

FINANCIAL AID FOR COLLEGE

HIGH SCHOOL TOOLKIT



www.NYFAFSAChallenge.org



Higher Education
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Dear School and District Leaders,

As you know, completing financial aid applications for college, like the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), NYS Application for Tuition Assistance Program (TAP), and the NYS DREAM Act forms, are critical steps toward enabling students to access the financial aid that can be a key factor in whether students who are from low-income backgrounds have the opportunity to attend college.

Even as high schools across New York returned to in person school last year, the FAFSA completion rate continues to lag behind pre-pandemic levels, particularly at schools that serve the largest shares of students from low-income backgrounds. Statewide, the FAFSA completion rate as of the end of the 2021-22 school year was up one percentage point from the same time last year, yet the rate is still five percentage points lower than at the end of June 2019, before the pandemic forced school closures. And among schools that serve the largest shares of students from low-income backgrounds the gap in FAFSA completion rates from June 2019 to June 2022 is 8 percent.

While facing the challenges of the ongoing pandemic, many high schools in New York have remained committed to helping students access critical financial aid and supported them in completing their applications. These efforts are exemplified in last year's New York FAFSA Challenge Winners, who utilized strategies like remote office hours, classroom push-ins, regular student outreach, and college readiness courses to support more of their students than ever before to complete their financial aid for college applications. We know that school leaders and staff have worked tirelessly to support students during the pandemic. And extensive research shows that high schools can make a significant difference in helping students who are from low-income backgrounds, students from immigrant households, and first-generation college hopefuls to complete their FAFSA and other state financial aid applications.

So we are excited to release this updated version of the High School Toolkit to support efforts to help your students and their families complete their financial aid applications.

This toolkit includes a collection of evidence-based steps your school can take each month from October through June to support student financial aid completion. It offers a guide for schools to hold events like a financial aid for college completion night or regular office hours, and includes templates – in English and Spanish – that your school can use to communicate effectively with students and families about important deadlines as well as opportunities to get support completing their applications.

The toolkit also includes important information about the important changes to the FAFSA application that Congress passed late last year. These changes – including reducing the number of questions by almost 2/3rds, changing the way we determine the amount of money a family may be able to contribute to the cost of college, and expanding Pell Grant eligibility to students who are incarcerated – will take effect over the next two years and should make it easier for students to access federal financial support for college. You can find the toolkit at www.NYFAFSACHallenge.org.

Over the next few months, we'll be releasing our updated data tool to help schools track FAFSA completion progress. Please contact us at fafsa@edtrustny.org if there is any additional information or assistance we can provide.

10 evidence-based practices to support all your seniors to complete their financial aid for college applications

OCTOBER 2022 - JUNE 2023

Extensive research shows that high schools can make a big difference in helping students who are from low-income backgrounds, immigrant, and first-generation college hopefuls complete the FAFSA and other state financial aid applications. With the new FAFSA application changes this year, targeted support from schools to help students and families complete their financial aid applications is more important than ever.

In this Toolkit, you'll find 10 evidence-based best practices your school can use to support all eligible seniors and their families to complete their FAFSA, NYS Application for TAP, and NYS DREAM Act forms. You can find the Toolkit materials listed in each step at <https://newyork.edtrust.org/fafsa-toolkit/>.

Please note that completing these applications often requires follow-up after a student has submitted their applications, including timely responses to verification requests from financial aid offices. We've included reminders about both submission and follow-up in the strategies below.

1 HOLD A VIRTUAL OR IN-PERSON FINANCIAL AID FOR COLLEGE COMPLETION NIGHT

Hold a virtual or in-person schoolwide financial aid for college completion night in partnership with a community-based organization (CBO) that has trusted relationships with students and their families. It may be particularly helpful to partner with a CBO that has expertise supporting students who are undocumented with college access. Trained school staff should be available to support students and families as they complete their FAFSA, NYS Application for TAP, and NYS DREAM Act forms and respond to verification requests. **Schools should determine which students do not participate in an in-person or virtual event and follow up with them individually.**

IN-PERSON

At the event, students and families should have access to computers and internet, as well as counselors and others, to help complete their FAFSA, NYS Application for TAP, and NYS DREAM Act forms and respond to verification requests. It is often helpful to hold your event at the same time as another mandatory event — such as senior night — to ensure families can prioritize attendance.

REMOTE

Send seniors and their families a link to a Zoom or other virtual meeting room. Record the event so that students and families that may not have access to internet or smart devices at the time of the event can still view it.



TIMELINE – It is best to hold the event as early as possible, typically in November. You should also consider holding a second event in late January as students are returning for the second semester. It is important for students to complete the applications as early as possible to give them the best chance for the most aid.



TOOLKIT MATERIALS – [How-to guide: Financial aid for college completion night](#) (pages 17-18 of this Toolkit) and [a list of financial aid completion events in your area or remote and accessible to all New Yorkers](#)

2



HOLD REGULAR FINANCIAL AID FOR COLLEGE COMPLETION OFFICE HOURS

Hold regular office hours at least once per month for students and families to receive in-person or virtual support from school counselors or community experts to complete their FAFSA, NYS Application for TAP, and NYS DREAM Act forms and respond to verification requests. Publicize these office hours, and include personalized messages to each high school senior by the end of October.

IN-PERSON

During office hours, students and families should have access to counselors and other trained staff who can answer questions as well as help complete their FAFSA, NYS Application for TAP, and NYS DREAM Act forms and respond to verification requests.

REMOTE

Create a virtual meeting room and keep the link the same throughout the year so it is more easily accessible to students and families. Students and families should be able to speak with a counselor and other trained staff, including in private breakout rooms.



TIMELINE – Hold office hours at least once per month from October – June.



TOOLKIT MATERIALS – [How-to guide: Financial aid for college office hours](#) (pages 19-20 of this Toolkit)

3



DEDICATE CLASS TIME TO FINANCIAL AID APPLICATION COMPLETION

Set aside 1 hour of class time each week for students to work on their applications and respond to verification requests. Ensure there is private space for students who are undocumented to get support without having to publicly share their immigration status.

Consider using homeroom or mandatory study hall periods to regularly dedicate time to student financial aid completion.



TIMELINE – Classroom time set aside each week from October – June.



TOOLKIT MATERIALS – **How-to guide: Using class time for financial aid completion (pages 21-22 of this Toolkit)** and **lesson plan template (pages 23-24 of**

4



SEND REGULAR LETTERS OR EMAILS TO FAMILIES

Send monthly letters and emails out to families with reminders about the FAFSA, NYS Application for TAP, and NYS DREAM Act forms as well as information about upcoming opportunities to get support to complete those materials and respond to verification requests.



TIMELINE – Send a letter and email once per month from October – June.



