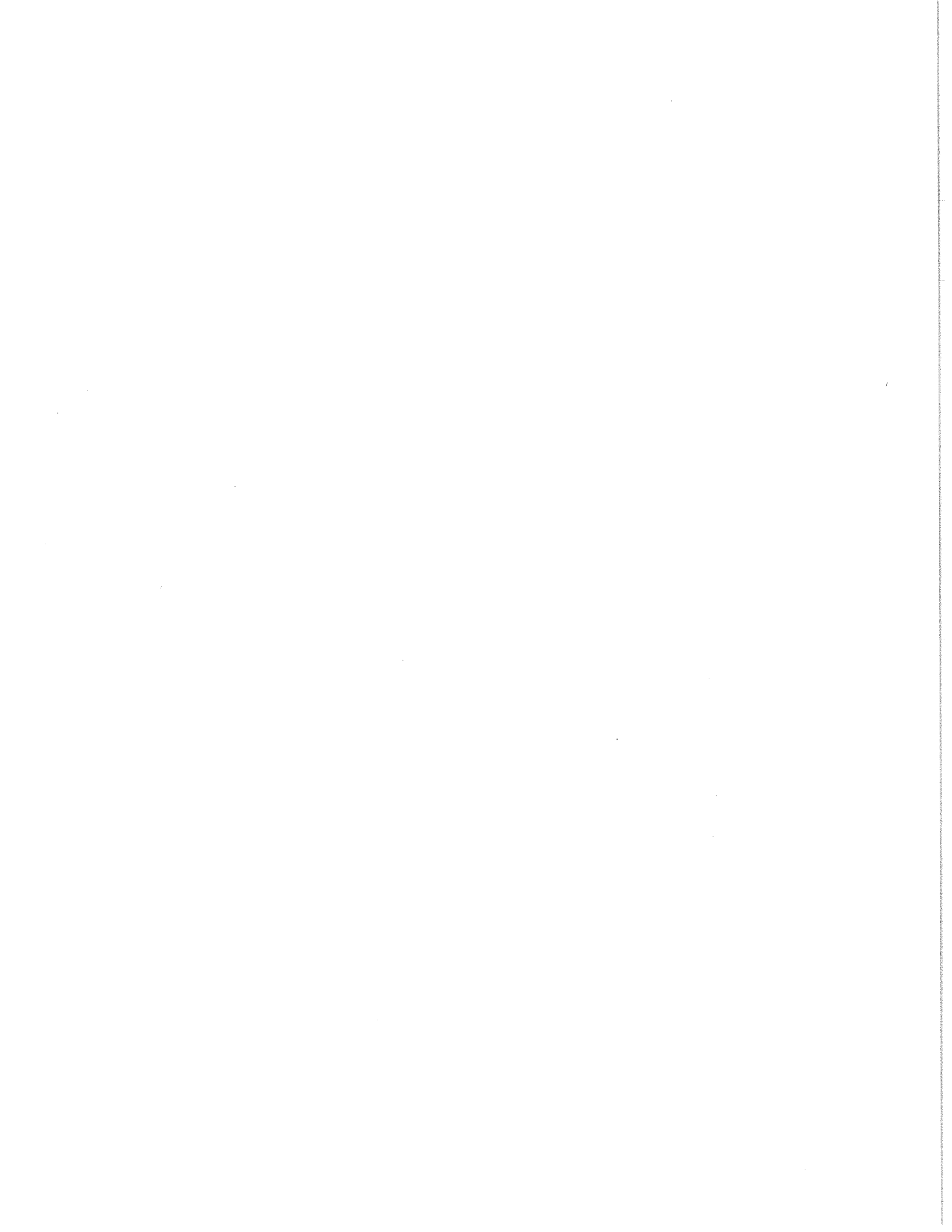


March 16th 2021

Hello,

My name is Julia Reigh and I am an intern for the NorthCentral TRAIL program with Wood County Human Services and CW Solutions. Our program assists youth who are transitioning from out-of-home care like foster care, living with a relative, or adoption. These youth are eligible for the Brighter Star award also known as Wisconsin's Education and Training Voucher (ETV) Program, which is available to help these youth pay for higher education. The Brighter Star is given to any eligible student in the amount of \$5,000 each academic year. Included in this letter is the application, and additional information about the award. If you have a student that may qualify, feel free to provide them with the application and informational handout. If they would like an electronic copy, please have them reach out to us as well. For further questions, please send an email to independentliving@changewithin.net or call 715-540-0283. We appreciate your assistance in getting the word out about the Brighter Star to eligible students!

