



# Youth Mentorship Scholarship Program

**Legislative Report**

**Senate Bill 23-149**

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2024

Prepared and submitted by the  
Colorado Department of Higher Education (CDHE)  
Report to the Colorado General Assembly  
Statute: 23-3.3-1010  
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# Youth Mentorship Scholarship Program

## Legislative Reporting Requirements

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C.R.S. 23-3.3-1010 (8)(b) requires that on or before December 1 each year, the department submit a report to the education committees of the Senate and House of Representatives concerning the Youth Mentorship Scholarship program in the preceding state fiscal year. At a minimum, the report must include:

- Location, the services provided, demographic information of the mentees, and summary of the program's impact on the mentees served.
- Number of eligible student mentors, disaggregated by race/ethnicity, gender identity, public institution attending.
- Amount of money received by the mentor organization, disaggregated by payments to the public institutions of higher education.
- If available, the number of eligible student mentors who participated in the program who continued enrollment in the qualified public institution of higher education in a subsequent term, reported for the program as a whole and for each institution, in total and disaggregated by race, ethnicity, and gender identity.
- If available, the number of eligible student mentors who participated in the program and graduated from a qualified public institution of higher education, reported for the program as a whole and for each institution, in total and disaggregated by race, ethnicity, and gender identity.

## Program Overview

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The youth mentorship assistance grant pilot program, known as the Youth Mentorship Scholarship Program, is led by the Colorado Opportunity Scholarship Initiative (COSI), a division of the Colorado Department of Higher Education (CDHE).

This program is designed to provide scholarships to students who offer mentorship services to defray the cost of higher education. In fiscal year 2023-2024 the state appropriated \$100,000 to be used through June 30, 2027, and 100% of the funds will be used for student scholarships.

Youth Mentorship Scholarship Program	
<b>Intended Applicant</b>	<p>Applicants include youth mentorship organizations focused on serving one or more of the following communities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a youth mentorship organization for youth who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or queer;</li> <li>• a youth mentorship organization for youth who have a physical, mental, or developmental disability;</li> <li>• a youth mentorship organization for youth of color;</li> <li>• a youth mentorship organization for youth who are justice-involved</li> </ul>
<b>Program</b>	<p>The Youth Mentorship Scholarship program utilizes \$100,000 in state funds to provide grants to youth mentorship organizations. The funds are used as payments for service to the student in the form of scholarships, which are paid directly to the public institution of higher education at the end of each semester.</p>
<b>Program Goal</b>	<p>The program provides financial assistance to students who provide mentorship services to defray the cost of the student's attendance at a public institution of higher education.</p>

Statute (C.R.S. 23-3.3-1010) details specifics regarding the eligible organizations and mentor requirements. In addition, the COSI Advisory Board (The Board) was charged with developing program policies. An overview of the policies and eligibility is detailed below.

**Grant Awards**

COSI awards grants of up to \$25,000 per youth mentorship organization to be spent over two years. The organization must use grant funds to provide student scholarships. Funded applicants will be eligible for continued funding in the subsequent years of the grant cycle after successfully demonstrating the following:

- Submission of all required evaluation materials.
- Adequate progress toward successfully meeting annual objectives; and
- Completed annual report to demonstrate fidelity to proceed in subsequent years.

### **Use of Funds**

- Organizations provide scholarships of up to \$2,500 per student per year.
- Scholarships are provided to the student mentor in exchange for mentorship services provided.
- Scholarships must be used to cover the cost of attendance and must be paid directly to the institution of higher education.
- The scholarship must be paid each fall and spring semester, and only once hours have been confirmed by the mentorship organization will the scholarship be paid, which may occur at the end of the semester.
- Scholarships are not intended to supplant federal, state, local, or non-federal funds. Scholarships should be designed to close the affordability gap for students pursuing postsecondary credentials.

### **Eligible Student-Mentor Criteria**

- Complete the Free Application for Student Aid (FAFSA) or Colorado Application for Student Financial Aid (CASFA) application annually.
- Meet the financial need threshold of up to 0%-250% of Pell eligibility.
- Undergraduate student.
- Colorado residents for tuition purposes (includes ASSET students).
- Attending public area technical colleges, community colleges, four-year institutions of higher education, and research institutions in Colorado.
- Satisfy all eligibility requirements necessary to be a student mentor through the approved mentorship organization, including completing the fingerprint-based criminal history record check.
- Actively participate in the youth mentorship organization and provide student mentor services.
- Recommended to focus on student-mentors who are at least sophomore level.

### **Program Progress**

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COSI moved this program forward quickly. The bill was signed on June 6, 2023, effective August 7, 2023, and required fund disbursement to begin on or before January 1, 2024. In total, \$100,000 was appropriated to this program, and all funds were required to be used for scholarships.

COSI released the request for proposal on August 16, 2023, and The Board approved the first awards in November 2023. Nine proposals were submitted in November requesting over \$330,000. The Board approved three proposals supporting youth of color, youth who are justice-involved, and youth who have physical, mental, or developmental disabilities focus areas for a total of \$75,000. In March 2024, The Board approved an additional proposal for \$25,000 for youth who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or queer focus area. The total appropriation of \$100,000 was awarded by March 2024.

Two programs launched in the spring of 2024, serving less than ten students. The programs disbursed \$10,000 in scholarship funds to public institutions of higher education to compensate the mentors for their services. The remaining two programs will launch in the fall of 2024. All four programs are expected to be fully operational in fiscal year 2024-25, and more detailed information on eligible mentors will be available in future reports. Table 1 provides an overview of the program, including its location, the services offered, the demographics of the participants, and a summary of its positive impact on the mentees it serves.