TOOLKIT MATERIALS – **Monthly letters and emails templates in English and Spanish**

5



POST UPDATES IN SCHOOL NEWSLETTERS, EMAILS, AND NEWSPAPERS

Include regular updates in the school newsletter, emails, and newspapers about the FAFSA, NYS Application for TAP, and NYS DREAM Act forms as well as information about upcoming opportunities to get support to complete those materials and respond to verification requests.



TIMELINE – Each school newsletter or newspaper that is released from October – June.



TOOLKIT MATERIALS – **Monthly updates for school newsletters, emails, and newspapers in English and Spanish**

6



SEND REGULAR TEXTS AND ROBOCALLS TO FAMILIES

Using your school or district's text or robocall system, send out at least one update per month to families and students about financial aid completion and responses to verification requests. You can also use those systems to drive participation in your financial aid for college completion night and office hours.



TIMELINE – At least once per month from October – June and at least once per week in the weeks immediately preceding your financial aid for college completion night and office hours.



TOOLKIT MATERIALS – **Pre-written text and robocall scripts in English and Spanish**

7



POST REGULARLY ON YOUR SCHOOL'S SOCIAL MEDIA

Post regularly on your school's social media accounts about the FAFSA, NYS Application for TAP, and NYS DREAM Act forms as well as information about upcoming opportunities to get support to complete those materials and respond to verification requests.



TIMELINE – At least once per week from October – June, as well as daily in the week immediately leading up to key events such as the financial aid for college completion night and office hours.



TOOLKIT MATERIALS – **Regular social media posts in English and Spanish**

8



USE DATA TO TRACK YOUR SCHOOL'S PROGRESS TOWARD FULL FAFSA COMPLETION

Regularly check on your school's progress toward full FAFSA completion. This October, you should join the **NYS FAFSA Completion Initiative data access program** organized by the state's Higher Education Services Corporation (HESC) to get student-level completion data. You should also check the **www.NYFAFSACHallenge.org** website starting in early 2023. The information from both of these sites should be used to track how well your school's efforts are working and target resources to individual students and families who need support.



TIMELINE – Track progress and follow-up with students and families at least once per week from January – June.



TOOLKIT MATERIALS – **How-to guide: Using data to track your school's progress toward 100 percent financial aid for college completion** (pages 25-26 of this Toolkit)

9



ADD A SECTION TO YOUR SCHOOL WEBSITE WITH INFORMATION ABOUT FINANCIAL AID FOR COLLEGE COMPLETION

In a prominent place on your website, post information about the importance of financial aid for college completion, a list of the supports your school is offering to students, and links to resources that students and families can use to help them complete their applications.



TIMELINE – Add the section to your website by mid-October, and regularly update it with new information through June.



TOOLKIT MATERIALS – **Pre-written copy for your school website section on financial aid for college completion in English and Spanish**

10



ENSURE THAT YOUR SCHOOL COUNSELOR AND AT LEAST 2-3 OTHER SCHOOL STAFF ATTEND A TRAINING ABOUT HOW TO SUPPORT STUDENTS TO COMPLETE THEIR FINANCIAL AID FOR COLLEGE APPLICATIONS

Organizations across the state hold high-quality trainings for school staff to support students and families as they complete their financial aid for college applications.

You can find a running list of trainings we know about on our website at nyfafsachallenge.org



TIMELINE – Sign up for a training near you this fall.



TOOLKIT MATERIALS – View trainings we know about across the state on our website at nyfafsachallenge.org

Checklist for schools

OCTOBER 2022 - JUNE 2023

CALENDAR OF FINANCIAL AID FOR COLLEGE SUPPORTS FOR STUDENTS AND FAMILIES

All resources in the checklist can be found at

<https://newyork.edtrust.org/fafsa-toolkit>

MONTH	CHECKLIST FOR SCHOOLS
OCTOBER	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input checked="" type="radio"/> Schedule a financial aid for college completion night for your school in November and another in January. Use the How-to guide: Financial aid for college completion night to begin planning the event. <input type="radio"/> Schedule monthly financial aid for college office hours for your school from October – June. Office hours can be held in person or virtually. Use the How-to guide: Financial aid for college office hours to help plan these events. Make sure to hold your first financial aid for college office hours before the end of the month. Publicize your office hours, and include personalized messages to each high school senior. <input type="radio"/> Send out a kick-off letter or email in English and Spanish to families using this template. <input type="radio"/> Include a kick-off message in English and Spanish in your school newsletter or newspaper using this template. <input type="radio"/> Post kick-off messages on your social media accounts using this template. <input type="radio"/> Use 1 hour of class time per week — during home room or study halls for example — for students to work on their applications. Use our How-to guide: Using class time for financial aid for college completion and our lesson plan templates to fill that time. <input type="radio"/> Identify 2-3 staff members from your school to attend a training on supporting students and families to complete their financial aid for college applications. <input type="radio"/> Update your school's financial aid for college website section using this guide. <input type="radio"/> Track your school's progress toward 100 percent FAFSA completion using this guide.

MONTH	CHECKLIST FOR SCHOOLS
NOVEMBER	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> Hold a financial aid for college completion night this month. Use the How-to guide: Financial aid for college completion night to begin planning the event. <input type="radio"/> Hold at least one financial aid for college office hours event. Use the How-to guide: Financial aid for college office hours to help plan the event. Publicize your office hours, and include personalized messages to each high school senior. <input type="radio"/> Send out an update letter or email in English and Spanish to families using this template. <input type="radio"/> Post update messages on your social media accounts every week using this template. <input type="radio"/> Include a school newsletter or newspaper update in English and Spanish using this template. <input type="radio"/> Send a text or robocall in English and Spanish to families of seniors about your school's financial aid for college completion supports using these templates. <input type="radio"/> Use 1 hour of class time per week — during home room or study halls for example — for students to work on their applications. Use our How-to guide: Using class time for financial aid for college completion and our lesson plan templates to fill that time. <input type="radio"/> Ensure 2-3 staff members from your school attend a training on supporting students and families to complete their financial aid for college applications. <input type="radio"/> Update your school's financial aid for college website section using this guide. <input type="radio"/> Track your school's progress toward 100 percent FAFSA completion using this guide.

MONTH	CHECKLIST FOR SCHOOLS
DECEMBER	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Hold at least one financial aid for college office hours event. Use the How-to guide: Financial aid for college office hours to help plan the event. Publicize your office hours, and include personalized messages to each high school senior. ○ Send out an update letter or email in English and Spanish to families using these templates. ○ Post update messages on your social media accounts every week using these templates. ○ Send a text or robocall in English and Spanish to families of seniors about your school's financial aid for college completion supports using these templates. ○ Use 1 hour of class time per week — during home room or study halls for example — for students to work on their applications. Use our How-to guide: Using class time for financial aid for college completion and our lesson plan templates to fill that time. ○ Update your school's financial aid for college website section using this guide. ○ Determine which seniors have not yet participated in an in-person or virtual completion night or office hours and follow-up with them individually. ○ Track your school's progress toward 100 percent FAFSA completion using this guide.

