

National Center for Homeless Education (NCHE) Education Goals and Supports: A Guided Discussion Tool

A Guide for Using the Tool



Purpose of the Tool

This tool may be used by service providers working with youth and young adults (YYA) experiencing homelessness to guide YYA clients through a discussion of their interests and skills. The tool uses motivational interviewing questions to help determine the client's interest in pursuing education, provides online resources to help the client explore education and career pathways and determine possible pathway options in areas of interest, includes information on how to pay for higher education, and recommends next steps towards the client's goals.

The tool can be used during the intake process or later after a client's basic needs have been met. Regardless of a client's readiness to pursue educational goals, the questions in Section 1 may be used to plant seeds for revisiting the discussion at a later time. It is recommended that the service provider and client walk through the tool and record the client's responses in either electronic or hard-copy format.



Using the Tool

The tool is broken down into 4 sections

1. **Section 1** asks questions to help determine a client's level of interest in pursuing education.
2. If the client expresses interest in pursuing education, **Section 2** focuses on the client's interests and skills, and provides resources for helping the client connect their interests and skills to possible education and career pathways.
3. **Section 3** shares a selection of resources focused on helping the client pay for their education.
4. **Section 4** recommends next steps for the service provider and client towards the client's education and career pathway goals.



Before Beginning

Before beginning section 1, the service provider should frame the conversation by communicating to the client that

- the goal of the conversation is to help the client feel supported in considering and making an informed decision about the role that education and career pathways may play in their future;
- resources are available to help the client pay for and successfully complete their education; and
- there are a variety of educational and career pathways available to match with the client's goals and interests, including non-degree credentials (NDCs), such as certificates, industry certifications, apprenticeship certificates, and occupational licenses, as well as college degrees.

Apprenticeships: [Apprenticeship Fact Sheet](#) | [Apprenticeship Frequently Asked Questions](#) | [Apprenticeship Office by Location Search](#)

Career and Technical Qualifications: [Career and Technical Education \(CTE\) Career Pathways](#)

College Degrees: [Quick Guide: Your College Degree Options](#)
[Certificate vs. Degree: What's the Difference?](#)

Education Goals and Supports: A Guided Discussion Tool



Section 1: Interest in Pursuing Education and Career

The purpose of this section is to explore the client's education and career interests and goals, and to determine the client's level of interest in pursuing some form of education or career training. It is suggested that service providers preface the questions below with a brief discussion with the client of possible education and career pathway options, including college degrees and non-degree credentials (NDC's), such as certificates, industry certifications, apprenticeship certificates, and occupational licenses.

Explore the following motivational interviewing questions with the client:

- In a perfect world, what would you be doing in 5 years to earn money? Click or tap here to enter text.
- Are you comfortable with planning for 1-5 years into the future? <<If the client responds "no", ask the client what would help them feel more comfortable planning for the future.>> Click or tap here to enter text.
- What has been your experience in school (middle school, high school, college, other educational settings)? Click or tap here to enter text.
- What made school easier? What made school harder? Click or tap here to enter text.
- What are/were your favorite subjects or biggest interests in school? Click or tap here to enter text.
- If you stay in/go back to school, what might you want to learn to do? Are there particular subjects or jobs that interest you? Click or tap here to enter text.
- Imagine that you had what you needed — housing, food, enough money to pay your bills, support from other people — would you want to stay in/go back to school or a career training program? Click or tap here to enter text.
- On a scale of 1-5, how interested are you in staying in/going back to school or a career training program?
 - 1 = Not interested at all
 - 2 = Slightly interested
 - 3 = Somewhat interested
 - 4 = Very interested
 - 5 = Extremely interested
- Would you like to continue this conversation and discuss your interests in more detail? <<If the client says "yes", continue to section 2; if the client says "no", let the client know that this conversation can be revisited at a later date if/when the client wants to do so.>> Click or tap here to enter text.



Section 2: Interest and Skills Assessment

The purpose of this section is to ask questions that give the client the opportunity to explore their personal interests and skills. The section includes links to online tools and assessments the client can use to explore education and career options and pathways based on their interests and skills.

- If you could have any job, what would it be? Why? Click or tap here to enter text.
- What is important to you in a job (pay, flexible hours, benefits, paid time off, fast-paced, slower-paced, a 9am-5pm schedule or off-peak hours, etc.)? What kind of values are important to you in a job (respect, teamwork, working alone, room to grow in your job, etc.)? Click or tap here to enter text.
- What are some of your favorite activities? What do you enjoy doing in your free time? Click or tap here to enter text.
- What types of things motivate you and make you happy? Think about people, places, and activities. Click or tap here to enter text.
- Have there been activities, issues, or causes you have been involved in at a personal level? What about these activities, issues, or causes draws you to them? Click or tap here to enter text.
- What type of volunteering have you done or would you like to do? Click or tap here to enter text.

- What do you think you're good at? What have other people told you you're good at? Click or tap here to enter text.
- What are some of the jobs or careers your friends or family work in or plan to work in? Do any of these jobs or careers interest you for yourself? Click or tap here to enter text.

