

Helping Foster and/or Probation Youth Recover High School Credits

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Introduction

Youth in the foster care or juvenile justice system can experience undue hardships academically due to their life circumstances and frequent moves. It is critical for adults working with these youth to assist them in uncovering high school course credits that may have been completed while they were attending other schools/school districts. If you are a parent, social worker, attorney, school district employee, Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA), mentor, or holder of education rights, the following credit recovery guidelines are intended to help you support the youth you are serving. Although the process for recovering credits will vary with each school district, below are some key steps that will help to facilitate this process and increase the likelihood of successfully recovering credits.

General Guidelines

- Students should earn approximately 30 credits per semester (60 per school year) if they pass all of their classes. Each class is usually worth 5 credits. Check with the school district to find out their specific graduation requirements and class credits, as they often vary.
- *California Education Code Section 48645* requires each public school district and county office of education to accept, for credit, full or partial coursework satisfactorily completed by a student while attending another public school, or nonpublic, non-sectarian school or agency.
- Schools enrolling new students should request transcripts from the previous school(s) within two business days. Best practice is to request transcripts from all previous schools the youth attended, as credits may not have transferred properly from a previous school move. The best person to contact at any previous school is the registrar, school records clerk or the school counselor.
- Schools receiving requests for a prior student's credits should send records directly to the enrolling school within two business days. Make sure they are aware of the new school the youth was transferred to.

Credit Recovery Checklist

Follow these steps to help youth recover all their credits:

1. Find out how the student was doing academically before he/she transferred.

- Contact the registrar/records clerk/school counselor at the last school the student attended to obtain **check-out grades**. (Check-out grades are issued when a student leaves a school mid-semester and does not complete a class due to the transfer).
- **If the student transferred towards the middle of the semester (or earlier):**
 - ⊗ Check-out grades typically should not appear on the student's transcript because they may reflect lower grades than what the student still may be able to achieve. Ask the school representative that provided the check-out grades to verify this.
 - ⊗ To help the student achieve the highest possible grades, explore if he/she can complete additional work to improve these grades. Use the check-out grades to identify failing grades or classes that were left incomplete, and consider requesting **seat time** from the student's school counselor. The school counselor will discuss this request with the appropriate teachers and calculate it based on the time the student actually spent in the classroom. The table below identifies an estimated number of credits earned per subject, based on the number of days the student attended the school. Please note the results you obtain may significantly vary from the suggested credits below.

Number of days attended	Credits earned
1-9 days	No credit/grade
10-16 days	0.5 credit per subject
17-23 days	1 credit per subject
24-30 days	1.5 credits per subject
31-37 days	2 credits per subject
38-44 days	2.5 credits per subject
45-51 days	3 credits per subject
52-58 days	3.5 credits per subject
59-65 days	4 credits per subject
66-72 days	4.5 credits per subject
73+ days	5 credits per subject

- **If the student transferred towards the end of the semester**, verify whether the check-out grades are the student's final grades. (Sometimes check-out grades become final grades if the student transferred close to the end of a grading period). If the check-out grades are considered to be the final grades, then do not request seat time. Instead, explore if there are opportunities for the student to complete additional work for incomplete classes.

2. **Contact the registrar/records clerk/school counselor at the student's current school site. Find out if transcripts have been received from the previous school district(s).**

○ If transcripts have not been received:

- ⊗ Contact the records office at the previous school site(s) the student left.
- ⊗ Ask if the student has been properly **disenrolled**. (Note: Some districts have an exit date on the transcript. Absences after the student's exit should no longer be held against the student).
- ⊗ Request that transcripts be sent to either the requestor or the new school site.

Additional Troubleshooting Tips:

- School district personnel may request a court order to release records.
- Per Assembly Bill 490 (AB 490) and *EC § 48853.5(d)(4)(B)*, foster youth are entitled to immediate enrollment even when they are missing required forms, immunization records, uniforms, etc.
- Students are also entitled to a timely transfer of records pursuant to *EC § 49069.5(c)*
- Records must be provided regardless of any outstanding fines, fees, textbooks or other items/money owed to the school.

3. **Ask who at the student's current school site has/will review the student's transcripts to calculate credits earned.**

Calculations are completed by the records clerk/school counselor at the receiving school, not by the caseworker.

Additional Tip:

Here is a guide for credit calculation: <https://www.sacfys.org/demo/FYSPartialGradeCalc.cfm>

4. **Once the transcripts are received, review them carefully with the student to make sure that everything is correct to the best of their knowledge.**

5. **Review the transcripts for any enrollment gaps.**

Ensure that the student was enrolled for every semester they were required to be in school. If a student was not enrolled for a quarter or semester, find out why they were not in school and be sure that this information is documented appropriately in the case file or academic file.

6. **If any difficulties arise, contact the Foster Youth Liaison for the school district.**

Every school district should have a Foster Youth Liaison. That person usually performs other functions as well, and will not be dedicated solely to Foster Youth Liaison duties.

Additional Tip:

Here is a list of Los Angeles County Foster Youth Educational Liaisons per school district for 2010-2011: <http://lacdcfs.org/edu/docs/LASchoolDistrictFosterYouthLiaisons.pdf>

7. **Be sure to review the school records after the transfer process has been completed to ensure that all courses were appropriately credited to the student's record.**

Key information to be included in each student's records:

- Enrollment and immunization forms
- Cumulative transcript
- Achievement test scores, including:
 - ⊗ California Standardized Test (CST)
 - ⊗ California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE)
 - ⊗ Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) and/or American College Testing (ACT)
- Progress reports and report cards
- Calculation of seat time and full/partial credits earned. See *California Education Code §49069.5(e)*.
- Gifted and Talented Education (GATE) identification/records, if applicable
- Individual Education Plans (IEPs), if applicable
- Behavior logs and/or discipline records (may require specific request)