



treehouse™

## Caregiver FAQ

*Updated 10-8-20*

### **1. How do I get a Treehouse referral or update an existing referral for a youth in my home? How long will my referral be good for?**

A referral for eligible youth can be made through your child's social worker or CASA and educational referrals can be made by school staff as well. This can be done online and only takes about 10 minutes to do!

A Treehouse referral for the Store and Just-in-Time Funding is good from the time it is made until the following July 31<sup>st</sup> regardless of youth's placement. For youth in Graduation or Launch Success, their referral will remain open as long as they stay active and engaged in the programs. They DO NOT need a referral on an annual basis.

### **2. Are all Treehouse programs currently running? How are they different during the pandemic?**

Yes, all of our Treehouse Programs are still running but things look a little different right now! Our offices are currently closed and all of our employees are currently working remotely. The exception is that our store staff and volunteers are still filling orders onsite. All other services, which include Just-In-Time Funding, Drivers Assistance, Educational Advocacy, Graduation Success, Launch Success and Holiday Magic are fully operational with safety measures in place for COVID-19.

### **3. Is the Treehouse store open for shopping and what do shopping services currently look like?**

The Treehouse Store is not currently open for in-person shopping but has instead shifted to filling orders for youth via an online order form. It is a super easy process to make an online shopping request and takes about 10-15 minutes to fill out. Once orders are placed, it currently takes between 7-10 days to fulfill. We currently prefer that caregivers arrange for a no contact pick up if possible but we are also able to do shipping and delivery if families are not able to come to the building.

Youth are currently eligible for 3 shopping visit a year with approximately 20 items per visit (not counting school supplies and books). With these guidelines, we are able to support more youth with materials goods across the state. We will continue to look at store programs and guidelines as the year progresses.

**4. My youth needs additional support with school this year. How can Treehouse help with tutoring?**

We know this has been an extra concern for many foster families this year. Treehouse is looking at a variety of ways to work with community partners to make sure that Treehouse youth have the right educational support. Currently we are collaborating with Tutor.com and I-foster to support youth of all ages.

Please see attached information for caregivers at <http://bit.ly/tutorsfaq> and more detailed instructions for tutoring at <http://bit.ly/tutorcomth>. You can always check our website for further details about tutoring or contact us through the Treehouse Outreach department.

For youth in our Graduation Success and Launch Success Program, you can make a request through the participant's education staff person about requesting a tutor through our Treehouse Volunteer tutor program. Treehouse is currently talking with other community partners about additional tutoring support for all students and will update families about potential additional supports. We do not currently pay for tutoring directly.

**5. What types of funding support can Just-in-Time funding provide and what do they not support?**

Just in Time funding can still cover many activities and fees for youth. This includes school fees, athletics, art and music programs, driver's education, skill/certification classes, camps and cultural activities for a youth's family or origin and multitude of other academic and extracurricular activities

We know that activities have not been happening as normal, but many organizations and classes now have virtual options and some activities and sports have started to return on a limited basis. JITF has also been working to cover some phone or other technology needs for youth without access to other resources.

We will also continue to update our resource page with a variety of options at the [Treehouse Resource Center](#) continue to re-evaluation programs during the program year and will update caregivers as changes are made.

**6. We are going to be heavily dependent on technology this year. Who can we connect with regarding school technical needs? Can Treehouse help with technology needs?**

Most students should have received a laptop through their school and should have clear guidelines on who to contact at the school/district regarding technical needs. Treehouse is a supplemental service and we have worked to fill the gap in technology for some Treehouse youth during the pandemic. In some cases, students did not receive a laptop in a timely manner and Treehouse was able to assist with this.

If you have not been able to obtain needed technology from the school or district, you can contact your student's Treehouse education staff person for assistance. If they are currently not connected with an education staff person (through Graduation Success or Educational

Advocacy), you can ask your social worker to put in an Educational Advocacy request to help resolve this issue.

