



California Edition 17

Marching Towards Tax Success: Insights from Our Team

March Edition 2024

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Explore the captivating link between taxes and job opportunities in our newsletter. Get expert tips on tax planning, deductions, and leveraging incentives to stand out in the job market. AND have the opportunity to take a stand to save the CA Lifeline program for foster youth.

CALL TO ACTION | HELP SAVE THE PHONES FOR FOSTER YOUTH PROGRAM

Dear iFoster Community Members,

We urgently need your help to ensure that foster youth in California continue to have access to vital communication services through the LifeLine program. The California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) is considering drastic changes to the LifeLine program, impacting over 12,000 children and youth in foster care who rely on this service for communication and Internet access.

Since its launch in November 2019, the Phones for Foster Youth LifeLine Pilot Program has successfully served over 20,000 foster youth between the ages of 13 and 26 in California. Due to its immense success, the program has been extended twice and is set to become a permanent LifeLine program – the only one of its kind in the country.

However, iFoster and T-Mobile, who have been instrumental in providing services and support for this program, have withdrawn from consideration to operate the permanent program due to the concerning changes proposed by the CPUC. These changes do not adequately support the digital communication rights of foster youth as outlined in the Foster Care Bill of Rights. See proposed changes in chart below:

| CPUC Foster Youth Phone Pilot Program <i>(Current)</i> | Permanent Program – Proposed Requirements <i>(08/24)</i> |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Free smartphone 5G capable, newest models • Free wall charger and case • Unlimited voice, text and highspeed data with 10GB of hotspot capability a month. Single service plan under T-Mobile for Government program. • Available to current/former foster youth ages 13 to 26 inclusive • PII information secured following HIPAA protocols with necessary cyber-insurance • 1 service provider (T-Mobile) • Standard smartphone setup with digital literacy and FURS imaged on phone with no adware or other fee-based apps on phone at no cost by T-Mobile • Administrator is from child welfare and deeply experienced in serving and working with those in the system • PII information secured following HIPAA protocols with necessary cyber-insurance • Emergency phone suspension and coordinated Administrator/Service Provider work with social workers and law enforcement in crisis situations • Involvement of child welfare in program design and refinement over pilot years, including workshops and focus groups | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providers not required to provide a smartphone for free • No wall charger or case required to be provided by providers • Unlimited voice, text and 25GB of data, not required to be high speed and no hotspot capabilities required. Service Providers can decide their own service plan, no standardization. • Available to current foster youth ages 13 to 17, inclusive, and to age 18-20, inclusive, if continuing in extended foster care. • No requirement for securing PII information or having necessary cyber-insurances or HIPAA protocols • Subject to 1 LifeLine phone per household (i.e. if Caregiver has LifeLine phone, youth would not be eligible) • Potentially multiple Service Providers and T-Mobile has stated it will not continue as iFoster is its client, declines to continue if Administrator changed • No standard phone set-up required and service providers can decide what to put on the phone • Administrator not required to have any child welfare experience • No requirement for Administrator or Service Providers to work with child welfare or law enforcement in crisis situation outside of existing warrant protocols • No involvement by child welfare, not invited in to participate in permanent program design or RFP |

How Can You Help?

1. **Organizations Sign the Support Letter:** Organizations are encouraged to sign a support letter requesting that the crucial elements of the pilot program be preserved.
2. **Youth Sign on to a Letter:** Foster youth and supportive adults can sign another letter to advocate for preserving the crucial elements of the pilot program.
3. **Share Your Story:** Foster youth, supportive adults, and organizations can directly file comments expressing your support for maintaining the current program structure.

The CPUC is accepting comments on their proposed decision until Friday, March 8 at 5 pm PT. Your voice matters, and your input can make a significant difference in ensuring that foster youth in California continue to have access to essential communication services.

Together, we can fight for the rights of foster youth and support the continuation of the LifeLine program. Let's stand together to impact the lives of vulnerable youth in our community positively.

[Learn More About How to Help](#)

Resources for you

It's TAX Time - Foster Youth GET PAID!



Did you know that filing your taxes could provide you with a refund? It's a great way to add extra money to your pockets. Most current and former foster youth qualify for tax credits even if they haven't earned the minimum income required to file taxes. If you're a CA foster youth between 18 and 25, you could be eligible for the \$1,000 tax-refundable FOSTER YOUTH TAX CREDIT this year.

Don't miss out on the opportunity to get FREE money. You've earned it! Make sure to file your taxes!

