DATE: September 30, 2013

POLICY #: SSA – CW 14-6
(This Policy Directive supersedes and replaces SSA Policy Directive 13-12)

TO: Directors, Local Departments of Social Services
    Assistant Directors, Services

FROM: Carnitra D. White, Executive Director
      Social Services Administration

RE: Maryland’s Tuition Waiver Program and
    Education and Training Voucher
    Program

PROGRAMS AFFECTED: Out-of-Home Placement

ORIGINATING OFFICE: Resource Development, Placement and Support
                     Services

ACTION REQUIRED OF: All Local Departments

REQUIRED ACTION: Compliance with the Policy Directive

ACTION DUE DATE: October 15, 2013

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PURPOSE:

This policy directive seeks to provide case workers with information that will assist current and former foster care youth with how to access Maryland’s Tuition Waiver for Foster Care Recipients and the Education and Training Voucher (ETV) programs. This policy directive also provides direction on how to apply the Education and Training Voucher.

BACKGROUND:

Maryland Tuition Waiver for Foster Care Recipients
Pursuant to Section 15-106.1 of the Education Article of the Maryland Annotated Code, Maryland’s Tuition Waiver for Foster Care Recipients is available to foster care youth who are enrolled as a candidate for an associate, a bachelor’s degree or a vocational certificate at a Maryland public institution of higher education. The youth must be enrolled on or before he or she reaches the age of 25.

In order to be eligible for the Maryland Tuition Waiver for Foster Care Recipients program, a youth must have:
1. A. Been placed in out-of-home placement by the Maryland Department of Human Resources; and
   B. Resided in an out-of-home placement in Maryland at the time he or she graduated from high school or successfully completed a general equivalency examination; or
2. Resided in an out-of-home placement on his or her 13th birthday and was placed into guardianship or adopted out of an out-of-home placement after his or her 13th birthday; or
3. Been the younger sibling of a child who meets the qualifications stated either in 1 or 2 and was placed into guardianship or adopted concurrently out of an out-of-home placement by the same guardianship or adoptive family.

The youth must complete and file the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) by March 1st of each year. This application is available at www.fafsa.gov.

The tuition waiver provides exemption from paying any tuition and mandatory fees at a Maryland public institution of higher education. The referenced youth must be enrolled as a candidate for an associate’s degree, a bachelor’s degree or a vocational certificate at a Maryland public institution of higher education, on or before his or her 25th birthday. Any scholarships or grants that the youth receives shall not be applied to the tuition cost. The youth continues to be exempt from paying tuition and fees until 5 years after first enrolling as a candidate for an associate’s degree or a bachelor’s degree at a Maryland public institution of higher education or the date that the youth is awarded a bachelor’s degree, whichever one comes first. The tuition waiver does not apply to room and board and other expenses incurred as part of the overall cost of attendance.
Maryland’s Education and Training Voucher Program (ETV)
The federal government makes available through an amendment of the Chafee Foster Care Independence Program additional funds for post secondary educational opportunities. The funds can only be used for qualified educational expenses. This program is known as the Education and Training Voucher Program (ETV).

Maryland’s Education and Training Voucher Program is administered by Foster Care to Success, formerly known as the Orphan Foundation of America (OFA), and provides up to $5,000 per federal fiscal year for college and vocational training for full time students. Part-time student may receive no more than $2,500.

Foster care youth are eligible for ETV if they are:
- A current foster/kinship care youth, voluntarily placed or committed to the State of Maryland;
- A youth adopted from foster care after the age 16;
- A youth who after age 16 entered into guardianship placement from foster care or
- A former foster youth who left care at the age of 18, but is not yet 21.

Additionally, foster care youth must be:
- Age 18,19, or 20 when making first application for ETV
- A high school graduate or a GED recipient; and
- Accepted/enrolled at a college, university or vocational school that is accredited.

To be eligible for the ETV program, youth must also complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) by or before March 1st in the year that the youth plans to attend an institution of higher learning.