MONTH	CHECKLIST FOR SCHOOLS
JANUARY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> Hold a financial aid for college completion night this month. Use the How-to guide: Financial aid for college completion night to begin planning the event. <input type="radio"/> Hold at least one financial aid for college office hours event. Use the How-to guide: Financial aid for college office hours to help plan the event. Publicize your office hours, and include personalized messages to each high school senior. <input type="radio"/> Send out an update letter or email in English and Spanish to families using these templates. <input type="radio"/> Post update messages on your social media accounts every week using these templates. <input type="radio"/> Include a school newsletter or newspaper update in English and Spanish using these templates. <input type="radio"/> Send a text or robocall in English and Spanish to families of seniors about your school's financial aid for college completion supports using these templates. <input type="radio"/> Use 1 hour of class time per week — during home room or study halls for example — for students to work on their applications. Use our How-to guide: Using class time for financial aid for college completion and our lesson plan templates to fill that time. <input type="radio"/> Update your school's financial aid for college website section using this guide. <input type="radio"/> Determine which seniors have not yet participated in an in-person or virtual completion night or office hours and follow-up with them individually. <input type="radio"/> Track your school's progress toward 100 percent FAFSA completion using this guide.

MONTH	CHECKLIST FOR SCHOOLS
FEBRUARY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> Hold at least one financial aid for college office hours event. Use the How-to guide: Financial aid for college office hours to help plan the event. Publicize your office hours, and include personalized messages to each high school senior. <input type="radio"/> Send out an update letter or email to families using this template. <input type="radio"/> Post update messages on your social media accounts every week using these templates. <input type="radio"/> Send a text or robocall in English and Spanish to families of seniors about your school's financial aid for college completion supports using these templates. <input type="radio"/> Use 1 hour of class time per week — during home room or study halls for example — for students to work on their applications. Use our How-to guide: Using class time for financial aid for college completion and our lesson plan templates to fill that time. <input type="radio"/> Track your school's progress toward 100 percent FAFSA completion using this guide. <input type="radio"/> Update your school's financial aid for college website section using this guide. <input type="radio"/> Determine which seniors have not yet participated in an in-person or virtual completion night or office hours and follow-up with them individually.
MARCH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> Hold at least one financial aid for college office hours event. Use the How-to guide: Financial aid for college office hours to help plan the event. Publicize your office hours, and include personalized messages to each high school senior. <input type="radio"/> Send out an update letter or email to families using this template. <input type="radio"/> Include a school newsletter or newspaper update in English and Spanish using these templates. <input type="radio"/> Post update messages on your social media accounts every week using these templates. <input type="radio"/> Send a text or robocall in English and Spanish to families of seniors about your school's financial aid for college completion supports using these templates. <input type="radio"/> Use 1 hour of class time per week — during home room or study halls for example — for students to work on their applications. Use our How-to guide: Using class time for financial aid for college completion and our lesson plan templates to fill that time. <input type="radio"/> Track your school's progress toward 100 percent FAFSA completion using this guide. <input type="radio"/> Update your school's financial aid for college website section using this guide. <input type="radio"/> Determine which seniors have not yet participated in an in-person or virtual completion night or office hours and follow-up with them individually.

MONTH	CHECKLIST FOR SCHOOLS
APRIL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> Hold at least one financial aid for college office hours event. Use the How-to guide: Financial aid for college office hours to help plan the event. Publicize your office hours, and include personalized messages to each high school senior. <input type="radio"/> Send out an update letter or email to families using this template. <input type="radio"/> Include a school newsletter or newspaper update in English and Spanish using these templates. <input type="radio"/> Post update messages on your social media accounts every week using these templates. <input type="radio"/> Send a text or robocall in English and Spanish to families of seniors about your school's financial aid for college completion supports using these templates. <input type="radio"/> Use 1 hour of class time per week — during home room or study halls for example — for students to work on their applications. Use our How-to guide: Using class time for financial aid for college completion and our lesson plan templates to fill that time. <input type="radio"/> Track your school's progress toward 100 percent FAFSA completion using this guide. <input type="radio"/> Update your school's financial aid for college website section using this guide. <input type="radio"/> Determine which seniors have not yet participated in an in-person or virtual completion night or office hours and follow-up with them individually.

MONTH	CHECKLIST FOR SCHOOLS
MAY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> Hold at least one financial aid for college office hours event. Use the How-to guide: Financial aid for college office hours to help plan the event. Publicize your office hours, and include personalized messages to each high school senior. <input type="radio"/> Send out an update letter or email to families using this template. <input type="radio"/> Include a school newsletter or newspaper update in English and Spanish using these templates. <input type="radio"/> Post update messages on your social media accounts every week using these templates. <input type="radio"/> Send a text or robocall in English and Spanish to families of seniors about your school's financial aid for college completion supports using these templates. <input type="radio"/> Use 1 hour of class time per week — during home room or study halls for example — for students to work on their applications. Use our How-to guide: Using class time for financial aid for college completion and our lesson plan templates to fill that time. <input type="radio"/> Track your school's progress toward 100 percent FAFSA completion using this guide. <input type="radio"/> Update your school's financial aid for college website section using this guide. <input type="radio"/> Determine which seniors have not yet participated in an in-person or virtual completion night or office hours and follow-up with them individually.

MONTH	CHECKLIST FOR SCHOOLS
JUNE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> Hold at least one financial aid for college office hours event. Use the How-to guide: Financial aid for college office hours to help plan the event. Publicize your office hours, and include personalized messages to each high school senior. <input type="radio"/> Send out an update letter or email to families using this template. <input type="radio"/> Include a school newsletter or newspaper update in English and Spanish using these templates. <input type="radio"/> Post update messages on your social media accounts every week using these templates. <input type="radio"/> Send a text or robocall in English and Spanish to families of seniors about your school's financial aid for college completion supports using these templates. <input type="radio"/> Use 1 hour of class time per week — during home room or study halls for example — for students to work on their applications. Use our How-to guide: Using class time for financial aid for college completion and our lesson plan templates to fill that time. <input type="radio"/> Track your school's progress toward 100 percent FAFSA completion using this guide. <input type="radio"/> Update your school's financial aid for college website section using this guide. <input type="radio"/> Determine which seniors have not yet participated in an in-person or virtual completion night or office hours and follow-up with them individually.
JULY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> Post celebration messages on your social media accounts using these templates.