**TABLE 1:** Youth Mentor Scholarships Program Grantee Information and Program Impacts

Grantee	Community Served	Area of Service	Mentee Demographics	Program Impact
College Access Navigators Inc	Youth Of Color	Fort Morgan	Students in high school and early college, with a focus on first-generation, immigrant, and English-learning students	Mentees acknowledged heightened confidence in their ability to achieve future goals due to their mentor’s guidance. Mentors emphasized the program’s significance in fostering a supportive and inclusive community, with mentors feeling less isolated and happier as part of a community that “feels like a supportive village.”
Initiative for Inclusive Higher Education	Youth Who Have A Physical, Mental, Or Developmental Disability	Metro area, Pikes Peak	Pairs high school seniors with intellectual disabilities with college or university students with intellectual disabilities who are enrolled at one of IN!’s IHE campuses	High school staff shared how successful mentorship was for their students and how much interest in college it generated among students who were not previously considering postsecondary education. COSI funding allowed the students to complete their Junior year in financial good standing, allowing them to return to campus in the Fall of 2024.
Larimer County Partners	Youth Who Are Justice Involved	Larimer and Weld County	Youth must be referred by a professional in the following communities: Ft. Collins, Loveland, Greeley, Estes Park.	The program launched in the fall of 2024. The organization will complete an annual report in August 2025, and their impact will be provided in the next legislative report.

University of Colorado Colorado Springs	Youth Who Are Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Or Queer	El Paso, Douglas, Elbert, Lincoln, Crowley, Pueblo, Fremont, Teller, and Park Counties	Students who identify as LGBTQ+, people of color, and first-generation to college	The program launched in the fall of 2024. The organization will complete an annual report in August 2025, and their impact will be provided in the next legislative report.
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**Grant Awards and Disbursements**

Table 2 lists the organizations, program launch dates, total awards received, annual disbursements from COSI, and the amount the grantee disbursed to the institution. For those organizations noting “not applicable”, this is due to a later launch date of fall 2024.

**TABLE 2:** Youth Mentor Scholarships Program Grant Awards and Disbursements

Grantee	Program Launch	Total Award	Spring 2024 COSI Disbursement	Amount Grantee Disbursed to the Institution
College Access Navigators Inc	Spring 2024	\$25,000	\$5,000	\$5,000
Initiative for Inclusive Higher Education	Spring 2024	\$25,000	\$5,000	\$5,000
Larimer County Partners	Fall 2024	\$25,000	N/A	N/A
University of Colorado Colorado Springs	Fall 2024	\$25,000	N/A	N/A

**Students Served**

From January 1, 2024, through June 30, 2024, the College Access Navigator, Inc., and the Initiative for Inclusive Higher Education organizations served less than ten students (exact number redacted to protect student privacy). The students attended Colorado State University, Metropolitan State, the University of Denver, the University of Colorado Boulder, the University of Colorado Colorado Springs, and the University of Northern Colorado. CDHE requires a minimum of ten students in the data set not to compromise personally identifiable information. Given the limited number of students in the initial cohort, it is essential to prioritize data privacy. While disaggregating data by race, ethnicity, and gender identity can provide valuable insights, balancing this with protecting individual privacy is crucial. Disaggregated data will be provided in future reports if and when there is large enough program participation.

## Persistence

The bill states that if available, the report should include the number of eligible student mentors who participated in the program who continued enrollment in the qualified public institution of higher education in a subsequent term, reported for the program as a whole and for each institution, in total and disaggregated by race, ethnicity, and gender identity. In future years, this information will be provided when sufficient numbers of students have been retained to protect student privacy.

## Completion

The bill requests data on completion outlining the number of eligible student mentors who participated in the program and graduated from a qualified public institution of higher education, reported for the program as a whole and for each institution, in total and disaggregated by race, ethnicity, and gender identity. The Department requires a minimum of ten students in the data set to not compromise personally identifiable information. Given the limited number of students in the initial cohort, it is essential to prioritize data privacy. While disaggregating data by race, ethnicity, and gender identity can provide valuable insights, balancing this with protecting individual privacy is crucial. In future years, this information will be provided when sufficient numbers of students have been retained to protect student privacy.

## Conclusion

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The Youth Mentorship Scholarship Program, a pilot initiative under SB23-149, has made significant strides in its inaugural year. The program awarded \$100,000 in grants to four organizations serving diverse student populations. Two programs launched in Spring 2024, serving less than ten students, and two more programs are set to begin in Fall 2024. All four programs are expected to be fully operational in Fiscal year 2024-25.

### Key Accomplishments:

- **Successful Grant Award Process:** The program awarded \$100,000 in grants to four eligible organizations focused on diverse youth populations.
- **Financial Support for Mentors:** The program provided direct financial support to student mentors, enabling them to continue their education while providing valuable mentorship services.

- **Diverse Student Impact:** The program reached students from various backgrounds, including youth of color, LGBTQ+ youth, and youth with disabilities.
- **Positive Outcomes:** Early indications suggest positive impacts on mentees, such as increased confidence, academic motivation, and a stronger sense of community.

The program is successfully meeting its goals by fostering relationships with mentorship organizations and supporting the academic achievement of student mentors through financial incentives. As the program expands, it aims to further its positive impact on mentors and mentees.