Julia Reigh
Independent Living Intern
Wood County Human Services
111 West Jackson Street Wisconsin Rapids, WI 54495
715-540-0283 (Call/Text)
independentliving@changewithin.net



Flexible funding for youth formerly in out-of-home care to help them reach their goals!

What is Brighter Star?

The federal government recognizes that young people transitioning from out-of-home care to post-secondary education have unique insights and barriers that can make their journey different than their peers. In 2002, Education and Training Voucher (ETV) funds were added to an existing federal law called the [John H. Chafee Foster Care Independence Program](#) that allocates funds to states specifically for supporting older youth who have spent time in out-of-home care in their transition to adulthood.

In 2016, the Wisconsin Department of Children and Families (DCF) began contracting with regional Transition Resource Agencies (TRA) to provide independent living services and some ETV funding to former foster youth between the ages of 18 and 21. Moving forward, these same agencies will have additional flexibility to provide eligible youth with ETV funds, now known in Wisconsin as **Brighter Star**. TRAs will now serve as "one-stop-shops" for youth eligible for independent living services and supports! All youth eligible for independent living services until age 21 are also eligible for Brighter Star up to age 23, or a maximum of up to 5 years, if they meet the school type and academic requirements.

As a state, we recognize that planning for post-secondary education is important. The goals of this change are to increase the number of youth accessing Brighter Star, maximize the amount of funding each eligible youth receives, and reduce their financial burdens while pursuing their post-secondary goals.

The chart below contains information regarding who to reach out to about Brighter Star. These contacts also offer other services and supports, and can help youth with things like budgeting, finding an apartment, filling out the FAFSA, and more! If you have general questions about Brighter Star, contact DCF at DCFILCoordinator@wi.gov. Youth who receive Brighter Star funds through a TRA are in no way obligated to participate in other services.

Region	Counties Included	Tribes Included	Agency	E-mail	Phone
1	Adams, Forest, Lincoln, Langlade, Marathon, Oneida, Portage, Vilas, Wood	Forest County Potawatomi, Lac du Flambeau, Sokaogon	Wood County in collaboration with CW Solutions	independentliving@changewithin.net	(715) 421-8927
2	Brown, Calumet, Door, Florence, Fond du Lac, Green Lake, Kewaunee, Manitowoc, Marinette, Menominee, Oconto, Outagamie, Shawano, Sheboygan, Waupaca, Waushara, Winnebago	Stockbridge-Munsee, Menominee, Oneida	Bay Area Workforce Development Board	ILPCoordinator@bayareawdb.org	(920) 431-4107
3	Milwaukee	N/A	SaintA	ETV@sainta.org	(414) 465-5750
4	Kenosha, Racine, Walworth	N/A	KHDS	ILsupport@khds.org	(262) 657-3330
5	Columbia, Dane, Dodge, Grant, Green, Iowa, Jefferson, Lafayette, Marquette, Richland, Rock, Sauk, Washington, Ozaukee, Waukesha	N/A	Workforce Development Board of South Central WI	klarson@wdbscw.org	(608) 249-9001
6	Buffalo, Chippewa, Clark, Crawford, Dunn, Eau Claire, Jackson, Juneau, La Crosse, Monroe, Pepin, Pierce, St. Croix, Trempealeau, Vernon	Ho Chunk, St. Croix	Family and Children's Center	PostSecondaryFundingIL@fccnetwork.org	(608) 785-0001 ext. 350
7	Ashland, Barron, Bayfield, Burnett, Douglas, Iron, Polk, Price, Rusk, Sawyer, Taylor, Washburn	Bad River, Lac Courte Oreilles, Red Cliff	Workforce Resource	DCFscholarship@workforceresource.org	(715) 232-7380 ext. 1411

Frequently Ask Questions (FAQ)

Q. How do I know if a youth is eligible for Brighter Star funding?

A. Did the youth already, or will they in the future:

1. "Age out" or leave one of the following court-ordered placements on or after their 18th birthday?
 - Foster home
 - Residential care center
 - Group home
 - Court-ordered placement with a relative
2. Be adopted or placed in subsidized guardianship after the age of 16?

If so, they are likely eligible for Brighter Star funding!

Brighter Star funding is money specifically for youth formerly in court-ordered out-of-home care who are attending an accredited or pre-accredited school for a:

- 4-year degree
- 2-year degree
- Technical Diploma
- Apprenticeship
- Professional license/certification (some short-term programs may apply)

Not sure if the program the youth is interested in falls into one of these categories? Contact the Transition Resource Agency Brighter Star contact and ask!

