

FINANCIAL AID ADVISING DAY

Purpose:

To increase financial aid application completion rates, especially among underrepresented students. Research has shown that increased completion of student aid applications in other states has led to increases in high school graduation and college matriculation, especially for students in underrepresented groups. Washington's new Financial Aid Advising Day, in conjunction with related High School and Beyond Plan requirements, provide districts with a framework for improving Washington's low financial aid application completion rates and better supporting students' post-high school goals to attend college.

Scope of financial aid advising day(s):

Between September 1 and December 1 each year, all districts with a high school must provide both a financial aid advising day and notification of financial aid opportunities to parents and guardians of any student entering the twelfth grade. The notification must include information regarding:

- The eligibility requirements of the Washington College Grant;
- The requirements of the financial aid advising day;
- The process for opting out of the financial aid advising day; and
- Any community-based resources available to assist parents and guardians in understanding the requirements of and how to complete the free application for federal student aid and the Washington application for state financial aid.

Per current High School and Beyond Plan requirements, all students must show evidence of receiving the following information about the federal and state financial aid programs, as applicable:

- Documentation necessary for completing federal and state applications;
- The importance of application timeliness (need to submit early) and submission deadlines;
- Information specific to students who are, or have been, in foster care;
- Information specific to students who are, or are at risk of experiencing, homelessness;
- Information specific to students whose family member or guardian(s) will be required to provide financial and tax information necessary to complete applications, and
- Opportunities to participate in sessions that assist students and, when necessary, their family member(s) or guardian(s), fill out financial aid applications;
- Relevant resources and information provided on the Washington Student Achievement Council's website; www.wsac.wa.gov/12th-year-campaign
- Information on the College Bound Scholarship.

Districts may choose to combine offering the financial aid advising day(s) with concurrently ensuring all seniors have completed this required component of their High School and Beyond Plan.

A ‘financial aid advising day’ means a day or series of days occurring by December 1st of each year that includes, but is not limited to, dedicated time during regular school hours for staff to:

- Provide information to twelfth grade students on the free application for federal student aid (FAFSA), the Washington application for state financial aid (WASFA), and the college board’s CSS profile;
- As appropriate and whenever possible, assist twelfth grade students in completing the FAFSA and WASFA;
- In conjunction with the Washington Student Achievement Council, distribute information on the Washington college grant and demonstrate the use of the college financial aid calculator.

The district may choose the date, or series of dates, on which to hold a financial aid advising day.

Whenever possible, districts shall provide spoken language interpreter services for limited English-speaking families.

Schools must allow students over the age of eighteen to opt out and parents or guardians of students under the age of eighteen to opt their student out of scheduled financial aid advising day activities.

A student may not be penalized for failing to complete financial aid applications or for opting out of activities under subsection of this section. Educational staff, including instructional, administrative, and counseling staff, may not be assessed or penalized on the basis of students’ completion of financial aid forms or students’ decisions to opt out under subsection of this section.

In the administration of the financial aid advising day, personally identifiable student or family information must be protected in accordance with state and federal privacy laws.

Legal References:

RCW 28A.230 – Compulsory Coursework and Activities;

RCW 28A.300 – Superintendent of Public Instruction;

RCW 28B.77 – Student Achievement Council;

WAC 180-21 – High School and Beyond Plan

Management Resource:

August 2020 – Policy and Legal News

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