



State of Florida
Department of Children and Families

Charlie Crist
Governor

Robert A. Butterworth
Secretary

DATE: February 28, 2007

TO: District/Region Administrators, Community-Based Care CEOs, Sheriff's Offices

THROUGH: George Sheldon, Assistant Secretary of Operations
David Fairbanks, Director of Provider Relations

FROM: Patricia Badland, Director of Office of Family Safety

SUBJECT: Clarification of Timeframes for Eligibility for Tuition and Fee Exemption

Purpose: The purpose of this memorandum is to provide clarification regarding eligibility criteria for tuition and fee exemptions for qualifying students attending public institutions of higher education. The attached form has been revised to reflect this clarification.

Action Required: Please share this memo and attached form with supervisors, casework staff and specialists who assist students in obtaining tuition and fee exemptions. The provisions of the statute described in this memo are effective immediately. The revised form should be used from this point forward for all eligible students and for all students who were denied a tuition exemption in error.

Background: As a result of statutory changes from the 2006 legislative session, s.1009.25(2)(c), F.S., regarding fee exemptions for students who are or were in foster care, relative caregiver program, adopted from the department or in guardianship, was revised. A misinterpretation of the revisions regarding the number of years a student is eligible after high school graduation has prevented some students from receiving a tuition and fee exemption. In order to ensure students eligible for the exemption receive this benefit, we have consulted with staff in the Department of Education and provided them with a copy of the revised form.

As provided in s. 1009.25 (2)(c), F.S., "(2) *The following students are exempt from the payment of tuition and fees, including lab fees, at a school district that provides postsecondary career programs, community college, or state university. ... (c) A student who is or was at the time he or she reached 18 years of age in the custody of the Department of Children and Family Services or a relative under s. 39.5085, F.S., who is adopted from the Department of Children and Family Services after May 5, 1997, or who, after spending at least 6 months in the custody of the department after reaching 16 years of age, was placed in a guardianship by the court. Such exemption includes fees associated with enrollment in career-preparatory instruction and completion of the college-level communication and computation skills testing program. Such an exemption is available to any student who was in the custody of a relative under s. 39.5085, F.S., at the time he or she reached 18 years of*

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age or was adopted from the Department of Children and Family Services after May 5, 1997; however, the exemption remains valid for no more than 4 years after the date of graduation from high school."

This language reflects a four-year restriction on the length of time the exemption remains valid after high school graduation for students who were adopted after May 5, 1997, and those who were in relative custody under s. 39.5085, F.S. However, no time restriction is provided for students who are or who were in the custody of the department on their 18th birthday, or those placed in guardianship after reaching age 16.

If students are denied exemptions, they should request assistance from the nearest community-based care agency providing services to young adults formerly in foster care. If needed, students and/or community-based care agencies may contact the central office staff member below to address exemption issues.

Contact Information: For additional information, please contact Joel Atkinson at 850-921-4118, SC 291-4118 or at Joel_Atkinson@dcf.state.fl.us.

Attachment