How-to guide: Financial aid for college completion night

OCTOBER 2022 AND JANUARY 2023

TOOLKIT STEPS

BY OCTOBER 21, 2022 AND JANUARY 13, 2023

- Schedule a date in November and another by mid-February to your financial aid for college completion nights. Financial aid for college completion nights can be held virtually or in person. This should include:
 - > Partnering with a trusted community-based organization (CBO) or your local college or university to co-host your financial aid for college completion night.
 - > Some CBOs in New York that support college financial aid completion are **UnLocal in NYC**, **College Bridge Cafe**, and **Latino U College Access**
 - > Making sure you have people staffing your virtual or in-person financial aid for college completion night who have expertise in completing the FAFSA, NYS Application for TAP, and NYS DREAM Act forms. Schools should identify 2-3 staff members to attend a training to help them support students and families to complete their financial aid for college applications. In addition, the CBO or local college or university you co-host with may have staff with expertise, or you can contact HESC at **PreCollegeServices@hesc.ny.gov**. HESC offers support to schools hosting FAFSA completion events free of charge.
 - > 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 most families don't have to leave work early to attend.

IF YOUR SCHOOL IS IN-PERSON

- > 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 questions 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, NYS Application for TAP, or NYS DREAM Act forms, they can attend one of the trainings listed on our website at **nyfafsachallenge.org**, or contact **the New York State School Counselor Association**, **the New York State**

Financial Aid Administrators Association, or **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.

- > 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 internet.
- 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.

○ **BY NOVEMBER 28 AND FEBRUARY 10**

- **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 DECEMBER 10 AND FEBRUARY 18**


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

How-to guide: Financial aid for college office hours

OCTOBER 2022 - JUNE 2023

TOOLKIT STEPS

BY OCTOBER 14, 2022

- Schedule regular times for at least one school staff person to be available for drop-in office hours for financial aid for college application completion each month from October through June. These can be held in-person or virtually. Consider:
 - > Holding some of them in the evenings so families who work during the day don't have to miss work, and others during the day so that families who work during the evenings don't have to miss work.
 - > Holding them regularly (e.g. calling them Financial Aid Fridays and hosting them every other Friday) so that students and families can easily keep track of when they can get support.
- Schedule a training session for all school staff who will be at any of your office hours. Consider:
 - > Ensuring that your school counselor and at least 2-3 other school staff attend a training about how to support students to complete their financial aid for college applications.
 **TIMELINE** – Sign up for access to the fall training in October 2021.
 - > Having your school counselor and other school staff who attend a training lead the prep so that all staff know how to answer common questions students and families have, what forms students will need to have with them, and how

BY OCTOBER 28, 2022

- Hold office hours at least once this month.

BY NOVEMBER 30, 2022

- Hold office hours at least once this month.

BY DECEMBER 23, 2022

- Hold office hours at least once this month.
- Identify the seniors who have not yet attended office hours or a financial aid completion night and reach out to them individually.

BY JANUARY 31, 2023

- Hold office hours at least once this month.
- Identify the seniors who have not yet attended office hours or a financial aid completion night and reach out to them individually.

to support students who need to respond to verification requests after they submit their applications. If your school needs additional support on how to best support families to complete the FAFSA, NYS Application for TAP, or NYS DREAM Act forms, contact **the New York State School Counselor Association**, **the New York State Financial Aid Administrators Association**, or **New York Cares**. In addition, many community-based organizations and colleges/universities (including SUNY and CUNY locations) in your area may offer financial aid completion services for free.

Use these templates to post in English and Spanish about your school's office hours on your social media accounts

○ **BY FEBRUARY 28, 2023**

- Hold office hours at least once this month.
- Identify the seniors who have not yet attended office hours or a financial aid completion night and reach out to them individually.

○ **BY MARCH 31, 2023**

- Hold office hours at least once this month.
- Identify the seniors who have not yet attended office hours or a financial aid completion night and reach out to them individually.

○ **BY APRIL 28, 2023**

- Hold office hours at least once this month.
- Identify the seniors who have not yet attended office hours or a financial aid completion night and reach out to them individually.

○ **BY MAY 31, 2023**

- Hold office hours at least once this month.
- Identify the seniors who have not yet attended office hours or a financial aid completion night and reach out to them individually.

○ **BY JUNE 30, 2023**

- Hold office hours at least once this month.
- Identify the seniors who have not yet attended office hours or a financial aid completion night and reach out to them individually.

How-to guide: Using class time for financial aid for college completion

OCTOBER 2022 - JUNE 2023

Once per week from October – June, set aside class time for seniors to work on their financial aid applications. This can be easily done during study halls, civics classes, or college prep courses if your school holds them — but it is important to make sure that class time is reserved for all seniors whether or not they are in college prep courses or planning to attend college. Schools should consistently emphasize that they are committed to supporting students throughout the financial aid process regardless of immigration status. It is also important to provide private space for students to share their immigration status.

Please note that students should not be using their parents' FSA ID without the parent being present, so unless the parent is present during the remote class time, students will need to use the class time to work on pieces of their financial aid applications that do not require the parents' FSA ID. To get the most out of this time:

GENERAL TIPS AND TO DOS



- Let students — and families — know in advance that they'll be using class time for financial aid application completion and to respond to any verification requests students receive. Give students the list of materials they may need from the FAQ on pages 31-37 of this Toolkit, so they can gather what they need to complete their applications.



- Celebrate completion rates — post the percentage of students from your school who have completed their applications on your school website, and talk about it during class time. Beginning in late January, you can look up your school's completion rates at the NYS FAFSA Completion Initiative website or at www.NYFAFSACHallenge.org.



- Students who have already submitted their applications should use the time for college applications or other work related to identifying and planning for their next steps after graduation.



- Make sure students know about other opportunities to get support completing their applications and responding to verification requests — mention your school's financial aid for college completion night as well as upcoming office hours.



- Ensure that students will have privacy to complete their applications. They will have to submit private financial information, so it is vital that they have the space to do that.



- Have a school counselor or another staff person who has attended a financial aid for college training available in-person to answer questions students may have.



- Ensure all students will have access to a computer, laptop, or mobile phone, and reliable internet.

Using class time for financial aid for college completion lesson plan template

OCTOBER 2022 - JUNE 2023

LESSON PLAN TEMPLATE



OBJECTIVES

- Students understand the importance of completing their financial aid applications whether or not they are sure about attending college. Applying for financial aid early helps students get a better sense of their options after graduation, so it is important for all students to complete their applications regardless of immigration status
- Students know to submit their FAFSA, NYS Application for TAP, and NYS DREAM Act forms as soon as possible to maximize their opportunity for the most financial aid
- Students know which financial aid applications they qualify for
- Students work on their financial aid applications and verification requests



MATERIALS

- Ideally, students should have access to a computer, laptop, or mobile phone, and reliable internet
- As a link, digital copy, or printed copy, students should have access to the FAQ handout on pages 31-37 of this Toolkit
- As a link, digital copy, or printed copy, students should have the financial aid for college completion night and office hours logistics information



INTRODUCTION

In-person, or using live video, recorded video, or live audio call, the instructor will remind students where they can find the FAQ handout and discuss the importance of completing all the steps of the FAFSA, NYS Application for TAP, and NYS DREAM Act.

