

NextUp Video - Mario
October, 2017

Shalanda: I went to five different high schools and I had to finish in the continuation school.

Tony: I first went into the foster system at about 5.

Shalanda: Once you turn 18 years old, your foster parents are no longer responsible for you, so you pretty much have to navigate your own way.

Tony: Worry about, you know, whether you're gonna sink or swim.

Mario: NextUp is a wonderful program offered by California Community Colleges whereby we provide resources for foster youth transitioning out of high school. Intrusive counseling services, we can provide students with childcare, help them meet transportation costs, in some cases, a little assistance with housing. But I would tell students that they maybe, may not qualify for NextUp. The resources are there. The financial support, the counseling, the advising, we have a climate that we embrace the fosters because we understand the challenges that they encounter or have to overcome.

Tony: You know what I've learned, personally that you can't be scared to ask for help. Right now I'm studying business admin but I may be changing that to business finance. It definitely makes me feel proud because looking at, looking back on my life and all, I kind of feel like, you know, I'm a statistic, or, at least, you know, being a foster youth, and I kind of want to break that. I want to break that boundary.

Shalanda: What I knew I didn't want is my child to suffer anything that I had went through in my childhood. So, my first thought was to fight to get that education that I had always been fighting for. So far, I've earned my associate's degree. I've also earned my bachelor's degree and I am starting grad school this upcoming fall.

When I think of the NextUp program and the opportunity that it could provide to students, it gives me, even more, hope that I know that my peers will have some of the opportunities that I had. I'm so very proud of myself.