



## 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. In 2019, DCF gave these same agencies the additional flexibility to provide eligible youth with ETV funds, known in Wisconsin as **Brighter Star**. By administering both Brighter Star and IL supports, TRAs serve as “one-stop-shops” for youth eligible for independent living services! 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 (whichever comes first), 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 were 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 on the next page contains important Brighter Star contact information. 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! Youth who receive Brighter Star funds through a TRA are in no way obligated to participate in other services.

Additional information about Brighter Star can be found via <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/files/youthservices/pdf/bs-funding-guidelines.pdf>. If you have general questions about Brighter Star, contact DCF at [DCFILCoordinator@wi.gov](mailto:DCFILCoordinator@wi.gov).

The Department of Children and Families is an equal opportunity employer and service provider. If you have a disability and need to access services, receive information in an alternate format, or need information translated to another language, please call the Division of Safety and Permanence at (608) 422-6990. Individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing, deaf-blind or speech disabled can use the free Wisconsin Relay Service (WRS) – 711 to contact the department.





# Brighter Star Contacts

Region	Counties Included	Tribes Included	Agency	E-mail	Phone
1	Adams, Forest, Lincoln, Langlade, Marathon, Oneida, Portage, Vilas, Wood	Forest County Potawatomi, Fond du Lac, Lac du Flambeau, Sokaogon	Wood County in collaboration with CW Solutions	<a href="mailto:independentliving@changewithin.net">independentliving@changewithin.net</a>	(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	<a href="mailto:ILPCoordinator@bayareawdb.org">ILPCoordinator@bayareawdb.org</a>	(920) 431-4107
3	Milwaukee	N/A	Saint A	<a href="mailto:ETV@sainta.org">ETV@sainta.org</a>	(414) 465-5750
4	Kenosha, Racine, Walworth	N/A	Kenosha Human Development Services (KHDS)	<a href="mailto:ILsupport@khds.org">ILsupport@khds.org</a>	(262) 657-3330
5	Columbia, Dane, Dodge, Grant, Green, Iowa, Jefferson, Lafayette, Marquette, Ozaukee, Richland, Rock, Sauk, Washington, Waukesha	N/A	Workforce Development Board of South Central WI	<a href="mailto:jhall@wdbscw.org">jhall@wdbscw.org</a>	(608) 249-9001
6	Buffalo, Chippewa, Clark, Crawford, Dunn, Eau Claire, Jackson, Juneau, La Crosse, Monroe, Pepin, Pierce, St. Croix, Trempealeau, Vernon	Ho Chunk	Family and Children's Center	<a href="mailto:PostSecondaryFundingIL@fccnetwork.org">PostSecondaryFundingIL@fccnetwork.org</a>	(608) 785-0001 ext. 2221
7	Ashland, Barron, Bayfield, Burnett, Douglas, Iron, Polk, Price, Rusk, Sawyer, Taylor, Washburn	Bad River, Lac Courte Oreilles, Red Cliff, St. Croix	Workforce Resource	<a href="mailto:BrighterStar@workforceresource.org">BrighterStar@workforceresource.org</a>	(715) 718-4840 ext. 2710



## Frequently Asked 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 after age 16 or placed in Chapter 48.977 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)

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. Youth may only receive this type of funding from one state at a time.

### **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 is easier to access!

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.

### **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 2. 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](mailto:renee.jahnke@wisconsin.gov).