- Completing all the financial aid applications for which you are eligible helps students get the financial aid they need and is a critical step on the path to college

- It is very important for students to complete their forms as soon as possible, and to respond promptly to any verification requests they receive after submitting their applications
- Research shows that 90 percent of high school seniors who complete the FAFSA go to college immediately after graduation — compared to just 55 percent of seniors who do not complete the FAFSA
- New Yorkers are missing out on an estimated \$152 million in federal financial aid by not filling out the FAFSA — plus NYS Application for TAP and NYS DREAM Act supports



INSTRUCTION

- Give students the rest of the time to work individually on their applications and verification requests. The instructor should remain available including via text, phone call, and video call/chat if possible so that students can receive immediate responses to their questions.



CLOSURE

- At the end of class time, remind students verbally, or send students a text and email reminding them about upcoming class time to work on applications, as well as financial aid for college completion nights and office hours.
- Remind students that your school is committed to supporting them throughout this process, regardless of their post-high school plans or immigration status.

How-to guide: Using data to track your school's progress toward 100 percent financial aid for college completion

OCTOBER 2022 - JUNE 2023

Data can be a powerful tool for you to use to support student financial aid completion. The NYS FAFSA Completion Initiative data from HESC will be available this fall. Our online data tool will be available beginning in early 2022. You should use completion data to help inspire more students to complete their applications, refine your school's strategy for supporting students and families working on their applications, and celebrate your successes.

TOOLKIT STEPS

BY OCTOBER 14, 2022

Designate one person on your staff to be the point person on student financial aid application completion data. This person should:

- Reserve about 30-45 minutes each week to track and report on your school's completion data
- Complete the necessary forms to register your school for the **NYS FAFSA Completion Initiative**. The Initiative is run by New York State's Higher Education Services Corporation (HESC), and will provide schools with up-to-date student-level information about your student's FAFSA and NYS Application for TAP completion rates

EACH WEEK FROM OCTOBER 2022 - JUNE 2023

The designated person on your staff should:

- Check the **NYS FAFSA Completion Initiative website** and track your school's FAFSA and NYS Application for TAP completion rates
- Starting in early 2023, use our **online data tool** to track how your high school is doing helping all eligible seniors complete the FAFSA. This tool will be updated regularly as more students submit their applications

- Ask some of the following questions to help analyze the data so it is most useful to your school's strategy to support financial aid application completion:
 - ❓ Has your school's FAFSA completion rate declined since the pandemic hit in spring 2022?
 - ❓ Are there groups of students who have much higher or lower completion rates? (Look at race, ethnicity, students who are low-income, gender, English language learner status, disability status, etc.) What unique barriers might those students face in completing their financial aid forms? How might your school be able to target support to reducing those obstacles?
 - ❓ How does your school's financial aid completion rate compare to similar schools in New York State?
 - ❓ Are completion rates for your school going up right around the completion events you are hosting? If so, can you replicate those events or what is working at those events? If not, ask students and families who have attended those events what obstacles they are facing that may be preventing them from completing their applications. Make changes to your supporting events to help address their concerns.
- Using the data, each week the designated person on your staff should:
 - > Follow-up with individual students and their families to encourage completion and offer support
 - > Regularly post updates about your school's progress toward full completion on social media, on school announcement boards, and any other places where most students will see or hear the updates
 - > Communicate regularly with students, families, teachers, counselors, and school staff about your school's progress (you can add this information to the letter, email, social media, and other materials for which we've provided templates in this Toolkit)
 - > Use the data to inspire younger students — they'll need to apply for financial aid when they become seniors, and it's never too early to begin building their knowledge about the steps they'll need to take to get financial aid

NY State and federal financial aid for college overview

OCTOBER 2022 - JUNE 2023

FEDERAL FINANCIAL AID AND NY STATE AID OVERVIEW

Financial aid for college education can come from the federal government, state government, or individual college institutions. Students should complete all of the federal and/or state financial aid applications for which they are eligible. Federal and state financial aid applications help the schools they are considering determine school-based aid.

Below is an outline of the major types of federal and state financial aid applications for which New York seniors are eligible.

FEDERAL FINANCIAL AID

- **FAFSA** – The FAFSA determines the amount of federal student financial aid (grants, loans, and other student aid) that seniors qualify for to pay for college. The FAFSA application asks questions about the student's and the parent's income, assets, and household to help determine the amount of aid.
 - > Is free to complete
 - > Can be completed on your mobile phone, tablet, or computer
 - > Should be completed as soon as possible, and by the end of the school year
 - > Federal financial aid is only available to citizens of the U.S., U.S. nationals, or eligible non-citizens such as:
 - + Permanent U.S. residents with an Alien Registration Card (I-551)
 - + Conditional permanent residents with an I-551C card
 - + People with an Arrival Departure Record (I-94) from the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) with any of the following designations:
 - > Refugee
 - > Asylum granted
 - > Parolee
 - > Victim of human trafficking
 - > T-Visa holder
 - > Cuban-Haitian immigrant

- > DACA-mented students should also complete the FAFSA application (along with the NYS DREAM Act). Although DACA-mented students are not eligible for federal aid through the FAFSA, colleges use the FAFSA information to help determine institution-based aid that DACA-mented students are eligible for.
- Before completing the FAFSA, all students and at least one of their parents must obtain a Federal Student Aid ID (FSA ID). This process only takes a few minutes, and the FSA ID will be used by students and parents to submit the FAFSA. Students and parents can get their FSA IDs [here](#). You will have to enter your Social Security Number to obtain a FSA ID. *Students with parents who are undocumented can still file the FAFSA. While parents who are undocumented are not able to obtain FSA IDs, they can print the signature page, complete it, and send it in the mail instead. If a student or their parent is an undocumented person, they can find very helpful information about your eligibility for the FAFSA [here](#).*
- **FAFSA verification requests** – Many students will receive requests for verification of some of their FAFSA materials from colleges and universities after they submit their applications. It is very important that students respond promptly to these requests, as failure to respond can prevent their application from being processed.