Participation in the ETV program is renewable until the youth’s 23rd birthday as long as the youth began receiving ETV funds before the youth turned 21.

The Education and Training Voucher shall not be applied to tuition and fees associated with enrollment at Maryland colleges or universities. The Maryland Tuition Waiver for Foster Care Recipients will cover the cost for those expenses. ETV shall be used for balances associated with room and board, books, school supplies and living expenses for those youth who attend college in Maryland.

ACTION:

Policy Objectives
- To ensure that foster care youth, who are eligible for Maryland’s Tuition Waiver for Foster Care Recipients and/or the ETV programs, apply for these programs so that they do not incur large debt due to applying for student loans in order to pay for tuition and fees to attend colleges, universities and, and vocational schools;
To ensure that foster care youth are aware of Maryland’s Tuition Waiver for Foster Care Recipients and the Education and Training Voucher (ETV) programs, and how to properly access both programs; and

To ensure that Maryland public colleges and universities apply the tuition waiver to tuition and any cost associated for enrollment regardless of any scholarships and/grants that a foster youth may receive.

GUIDELINES FOR APPLYING FOR MARYLAND TUITION WAIVER AND THE EDUCATION & TRAINING VOUCHER

Maryland Tuition Waiver for Foster Care Recipients

1. The DHR/SSA Education/Health Specialist shall contact the Independent Living Coordinators in May and November of each year to inform them that Maryland’s Tuition Waiver list is being developed.

2. The Independent Living Coordinator shall ensure that youth are in the appropriate program assignment in MD CHESSIE by the date that is given by the Education/Health Specialist.

3. The DHR/SSA Education/Health Specialist shall send Maryland’s Tuition Waiver list that is generated from MD CHESSIE to the Maryland Higher Education Commission in June and December.

4. The Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC) shall ensure that Maryland’s Tuition Waiver list is disseminated to the financial aid offices at Maryland public colleges and universities.

5. Students shall complete and file the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) by March 1st of each year at www.fafsa.gov.

6. Students must contact the financial aid office at their institution to alert them that they are eligible for the tuition waiver in order for the waiver to be activated.

7. The financial aid offices at Maryland public colleges and universities shall refer to Maryland’s Tuition Waiver list that is provided to them by the MHEC to ensure that a student is eligible for the tuition waiver program.

NOTE: If the student’s name is not on Maryland’s Tuition Waiver list, the financial aid office shall contact DHR/SSA’s Education/Health Specialist for verification.

Education and Training Voucher (ETV) Program

1. Students must complete and file the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) by March 1st of each year at www.fafsa.gov.

2. Students should go to www.statevoucher.org, click on Maryland, and complete the online application.

3. Once eligibility status is determined, the student should take the financial aid release form to the financial aid office of the institution.

4. The Financial Aid Office must submit documents to the Maryland ETV program on behalf of the student.

5. Youth must apply for the ETV program every year to remain eligible for the program.
RESPONSIBILITIES OF MARYLAND PUBLIC COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES' FINANCIAL AID & CASHIER'S OFFICES

1. To verify if the student is on Maryland’s Tuition Waiver list. *(If the student’s name is not on the list, the financial aid office shall contact DHR/SSA’s Education/Health Specialist for verification)*;

2. Apply the tuition waiver to balances associated with tuition and any fees associated with enrollment;

3. If applicable, apply the Education and Training Voucher (ETV) to balances associated with room and board. After room and board expenses are paid, any remaining funds should be given to the student. ETV *shall not* be applied to tuition and fees associated with enrollment;

4. Accurately complete the ETV financial aid release form. This includes indicating the amount that the student will receive from grants, scholarships, and tuition waiver on the financial aid release form; and

5. The cashier’s office shall submit the ETV’s financial aid release form to the ETV program via fax, and keep the student abreast of all expenses incurred as a part of the overall cost of attendance.