



TO: Chief Student Services Officers
NextUp Directors/Coordinators

FROM: Mia Keeley, Dean of Student Services

RE: Unaccompanied Refugee Minors (URM) Participants and NextUp Eligibility

This memorandum clarifies that students participating in the Unaccompanied Refugee Minors (URM) program are eligible for NextUp foster youth support and services, provided they can furnish documentation verifying participation in the URM program and satisfy the age and unit eligibility requirements set forth by the NextUp program.

Background

Many current and former foster youth lack the support of a caregiver or trusted adult who can assist in navigating the complex systems of higher education, including college admissions, financial aid, and academic progress. In response to these challenges, Senate Bill (SB) 11023 of 2014 amended Education Code Section 79220 et seq, authorized the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office (hereinafter Chancellor's Office) to establish the NextUp program with the intent of encouraging the enrollment, retention, and transfer of current and former foster youth within California's community colleges ([Chapter 771, Statues 2014, Amended by Statutes 2022](#)). Since 2013, NextUp programs have provided eligible foster youth with case management, wraparound services, and educational support throughout the student's academic journey. Subsequent legislation, including SB 12, SB 512, and AB 190 expanded the program.

URM Program

The URM program provides culturally and linguistically appropriate child welfare, foster care, and independent living services to youth who do not have a parent in the United States, or who enter the country unaccompanied by a parent, an immediate adult relative, or an adult having documentable evidence of legal custody of the minor.

Under Title Code 45 of Federal Regulations [Part 400.112\[a\]](#), URM states are mandated to provide foster care and child welfare services to URMs that are equivalent to those provided to mainstream foster youth.

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Since April 2004, the California Department of Social Services (CDSS), has supervised the California URM program. CDSS contracts with three Foster Family Agencies to provide URM services; contacts for each organization are included below:

- Catholic Charities of Santa Clara County: APinjic@CatholicCharitiesSCC.org;
- Crittenton Services for Children and Families: CSalgado@CrittentonSoCal.org; and
- International Christian Adoptions: RMora@4AChild.org and CharlotteP@4AChild.org

Further information regarding the URM program and service providers can be found on the CDSS website or the agencies' websites.

Youth in the URM program are eligible to remain in the program until their 25th birthday. For extended eligibility, youth must sign a mutual agreement to remain in Extended Foster Care (age 18-21) or a lease agreement for the Transitional Housing Plus placement (18- up to age 25).

The youth in the URM program are considered to be part of the Federal Foster Care program that mirrors California's foster care system. Colleges should work directly with URM Foster Family Agencies to obtain the dates of placement for verification purposes to ensure URM participants meet the age eligibility requirements, as outlined in [Education Code Section 79222](#).

URM Participants and NextUp Eligibility Guidance

Students may qualify for NextUp services and support if they were in foster care at any point on or after their 13th birthday and are no older than 25 years of age at the commencement of the academic year in which the student first enrolls in the program ([Education Code Section 79222](#)). Students must also be enrolled in at least nine units to be eligible for the NextUp program. However, students enrolled in fewer than nine units may be accepted, if enrollment is part of an education plan designed to move the student toward subsequent enrollment in at least nine units ([Education Code 79223](#)).

If URM youth meet the statutorily defined program criteria, they are eligible to participate in the NextUp program. Colleges are encouraged to work closely with their students and their Foster Family Agency to obtain the necessary verification documents to ensure they meet the age and unit eligibility requirements.

Further, URM youth will have either Designation/Approval Letter from the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) and/or the Refugee Verification Letter from the California Department of Social Services (CDSS). These letters will either be on ORR letterhead or CDSS letterhead. To ensure proper verification, colleges will need to work closely with foster family agencies and other relevant partners and are encouraged to maintain ongoing collaboration to support accurate documentation and service delivery.

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NextUp, in coordination with the broader community, can enhance the experience and support of URM youth enrolled in California community colleges. Leveraging both college-based resources and community partnerships ensures a comprehensive network of support, addressing the unique needs of URM participants. This collaborative approach strengthens students' access to academic, social, and personal resources, ultimately improving their opportunities for success in community college.

Contact Information

For specific questions about the NextUp program, please contact Thalia Marroquin, Program Specialist, at (916) 322-7924 or TMarroquin@CCCO.edu.

For specific questions about the URM program, please contact the Office of Immigrant Youth at OIY@DSS.ca.gov or URM@DSS.ca.gov or any of the Foster Family Agencies listed in this guidance memorandum.

cc: Sonya Christian, Chancellor

Rowena Tomaneng, Deputy Chancellor

Chris Ferguson, Executive Vice Chancellor of Finance and Strategic Initiatives

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