Q. How much funding is available for each youth?

A. Eligible youth can receive up to \$5,000.00 per academic year to put towards specific expenses as youth determine with the Transition Resource Agency.

Q. What can youth use this money for?

A. We know youth's needs vary greatly. Some things Brighter Star funds can be used for are: tuition, books and school supplies, child care costs, housing, transportation, rent, and food.

Q. Can Brighter Star funds be used to help pay for expenses at post-secondary schools out-of-state?

A. Absolutely! As long as an eligible youth is attending a program that is accredited or pre-accredited, Brighter Star funding can be used.

Q. How do these changes impact the DCF Scholarship?

A. The DCF Scholarship no longer exists in its previous form, however, the same amount of money is available to youth previously in out-of-home care and will be easier to access than ever!

Historically, ETV funding Wisconsin received from the federal government was separated into two pots of money – the DCF scholarship and local ETV funds that Transition Resource Agencies provided to clients. This process resulted in duplicative work, time delays, and underspending. In 2019 and onward, recombining the two pots will better serve the youth and maximize fund allocations. Youth who have accessed the DCF Scholarship before can now contact the Brighter Star contact in their region (see chart on Page 1) to continue to receive post-secondary supports.

Q. Who do I contact to get more information about Brighter Star?

A. Find the Transition Resource Agency Brighter Star contact information for your area by looking at the chart on Page 1. If you don't know which county a youth was placed in out-of-home care with, don't worry – connect with a Transition Resource Agency anyway! They will be able to help point you in the right direction. If a youth experienced court-ordered out-of-home care placement with Juvenile Corrections, contact Renee Jahnke at renee.jahnke@wisconsin.gov.



Application for:

Adams, Forest, Langlade, Lincoln, Marathon, Oneida, Portage, Vilas,
& Wood Counties

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Instructions:

This form must be fully completed. Incomplete forms will be returned to the applicant. A new form must be completed for each school year. In addition, one of the following documents must accompany this application. For more information about Brighter Star please visit <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/youthservices/college>.

First Time Applicants:

A copy of your acceptance letter from the school you will be attending.

Reapplying Applicants:

A copy of grades and/or college credits earned during the period in which you received your previous reward. To remain eligible, applicants must maintain a semester/term GPA of no less than a 2.0.

Name (First, MI, Last)		Birth Date (mm/dd/yyyy)	
Current Mailing Address (Street, City, State, Zip Code)		County of Residence	
Email Address		Telephone Number	
In what county were you placed into care?		Who was your primary social worker?	
Name & Location of Last School Attended (City, State)			
College/Technical/Vocational School		School's Office Phone Number	
School's Mailing Address (Street, City, State, Zip Code)			
Date of Enrollment	Major Field/Training Area		Anticipated Graduation Date
Time Period for Award to be Applied		Education Costs for the Requested Period	
Entire School Year	Fall Semester	Spring Semester	Tuition & Fees: _____
Other From: _____ To: _____		Books: _____	
		Total= _____	
Are you receiving any other financial assistance for your education? Yes No			
If yes, what? Work Study \$ _____ Loans \$ _____ Scholarships \$ _____ Other \$ _____			
How would you like to use these funds?			
<input type="checkbox"/> Tuition & Fees	<input type="checkbox"/> Room & Board	<input type="checkbox"/> Equipment (books, computer, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/> Child Care <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____
Optional:			
Choose from one or more of the options below to share with us a little about yourself and how this award could support you in your future goals. Use the blank space below for your response.			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What made you interested in the career path you are pursuing? • Tell us about a story in your life that made a lasting impact. • Think of a time that you faced a challenge, how did you overcome it? • If you could make one change to the foster care system, what would it be? • If you were given an award of recognition, what would it be for? • Select a music quote that describes a lot about you and why you connect with it. 			

Send completed application to: IndependentLiving@changewithin.net



Application for:

Adams, Forest, Langlade, Lincoln, Marathon, Oneida, Portage, Vilas,
& Wood Counties

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I understand that continued eligibility for the DCF program is dependent on satisfactory performance (minimum 2.0 GPA). I also understand that I am required to submit proof of performance for subsequent applications and awards.

Permission granted to exchange and release information regarding educational, financial aid and/or billing records as requested by the Transition Resource Agency (TRA) for the purpose of post-secondary education funding. In addition, permission to release and/or exchange information pertaining to my academic needs and/or support.

The TRA or campus may contact me regarding opportunities related to foster youth alumni.

Signature

Date (mm/dd/yyyy)

Send completed application to: IndependentLiving@changewithin.net