If you need face-to-face assistance with your taxes, consider finding a [Volunteer Income Tax Assistance \(VITA\) program near you](#).

iFoster is here to help answer any questions you have and connect

Tax credits for Caregivers are a thing!



As a caregiver for Foster, Kinship, Adoptive, Legal Guardian, or Bio children, you're working hard to raise your children, especially if they are young. The good news is that families can still claim the 2021 expanded Child Tax Credit until April 15, 2025. Every penny counts!

The Child Tax Credit can provide up to \$2,000 per child, which can help offset the costs of daycare, diapers, food, and other essentials your children need. Additionally, the Young Child Tax Credit offers an extra \$1,117 in 2023, specifically for parents with a child under 6 years old.

If you are looking for FREE face-to-face help with your taxes, [find a Volunteer Income Tax Assistance \(VITA\) program near you](#).

Find a Youth Source Center near you!



The Youth Source Centers are valuable resources that offer exceptional employment development opportunities for young individuals. These centers provide various opportunities, such as paid and unpaid work experiences, including summer and year-round employment options. They also offer pre-apprenticeship programs, internships, job shadowing, on-the-job training, occupational skill training, leadership development opportunities, and numerous other resources.

This program is specifically designed for youth aged 14-24. It aims to empower and support young individuals in their educational and career success journey.

you with trained tax preparers who can assist you in filing your taxes for free.

[Get Tax Help Now](#)

[Find out if you're eligible today!](#)

[Learn More](#)

Discover MoneySmart: Mastering Your Taxes



Looking to enhance your financial literacy and take control of your taxes? Dive into our self-directed learning module, MoneySmart: Filing Your Taxes! This resource is designed to empower you with the knowledge and skills needed to navigate the tax-filing process with confidence.

From understanding tax deductions to maximizing refunds, this module covers everything you need to know to become money-smart when it comes to taxes. Take the first step towards financial independence and start mastering your tax filings today with MoneySmart!

[Start the MoneySmart Way](#)

Boost Your Job Security

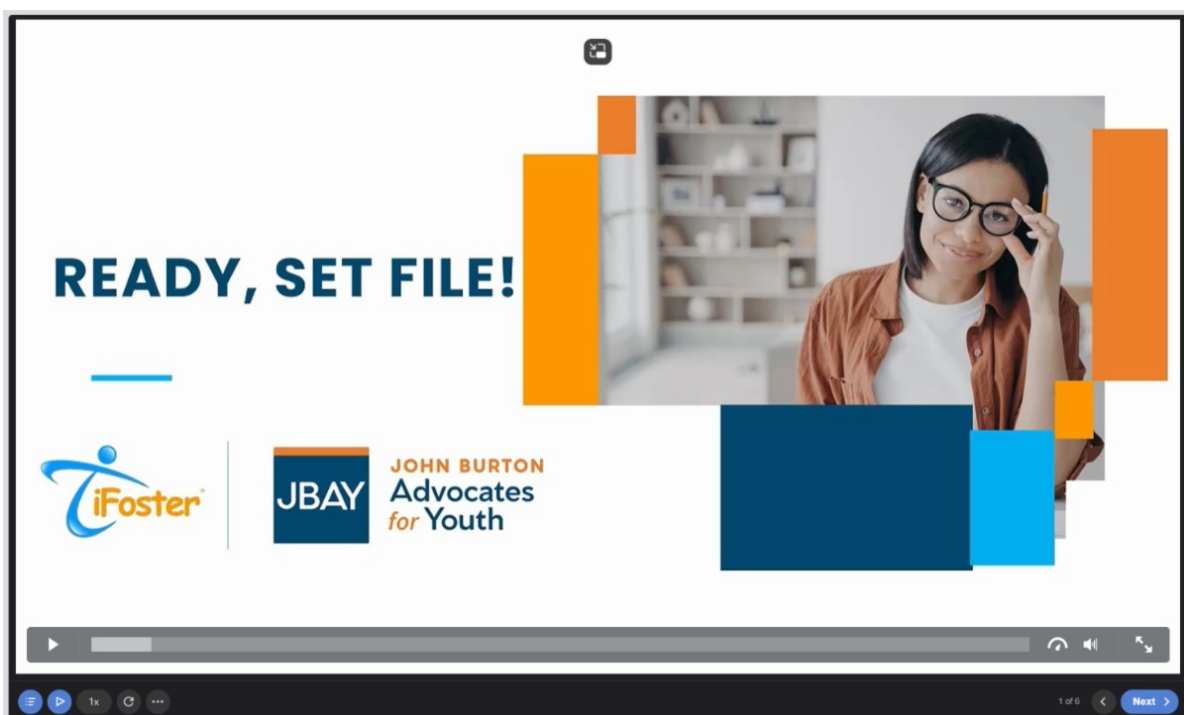


Enhance your job security with iFoster's self-directed training program focused on essential job skills.