NY STATE FINANCIAL AID

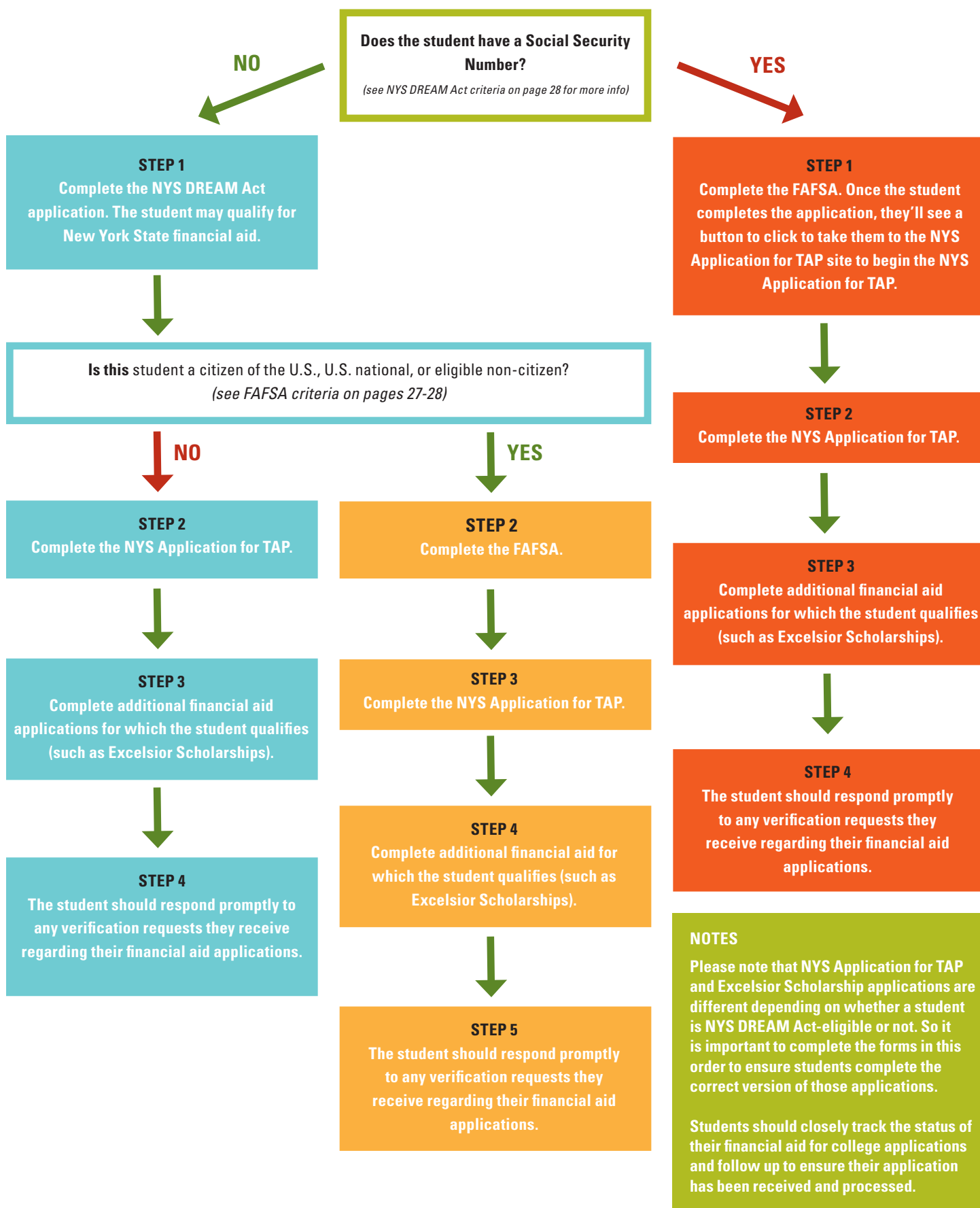
- **NYS DREAM Act** – The NYS DREAM Act determines eligibility to apply for New York State financial aid to pay for college or other post-secondary education. It will open the door to multiple state financial assistance programs, including the NYS Application for TAP grant and Excelsior Scholarships. The NYS DREAM Act:
 - > Is free to complete
 - > Should be completed as soon as possible, and before the end of the school year
 - > Can be completed on your mobile phone, tablet, or computer
 - > Will be held completely confidential by New York State and your college institution. Your immigration status will NOT be shared
 - > Is available to students who:
 - + Hold one of the immigration statuses below:
 - > T-Visa
 - > U-Visa
 - > Temporary Protected Status
 - > Hold no lawful immigration status (including undocumented and DACA-mented students)
 - + OR hold one of the citizenships statuses below:
 - > U.S. citizen whose permanent address is not in New York State
 - > Paroled refugee whose permanent address is not in New York State

- > Permanent non-citizen whose permanent address is not in New York State
 - + AND have received a New York State high school diploma OR who have qualified for in-state tuition at SUNY or CUNY colleges
 - > Students who have received a high school equivalency diploma are NOT required to have attended a NY State high school for at least 2 years but students who have received a high school diploma must have attended a NY State high school for at least 2 years.
 - + AND enroll in college or an accredited college institution within 5 years of earning their high school diploma OR equivalency diploma
 - > Students who have received a high school equivalency diploma are NOT required to have attended a NY State high school for at least 2 years but students who have received a diploma must have attended a NY State high school for at least 2 years.
- **NYS Application for TAP** – The NYS Application for TAP determines New York State residents’ or NYS DREAM Act-eligible students’ eligibility for New York State financial aid for college—most importantly, it is the state’s major grant program. The NYS Application for TAP:
 - > Is free to complete
 - > Can be completed on your mobile phone, tablet, or computer
 - > Should be submitted as soon as possible, and before the end of the school year
 - > Is available only to New York State residents and NYS DREAM Act recipients
- **Excelsior Scholarship** – The Excelsior Scholarship provides additional tuition assistance for students to attend SUNY and CUNY colleges. The Excelsior Scholarship:
 - > Is free to complete
 - > Is available for students who are eligible for the NYS DREAM Act and/or NYS Application for TAP programs
 - > Is available to students whose families have a combined adjusted gross income of \$125,000 or less
 - > Must be used in the pursuit of an undergraduate degree at a SUNY or CUNY college (this includes community colleges affiliated with SUNY and CUNY)
 - > **See more information about eligibility for the Excelsior Scholarship here**

NOTES

In addition to federal and state aid, many schools offer financial aid packages. You should begin applying for institution-based aid even before you are accepted to a school. Students may also need to complete the CSS Profile. This form is administered by the College Board. It is a fee-based application for institutional aid, which is only required by some private institutions. Apply [here](#).

Process for completing all financial aid applications for which students are eligible



Frequently asked questions about college financial aid, the FAFSA, NYS Application for TAP, and the NYS DREAM Act applications

OCTOBER 2022 - JUNE 2023

There is a lot of private information requested to complete the applications. How is this information shared?

The information you provide on your college financial aid applications is used SOLELY for determining financial aid. It is shared only with the financial aid office and no other government entities.¹

Who is eligible for the NYS DREAM Act? What is the deadline?