Education and Career Exploration Websites

The websites below may be used to help the client explore education and career options and pathways based on their interests and skills. To ensure the client has access to needed technology, the service provider should ask the client if they want to explore the websites in the service provider's office/on site at the program, or independently on their own time. All websites are accessible via smartphone, mobile device, or computer.

- [CareerOneStop Interest Assessment](#)
This website provides a basic assessment tool for learning about careers that might be a good fit based on responses to 30 questions that take approximately 5 minutes total to complete. This tool is helpful for clients who aren't sure what education or career pathways interest them.
- [My Next Move: Interest Profiler](#)
This website provides a more comprehensive interest profiler that consists of 60 questions focusing on whether the participant would like or dislike doing certain work activities. It includes a guide to job skill and education requirements broken down into 5 zones, ranging from no education needed to graduate education required or beyond. Each of the 5 zones has a list of careers the participant can click on to see the knowledge, skills, and education needed. It also includes a job security outlook and average salary and provides videos of people performing duties related to the specific job. My Next Move also allows clients to [search careers by key words or browse careers by industry](#).
- [CareerOneStop Exploration Toolkit](#)
This website provides a toolkit for researching careers, jobs, and training; links to state and local information; and includes information on wages and levels of growth/decline for specific industries to help determine job security.
- [Youth Engaged 4 Change: Education & Career Toolkit](#)
This website provides resources to help youth take the following steps: Finance my education, evaluate educational options, explore careers that fit me, learn how tech will impact tomorrow's jobs, make a plan, and find out about today's jobs.



Section 3: Resources to Help Pay for Education and Training

The purpose of this section is to inform clients about resources available to help them pay for education and training, including federal and state financial aid and scholarships.

- [The Free Application for Federal Student Aid \(FAFSA\)](#)
Students wishing to receive federal student aid – including [grants, loans, and work study](#) – must complete a FAFSA for every year for which they want to receive aid. Federal aid is the largest source of financial aid for education for most students. The FAFSA also is used to determine eligibility for many state and institutional aid programs. Students are encouraged to complete the FAFSA as soon as possible once the new FAFSA becomes available each year. For more information on financial aid for undocumented students, download [Financial Aid and Undocumented Students: Questions and Answers](#).
- [Independent Student Status on the FAFSA](#)
Some students – including unaccompanied homeless youth and youth who have been in foster care at any time since turning 13 – qualify as independent students. Independent students may complete the FAFSA without parent information, and their federal aid packages are calculated based solely on their own income

and assets. This may make the student eligible for more aid. Download a [sample form letter for documenting independent student status for unaccompanied homeless youth](#).

- **Scholarships**

There are a variety of scholarships available to help clients pay for their education, including need-based, merit-based, career-specific, and more. Use the following reputable websites to search for scholarships.

- The College Board: [Big Future Scholarship Search](#)
- Fastweb: [Scholarship Search](#)
- U.S. Department of Education's Office of Federal Student Aid: [Finding and Applying for Scholarships](#)

- **State Financial Aid Programs**

Additional financial aid and scholarships may be available in particular states or from particular institutions of higher education. Every state has its own funds and process for distributing state aid, which often consists of grants and scholarships. Some states only require students to complete a FAFSA to apply for state aid, while others may require students to complete a separate application. Some states also may provide higher education tuition and fee waivers for [unaccompanied homeless youth](#) and/or [students in or aging out of foster care](#).

- **Institutional Aid**

Institutional aid comes from the institution of higher education itself. It typically includes grants and scholarships; some institutions also offer their own loans and work-study programs. Contact the institution's office of financial aid to learn more about available institutional aid and how to apply.



Section 4: Next Steps

The purpose of this section is to help service providers and clients identify next steps to take to help the client reach their education and career pathway goals. Possible steps are listed below. <<Provider can edit, delete, or revise as needed to fit the client's needs.>>

Service Provider Next Steps

- Refer the client to education partners who may be able to help them meet their educational or other needs. Provide a warm hand-off whenever possible.
 - Local school district staff, including the [homeless education liaison](#) (click on the state in the map, then the liaison directory link) and/or a school counselor or school social worker
 - Campus-based supports at institutions of higher education the client is interested in (financial aid, basic needs, housing and residence life, etc.)
 - State or local college access and success programs
 - National Association for College Admission Counseling (NACAC): [Directory of College Access and Success Programs](#). National College Attainment Network (NCAN): [Member Directory](#)
- Refer the client to housing and other service provider partners who may be able to help meet the young person's housing and other basic needs.
- Follow up with the client periodically for a status check on next steps and to offer additional support.

Client Next Steps

- Explore education and career exploration websites, including completing one or more interest assessments.
- Check out [I Want to Go to College: Now What?](#) (a guide for youths who are or were homeless, or are at risk of experiencing homelessness).
- Complete the [FAFSA](#) online.
- Search for scholarships using a reputable website and/or by talking with your school counselor.
- Reach out to partner supports recommended by your service provider.
- Follow up with your service provider periodically to continue the conversation and access help, when needed.