Learn at your own pace, covering topics like communication, problem-solving, time management, and teamwork. Enroll today to invest in your professional growth and unlock endless job opportunities.

[Click Here to Get Started Now](#)

Get Tax Savvy with iFoster: File Like a Pro, Keep the Dough!!



Tax season can be daunting, especially if you're a youth navigating the maze of forms and deductions for the first time. But fear not, because iFoster, in partnership with John Burton Advocates for Youth, has your back with our new self-directed tax tool!

Say goodbye to expensive tax services and say hello to TaxSlayer, our partner helping you file your taxes for FREE. Every dollar counts, so we've designed this tool to maximize your return and ensure you keep more hard-earned cash.

What sets our tax tool apart? It's not just a one-size-fits-all approach. Along with John Burton Advocates for Youth, we have tailored various scenarios to your unique circumstances, helping you find the best strategies to optimize your return.

So don't wait to file this year GET READY SET AND FILE—like a pro, and let us help you keep the dough where it belongs – in your pocket!

Happy filing, and remember, we've got your back every step of the way!

Start your Tax Journey with Us

Did You Know?

Opportunities Await with Kollab Youth!

Join Kollab Youth, a transformative program empowering low-income youth. Gain essential skills, explore diverse career industries, and receive mentorship from industry leaders. Plus, earn scholarships, prizes, and enjoy fun field trips. Enroll now for the spring session starting May 5th! Ages 14-19. [Learn more and apply here.](#)



Kollab Youth
MORE THAN A PROGRAM. IT'S A JOURNEY OF OPPORTUNITIES

Spring Session 2024
MAY 5 TO JUNE 15
REGISTER BY: MONDAY, APRIL 29
Free online Workforce Development Program for youth ages 14 -19

- Career Exploration
- Field Trips
- Internships/Apprenticeships
- Mentorship
- Scholarships
- Skill Building
- Financial Literacy
- AND MUCH MORE!

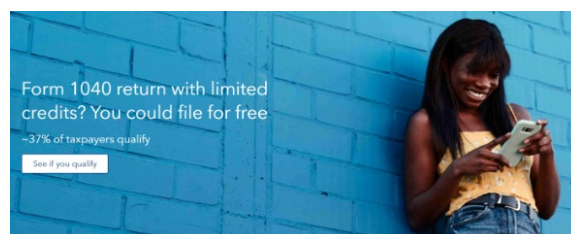
[SIGN UP NOW!](#)

kollabyouth.org/youth-registration
Questions? Email schaparro@kollabyouth.org

Reminder | Your Voice Can Make a Difference for Foster Youth in California

Please take a moment and take a stand to save the Foster Youth LifeLine Phones program by either 1) [Signing on as a supportive Organization](#), 2) [Signing on as a supportive young person](#), or 3) [Making your voice directly heard by filing a comment](#).

File Taxes for Free with TurboTax® Free Edition!



Introducing TurboTax® Free Edition, the perfect solution to file your taxes quickly and easily, without costing you a penny! With TurboTax® Free Edition, you can prepare and file your federal and state taxes online for FREE. Visit intuit.com to learn more and get started today!

iFoster is looking for HOST sites in 2023



Calling all agencies and organizations! iFoster is seeking HOST sites for 2024. Are you looking to expand your capacity while providing a meaningful work experience for foster youth? If so, we invite you to apply to become a TAY AmeriCorps host site in one of our 6 states CA, KY, OH, NV, NY, and or WA! With over 200 TAY AmeriCorps Peer Navigators trained annually, we need host sites for these internships.

Our program has been recognized as the Best New AmeriCorps program, and we are proud to announce that we are in 6 states. If you are a program or agency serving foster youth and are interested in having interns assist in connecting your clients to resources, complete this interest form. This opportunity comes at no cost to you and can make a significant impact on the lives of foster youth. If you are interested in answering the call of service then [learn how you can become a host site](#) today!



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For more information, please contact: iFoster Support at
855-936-7837 / text 530-550-8001/ support@ifoster.org
Must be an iFoster Member/ Register at www.ifoster.org, it's free!

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