To be eligible for the NYS DREAM Act, students must:

- Hold one of the immigration statuses below:
 - > T-Visa
 - > U-Visa
 - > Temporary Protected Status
 - > Hold no lawful immigration status
- OR hold one of the citizenships statuses below:
 - > U.S. citizen whose permanent address is not in New York State
 - > Paroled refugee whose permanent address is not in New York State
 - > Green card holder whose permanent address is not in New York State
- AND have attended a New York State high school for at least 2 years and have received a high school diploma or equivalency diploma OR have qualified for in-state tuition at SUNY or CUNY colleges
- AND enroll in college or an accredited college institution within 5 years of earning their high school diploma or equivalency diploma²

All students who are eligible should apply for the NYS DREAM Act as soon as possible, and before the end of the school year. [Click here to access the NYS DREAM Act application](#). You'll need to create an account first.

¹ <https://financialaidtoolkit.ed.gov/tk/outreach/target/parents.jsp#parent-privacy>

² <https://www.hesc.ny.gov/pay-for-college/financial-aid/types-of-financial-aid/nys-grants-scholarships-awards/nys-dream-act-faq.html>

Who is eligible for the FAFSA? What is the deadline?

All students who are U.S. citizens, U.S. permanent residents, or other eligible non-citizens who will graduate from high school or have received their equivalency diploma by 2023. All students who are eligible should apply as soon as possible, and before the end of the school year.³ Most colleges use FAFSA as a starting point for determining how much financial support a student will need, so the earlier a student can submit their FAFSA, the earlier they can work with their college to determine other financial aid supports that might be available to them.

I heard there are changes to the FAFSA this year. What are they?

The FAFSA form will change significantly over the next few years as a result of legislation passed by Congress in late 2021. These changes will make the form simpler and easier to complete, as well as ensure that more students are eligible for more aid.

Changes to the FAFSA will occur over multiple years, through at least the 2023-2024 school year.

There are six significant changes that will be implemented this year:

1. There will be a new, updated online form that should be easier to navigate.
2. The FAFSA itself will be just 36 questions total - down from 108 in previous years.
3. When completing the new FAFSA form, users will be able to select whether it is the student themselves completing the form, a parent, or a preparer. This should also help the form be more user-friendly.
4. Students who have a drug conviction on their record will now be able to receive FAFSA aid without their conviction impacting their eligibility.
5. Students who identify as male will not longer have to apply for the Selective Service.
6. Important simplifications for students in foster care and students experiencing homelessness (see below for more details).

What happens if a student is eligible for the FAFSA but their parents are undocumented?

There is a way to submit an application for the FAFSA if the student is eligible and their parents are undocumented. When filling out the FAFSA, the parent's Social Security number should be input as all zeros. Once the application gets to the signature page, the student and parents will need to print that page, have the parent sign it, and mail it in to the address provided. Please note, students may need to request a signature page and mail it in. If you have any questions, you can call the FAFSA hotline at 1-800-433-3243.

This information will be shared ONLY with the financial aid office. NO other government offices or other entities will have access to this information.⁴ Eligible students who have parents who are undocumented should be encouraged to apply for federal financial aid through the FAFSA. You can support students and families to do this by explaining the federal protections. Please note that families can complete the NYS DREAM Act even if they do not complete the FAFSA.

³ <https://fafsa.ed.gov/help/fftoc03a.htm>

⁴ <https://financialaidtoolkit.ed.gov/tk/outreach/target/noncitizens.jsp>

⁵ <https://www.hesc.ny.gov/pay-for-college/financial-aid/types-of-financial-aid/grants/tap-eligibility.html>

How can immigrant students who are documented or undocumented get support to navigate college financial aid?

Immigrants (documented and undocumented) often have a harder time finding the supports they need to access financial aid for college. High schools that make a concerted effort to train staff in the financial aid application process and support immigrant students to navigate it can make a big difference. Community based organizations such as **Unlocal in NYC**, **College Bridge Cafe**, and **Latino U College Access** can provide additional expert support.

How can schools support students experiencing homelessness to complete their financial aid for college forms?

First, it is important to know that the definition of homelessness used for financial aid is from the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act and means an individual who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence. Examples of homelessness can be found **here**. It is vital that schools train teachers and counselors and build strong partnerships with local homeless service providers to help identify students who are experiencing homelessness and students at risk of being homeless. Schools should include students at all high school grade levels in this outreach.

Schools should also offer direct, one-on-one support to students experiencing homelessness or at risk of being homeless regarding financial aid for college. This support should include helping students understand the types of financial aid available to them (including Pell Grants, state aid, loans, and other aid), as well as support navigating the application and verification processes, including helping them determine whether they qualify as independent students for purposes of the FAFSA.

How is the process for completing financial aid for college forms different for students who are experiencing homelessness?

Students experiencing homelessness, and unaccompanied homeless students (young people who are not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian), often face additional challenges completing financial aid forms. It is critical that schools are prepared to offer additional, personalized support to help students navigate this process.

- Students experiencing homelessness who are in the physical custody of a parent or guardian must still include the parental financial information required by the FAFSA.
- Unaccompanied homeless students are considered independent filers on the FAFSA, which means that they do not have to obtain their parents' financial information to complete the form. **This flow chart in English** and **Spanish** helps outline how a student can determine if they qualify as independent for the purposes of the FAFSA. Unaccompanied homeless students must have a determination that

⁶ <https://fafsa.ed.gov/help/before003.htm>

⁷ <https://www.hesc.ny.gov/pay-for-college/apply-for-financial-aid/apply-for-aid-start-here.html>

⁸ <https://www.hesc.ny.gov/pay-for-college/apply-for-financial-aid/nys-tap.html#horizontalTab2>

⁹ <https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/paying-for-college/articles/2015/03/02/do-4-things-if-your-fafsa-is-selected-for-verification>

¹⁰ <https://fafsa.ed.gov/help/fftoc01e.htm>

they were homeless and on their own for the year in which they are submitting the application. This year's FAFSA changes include an expansion of the entities that can provide a determination for unaccompanied homeless youth. You can see more information about who can make the determination at the [SchoolHouse Connection site](#).

You can find [sample determination letters here](#). Schools should keep copies of all determination letters whether they are the issuing entity or not, as students may misplace them during frequent moves.

- Starting this year, unaccompanied homeless youth will only need to get a determination letter one time. They will no longer need to get a new determination letter each year. In addition, the new FAFSA law passed by Congress requires that determination be made for students as quickly as possible.
- Students experiencing homelessness may qualify as non-tax filers for the purposes of the FAFSA. Non-tax filers must include a Verification of Non-filing (VNF) and IRS Form W-2 with their FAFSA application. [You can find more information about how schools can support students who qualify as non-tax filers here.](#)

How can schools help students experiencing homelessness determine whether they are dependent or independent for the purposes of the TAP grant?

