



INDEPENDENT YOUTH at the University of Northern Colorado

What does it mean to be an Independent Youth (IY)?

There are several reasons that a student could be classified as Independent Youth. Classification of dependency status begins with completion of the FAFSA and is determined by the Department of Education and verified by the Office of Financial Aid. Students may be independent youth if it has been determined that they fall into one of the following categories:

- They have or will have children who will receive more than half of their support from them.
- Student has dependents, other than children or spouse, that receive half of their support from the student.
- At any time since the age of 13, the student's parents were deceased, they were in foster care, or they were a dependent or ward of the court.
- Student is an emancipated minor or someone other than their parents/stepparents has legal guardianship of them, such as their grandparents.
- Student was determined as unaccompanied youth who was homeless or were self-supporting and at risk of being homeless.
- Students can also receive independent status through an appeals process in situations involving unusual circumstances. Some examples of such circumstances include the following:
 - Student has an abusive family environment (e.g. sexual, physical, or mental abuse)
 - Abandonment by parents
 - Incarceration of both parents

*An Office of the U.S. Department of Education (November 2017) Federal Student Aid
FinAid Page (2018). Dependency Overrides*

What happens after a student is classified as IY?

Once a student is classified as IY, they are automatically placed into the **Soar** program to receive academic support throughout their entire time at the University of Northern Colorado. There is NOT an application process for students to enter the program.

IY ACADEMIC STATISTICS

According to the Colorado Department of Education (2018), in 2017 students in foster care had a high school graduation rate of 33.6% in four years compared to the state average of 79%.

A study completed by the U.S. Department of Education (2011) found that 72% of foster youth enrolled in a two- or four-year college DID NOT receive their degree or certificate within six years.

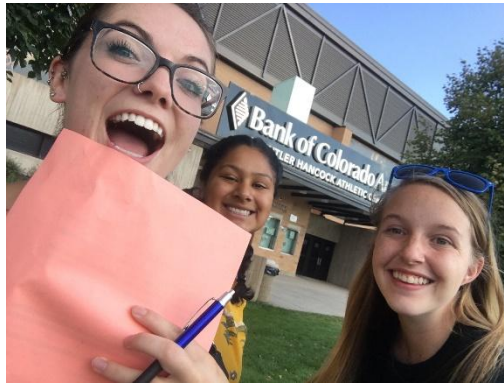
The National Conference of State Legislatures (2013) stated that 40% of teen mothers finish high school nationally. Fewer than 2% finish college by age 30.

According to the U.S. Department of Education, at least 32,000 college students were homeless in 2017.



INDEPENDENT YOUTH at the University of Northern Colorado

Soar Program



Soar provides proactive academic coaching to students in the Bears First program, Denver Scholarship Foundation program, Soar First Generation program, and Independent Youth (IY) program. Soar also provides individual academic advising to exploring students or students considering a major change. Soar provides students with academic and personal support in an inclusive environment by teaching them the skills necessary to make self-motivated academic decisions

Program Services for IY Students:

- One-on-one academic success coaching, including but not limited to support with time management, study skills, and goal setting.
- Support with connections to various resources on campus (Tutoring, Cultural Centers, Disability Resource Center, Center for Student Well Being, etc.).
- Assistance with understanding and navigating financial aid, including understanding your bill and aid package.
- Navigation support with the Colorado Department of Higher Education (CDHE) EmpowerEd and FosterEd applications, when applicable.
- Assistance with completion of the FAFSA.
- Opportunity to connect with Soar Peer Mentors.
- Access to weekly Soar workshops and monthly social events to promote building community.
- Direct connection to counseling services with the UNC Counseling Center and two designated counselors available to support Soar Independent Youth participants, when needed.

CITATION INDEX

CBS News (2018, June, 30). The Hidden Problem of Homelessness on College Campuses. Retrieved from: <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/the-hidden-problem-of-homelessness-on-college-campuses/>

Colorado Department of Education (2018). Graduation Statistics. Retrieved from: <http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdeval/gradratecurrent>

Federal Student Aid-An Office of the U.S. Department of Education (2017, November). When I Fill Out the FAFSA Form...Am I Dependent or Independent?

FinAid Page (2018). Dependency Overrides. Retrieved from: <http://www.finaid.org/educators/pj/dependencyoverrides.phtml>

Leibson, Hannah (2018, January, 9). Removing Barriers to Higher Education for Youth in Foster Care. Retrieved from: https://www.americanbar.org/groups/child_law/resources/child_law_practiceonline/child_law_practice/vol-35/september-2016/removing-barriers-to-higher-education-for-youth-in-foster-care/

National Conference of State Legislatures (2013, June, 17). Postcard: Teen Pregnancy Affects Graduation Rates. Retrieved from: <http://www.ncsl.org/research/health/teen-pregnancy-affects-graduation-rates-postcard.aspx>

Office of Dropout Prevent and Student Re-engagement with the Colorado Department of Education (2018, October). Foster Care Education Program Fact Sheet. Retrieved from: <http://www.cde.state.co.us/communications/fostercarefactsheet>

CONTACT INFORMATION:

Soar Staff

Melinda Gurule

Success Coach and Advisor

Email: melinda.gurule@unco.edu

OFFICE OF FINANCIAL AID

Hailey Gertner

Financial Aid Counselor & S.P.O.C.

(Single Point of Contact)

Office of Financial Aid

Email: hailey.gertner@unco.edu