We have also put a focus on supplying or connecting Graduation Success youth with phones to help them stay in contact with our education staff if needed. We are also looking at additional resources to make sure appropriate Wi-Fi services are in place for remote learning.

#### **7. What can my educational staff person help me with? How can I utilize their skills effectively?**

Our Educational staff are here to help students and caregivers navigate remote learning. You can talk to your student's education staff person about helping you understand your school and district policies and practices during COVID-19. They can also provide guidance around special education and other education plans. In addition, they can provide advocacy for youth who are struggling academically and help you know what kind of supports and resources you can request from schools and other community partners.

#### **8. What sort of interaction can I expect with my youth's education staff person?**

The interaction with staff will vary based on the schedule and needs of individual youth. Of course, Treehouse staff cannot currently take students out of online classes, so they will work around school schedules to best support them. While communication might vary from text or a phone call or email, Education specialist should be in contact with students a minimum of one time a week and with caregivers monthly.

At this time, Treehouse education staff are not currently authorized to go into schools regardless if students are attending school in person or remotely. Treehouse will be re-evaluating this policy on a regular basis during the school year and will keep families updated as changes occur. Some education staff may have "office hours" during which their youth can connect with them virtually.

#### **9. As caregivers, how can we best support our students with an IEP and special education services in place?**

Of course, talk with your child's Treehouse education staff if they have one assigned. Open communication with the IEP Case Manager is important. Make sure to get an understanding of HOW and WHEN (actual logistics) service minutes will be provided. Some IEP services may be provided at some point in person at school depending on the school/child. Some youth will be prioritized based on the difficulty of providing their proscribed services online.

Some schools will be able to offer up to 5 kids at a time in the school building in person. This will depend on districts. Paras may be able to offer 1:1 via zoom rather than the student being in a larger class zoom. Learn how Evaluations / re-evaluations will be done. Some of these are able to be administered without the youth being there in person.

Every district will be different depending on what they can/will do, so communication with key people is important. Learn who your school's foster care liaison is and touch base with them if needed.

**10. What can the Advocacy Program help with for my student? When should an Advocacy referral be made and by who?**

Our Advocates are working hard to connect caregivers to resources and help them navigate this new educational environment. Advocacy referrals should be made if a youth has a current, specific barrier to their education that requires intervention. Advocates act as a support for caregivers and students as well as a liaison between them, their social worker, and the school.

Advocates can help with things like enrollment issues, IEP establishment or modification, discipline concerns, credit retrieval, and academic progress, to name a few. Advocacy referrals typically come from the DCYF or tribal social worker, though we can also take referrals from school staff who are familiar with the youth and their needs/foster care status.

**11. What is the best way to stay connected to Treehouse services?**

We have always relied on technology to help keep us connected to all of kids and caregivers in our programs. During the pandemic, this is more important than ever. We ask caregivers to make sure that we have their email address so we can make sure to include them on Treehouse updates quickly.

Make sure to keep in contact with your education staff person if you have a youth in Graduation Success or Educational Advocacy. Our website [treehouseforkids.org](http://treehouseforkids.org) also provides emails for all of our departments. We also update the Treehouse website on a regular basis with current program changes and send out a caregiver e-news on a monthly basis. You can always call our main offices to be connected to the right department or get in contact with your education staff person. To be added to our e-newsletters, please feel free to contact the outreach department.

**12. What can I do to support the work that Education Specialists are doing with my students?**

Encourage students to connect with their Education Specialist weekly and ensure they have access to the technology necessary (phone call, text, email) to talk to their staff person. If you do not have access to technology, please connect with their Education Specialist for ideas and support.

You can always let us know what other questions you have at [outreach@treehouseforkids.org](mailto:outreach@treehouseforkids.org) or for specific referral questions at [referrals@treehouseforkids.org](mailto:referrals@treehouseforkids.org). Thank you for all you do for kids!