- Include **unaccompanied refugee minors** in federal foster care, if you intend to.
- Do not require that the applicant currently be in care — most applicants have aged out.
- Do not require that the applicant have a diploma if you accept GED or HiSET completers.

Verifying foster care experience with dignity

Ask for the least documentation that satisfies you, accept more than one form of proof, and never require an applicant to recount their case history. Any of the following is normally sufficient:

- A letter or email from a caseworker, social worker, ILP coordinator, CASA volunteer, or tribal social services worker
- A letter from a campus foster youth program (Guardian Scholars, NextUp, Fostering Success, or similar)
- A court order, placement letter, or ward-of-the-court document
- A Chafee eligibility letter, foster care verification letter, or ILP participation record
- A FAFSA or state aid determination showing independent student status due to foster care
- A signed self-certification, if you choose to accept one

Sample — verification request wording

Verification. Please include one document that confirms your foster care experience. Any of the following works: a letter or email from a caseworker, social worker, independent living program coordinator, CASA volunteer, or campus foster youth program; a court or placement document; or a Chafee or foster care verification letter. You do not need to share details about your case, and you do not need to explain why you were in care. If you are unable to obtain any of these documents, contact us at [email] and we will work with you.

Privacy commitment

Sample — privacy statement

Privacy. Your application materials will be seen only by the [Sponsor Name] selection committee, will be used only to select recipients, and will not be shared, sold, or published without your written permission. Documents will be securely destroyed within [12] months of the award decision. If you are selected, we will ask for your written permission before using your name, photograph, or story publicly, and you may decline and still receive the award.

Wording to avoid

- “Underprivileged,” “at-risk,” or “troubled” youth — describe the circumstance, not the person.
- “Foster kid” — use “youth who has been in foster care.”
- Requests to “describe your hardship” or “explain what happened to you.”
- Requirements that only a parent could satisfy, such as parental tax returns or a parent signature.

Important

This template is a general educational resource, not legal, tax, or financial advice. Thank a Teacher does not collect, hold, or distribute scholarship money, does not receive applications, and does not select recipients. The sponsor is solely responsible for funding, administering, receiving applications, selecting recipients, paying awards, and meeting all legal, tax, and compliance obligations. Please consult qualified professionals about your own situation. To be featured on thankateacher.net, a scholarship must be exclusively for current or former foster youth.