

How-to guide: Financial aid for college completion night

FEBRUARY – JUNE 2020

TOOLKIT STEPS

BY FEBRUARY 14, 2020

- Schedule a date in February to hold your financial aid for college completion night. This should include:
 - ❖ Confirming that your school counselor, school principal and at least 1-5 other school staff (depending on the size of your senior student body) are available and committed to attend
 - ❖ Partner with a trusted community-based organization (CBO) or your local college or university to co-host your financial aid for college completion night
 - ❖ Make sure you have people staffing your financial aid for college completion night who have expertise in completing the FAFSA, TAP application and NYS DREAM Act. This may be your school counselor, the CBO or local college or university you co-host with may have staff with expertise, or you can contact the Higher Education Services Corporation (HESC). HESC offers support to schools hosting FAFSA completion events free of charge. You can request HESC's support [using this form](#)
 - ❖ Ensuring translation services will be available to support families who may not speak English at home
 - ❖ Scheduling the event later in the evening – start after 6pm – so that families don't have to leave work early to attend
 - ❖ Holding the event on a night when there is another mandatory event (like a senior night) when families will already be at the school and there are not other school events (athletics, band concerts, plays, etc.) that might prevent participating students and their families from attending
 - ❖ Scheduling the event to last at least 2 hours to give families time to complete the applications there
 - ❖ Providing child care services at the event – you should contact CBOs in your area who may be able to help
 - ❖ Providing food at the event – you should contact CBOs in your area who may be able to help

- Book a space at the school or a community-based center nearby to hold the event. This should include:
 - ❖ Holding it in the school computer lab or another room where students and families will have access to computers and reliable internet
 - ❖ Ensuring that students and families that bring their own laptops will have access to reliable WiFi
- Having places where students and families can have privacy to complete their applications given the amount of private information that they'll need to share on the applications. **Use these templates** to post weekly updates to your school's Facebook and Twitter accounts about the financial aid for college completion night
 - ❖ Schedule a training session for all school staff who will be at the financial aid for college completion night. Consider:
 - + Having your school counselor lead the prep so that all staff know how to answer common question students and families have, as well as what applications they'll need to have with them. If your school counselor is unavailable or needs support on how to best support families to complete the FAFSA, TAP application, or NYS DREAM Act, they can contact **the New York State School Counselor Association**, **the New York State Financial Aid Administrators Association**, and **New York Cares**. In addition, many CBOs and colleges/universities (including SUNY and CUNY locations) in your area may offer financial aid completion services for free

○ **BY FEBRUARY 28, 2020**

- **Use these templates** to post weekly updates (and daily updates in the week prior to the event) in English and Spanish on your social media accounts.
- **HOLD YOUR SCHOOL'S FINANCIAL AID FOR COLLEGE COMPLETION NIGHT**

○ **BY MARCH 13, 2020**

- **Use these templates** to post in English and Spanish about attendance and updates after your school's event