The maximum annual TAP award for independent students is about \$2,000 less than the maximum award for dependent students. If it is safe for the student to have contact with their parent and feasible (the parent is willing and able to provide their tax returns to the student), in some cases it may be better financially for the student to apply as a dependent student for TAP, even though they may qualify as an independent student. Note: the student can still apply for FAFSA as an independent student (e.g., the student can apply for FAFSA as an independent student and as a dependent student for TAP). This [College Access Checklist](#) helps outline how schools can help unaccompanied students navigate this process.

How can schools help students in foster care determine whether they are independent or dependent on their FAFSA?

The FAFSA form includes a question that asks if a student has been in foster care at any point since they turned 13 years old. If a student answers yes to this question, they are considered independent for purposes of the FAFSA. *Even if a student has returned to live with one or both of their parents since they were in foster care, they will still be considered independent on the FAFSA.*

Because students who have been in foster care at any point since they turned 13 are considered independent, they should report only one person in their household — even if they live with foster parents and siblings — and they are not required to obtain their parents' signature on the FAFSA even if they sometimes see them or are living with them again.

Who is eligible for the NYS Application for TAP? What is the deadline?

All students who have been residents of New York for at least one year and will graduate from high school or have received their equivalency diploma in 2023. All students who are eligible should apply as soon as possible, and before the end of the school year.⁵

What documents do students and their families need in order to complete the FAFSA?

- All students and at least one of their parents must obtain a Federal Student Aid ID (FSA ID) in order to sign the FAFSA electronically — there should be one ID for the student and a separate ID for the parent — prior to completing their FAFSA. It takes only a few minutes and can be obtained [here](#). Students with parents who are undocumented can still file the FAFSA. While parents who are undocumented are not able to obtain FSA IDs, they can print the signature page, complete it, and send it in instead.
- The student's Social Security number
- The Social Security number, or green card number, from at least one of the students' parents (see question above if both parents are people who are undocumented). If a student lives with both parents, they will need to provide both parents' Social Security numbers or green card numbers.
- The student's driver's license if they have one
- The student's alien registration or permanent resident cards if the student is eligible for the FAFSA but is not a U.S. citizen
- Green card registration or permanent resident card from at least one of the student's parents if their parents are not U.S. citizens (see question above if both parents are people who are undocumented)
- The parents' tax records from 2021 (if applying for aid for the 2023-24 school year). [See this resource](#) if the parents do not live together, are not married, or if the student has been legally declared independent
- The student's tax returns from 2021, if they filed one
- Records of untaxed income the family received, including Social Security benefits, welfare benefits, or veterans benefits⁶

Students should make sure that the address they use on their financial aid applications is the same address their parents used on their tax applications in 2021.

In what order should I complete the applications? What is the deadline?

If you are eligible for the FAFSA:

- Complete the FAFSA first. At the end of your FAFSA you'll be directed to the NYS Application for TAP site to complete your application⁷

If you are eligible for the NYS DREAM Act:

- You must complete the NYS DREAM Act first
- Complete the NYS Application for TAP second⁸

If you are eligible for the NYS DREAM Act and the FAFSA:

- You must complete the NYS DREAM Act first
- Complete the FAFSA second
- Complete the NYS Application for TAP third

What are verification requests?

- It is common for students and families to be asked to submit copies of documents (generally income tax returns, W-2 forms, and 1099 forms) to help financial aid administrators certify that all the information submitted on the FAFSA form is accurate. If families receive an email notice, phone call, or letter from a FAFSA administrator or college with a verification request, they should respond as quickly as possible with the requested information.⁹ Students and families should reach out to schools for support if you receive verification requests. Verification requests are not unusual, and schools can help navigate how to respond promptly.

Will I have to complete financial aid forms every year?

- Yes. You must submit forms every year you are enrolled in college, and the earlier you do so the better. Usually the FAFSA, NYS Application for TAP, and NYS DREAM Act forms open October 1st.

Are there any good resources online where I can get my questions answered or get additional support about financial aid?

- Yes! If you've been accepted by any college or university, the school's financial aid representatives are a great resource. They are experts in financial aid for college whom you can meet with individually. In addition, many colleges and universities host admitted students events where you can also get financial aid support. You can also check out the online resources below:
 - > **The How-To Guide for High School Students (And the Adults Who Help Them)** – from the New School's Center for New York City Affairs
 - > **Q&A** about how to determine eligibility for the FAFSA
 - > **Resources** for school counselors and teachers to help them support students who are undocumented or immigrants
 - > **NYS DREAM Act Application and Eligibility Resources in Spanish**
 - > **Guide** for how students and parents who are eligible can obtain an FSA ID
 - > **Checklist** for students and parents of materials to have prior to completing their financial aid applications
 - > **Q&A** about how to determine dependency status prior to completing the FAFSA
 - > **Video** that can help walk you through completing your FAFSA
 - > **FAFSA Tips and Common Mistakes to Avoid**
 - > **IRS Data Retrieval Tool** – will electronically transfer your tax return information into your FAFSA
 - > **Guide** for how to save your FAFSA and complete it later

- > Confidential FAFSA Hotline at 1-800-433-3243 or **chat** — to get questions answered by expert staff, your conversation and questions will be strictly confidential — if a student or their parents are undocumented, their information will NOT be shared
- > **Find financial aid information and completion events in your area**
- > **Information about the NYS DREAM Act**, including eligibility criteria, a link to the application itself, and translations of all that information in Spanish, traditional Chinese, Haitian-Creole, Russian, Bengali, and Korean.
- > Help estimating your potential financial aid award:
 - > **FAFSA**
 - > **NYS Application for TAP**
 - > **College net price calculator**
- > **UnLocal Supports**
- > **EFC Calculator**
- There are a number of valuable resources for schools to support students experiencing homelessness, including:
 - > **New York State Technical and Education Assistance Center for Homeless Students** (NYS-TEACHS):
 - > 800-388-2014 (Helpline for questions about school-related issues)
 - > **An overview of SchoolHouse Connection's resources**, including helpful videos for students and schools **and this resource** that outlines the changes in the new FAFSA for homeless students and foster youth
 - > **Sample form letters** that schools can use to determine independent student status for unaccompanied students
 - > A flow chart in **English** and **Spanish** to help students determine whether they qualify for independent status
 - > **4 things schools can do to help homeless and foster youth**
 - > **Guidance** on supporting students who qualify for Verification of Non-Filing and extensions filers

Acknowledgments

We are grateful for the thoughtful feedback that we received on this Toolkit from **uAspire** and **SchoolHouse Connection**.

Please contact us at **fafsa@edtrustny.org** if there is any additional information or assistance that we can provide.

www.NYFAFSAChallenge.org

