



Reaching Out

Norristown Area Communities That Care for Youth

Keeping Youth Safe & Drug Free

Simplifying the college application process

By Taylor Hayes, Prevention Outreach Specialist

Where do I begin? Can I afford it? Is college the right choice for me? You never know until you try. Here are the first steps you need to take to begin the college application process.

- ◆ First, pick two-to-four different colleges that you could see yourself attending. Remember, 90 percent of colleges have an application fee that range from \$25 to \$75.
- ◆ Review the applications for each college. Some applications will ask for a “personal statement” which may range in length anywhere from a couple sentences to six pages.
- ◆ Once you have completed the applications, the next step is completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) form (www.fafsa.ed.gov). You will need your filed tax return (if you have filed for the previous year) and your parents’ tax return. You will need to input numbers from your tax return into the FAFSA form. There’s no need to feel overwhelmed with this process. The form includes detailed instructions. At the end of the FAFSA form, it will ask you to check the colleges that you have applied to. If later you have decided to add a college, you may make that change on the form at that time. **THIS FORM SHOULD BE COMPLETED BEFORE MARCH 1ST**. You can complete it at a later date, but to assure yourself the maximum amount of funding for your college career, you should submit it by that date.
- ◆ The U.S. Department of Education determines how much aid you should receive based on the information on your FAFSA form. It will notify the colleges that you have applied to.
- ◆ If you would rather apply for more scholarships and grants than student loans, that is also possible. If you go to the financial aid section of the college’s website, it will have many different grants, scholarships, and aid that you may apply to for further assistance.
- ◆ The National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (www.nasfaa.org) is a resourceful website for students and parents who may have questions or concerns about this process.
- ◆ The colleges/universities will send you a financial aid package. It will include any scholarships and grants that you may have received.
- ◆ Once you have received all the different packages, you can make an educated and informed decision as to where you would like to attend. It is important to notify the colleges/universities as soon as possible.

Good Luck!

Daily routines can increase energy and cognitive function

By Alissa McBride, MSW, Community Prevention Coordinator

Do you find yourself shouting your children out the door in the morning, only to discover that they forgot their homework or lunch? Many families find mornings to be stressful, particularly in the beginning of the school year when routines have not yet been established.

Below are some tips on how to make your mornings more pleasant and send your children off to school on time and with everything they need.

The best place to start is in the evenings. Assist your children as they:

- ◆ Make sure homework is complete and put into their backpacks before they go to bed.
- ◆ Place their backpacks by the front door.
- ◆ Lay out the clothes they plan to wear the following day.
- ◆ Shower or bath.
- ◆ Prepare lunch for the following day and place it in the refrigerator.
- ◆ Go to bed at a reasonable time. Allow eight hours of sleep.
- ◆ Try to go to bed at the same time every night; set alarm clock for the morning.



In the morning:

- ◆ Get up at the same time every morning, at least 30 minutes before they need to leave for school.
- ◆ Get dressed before they sit down to breakfast.
- ◆ Eat a healthy breakfast.
- ◆ Brush their teeth.
- ◆ Take lunch out of fridge and place it into their backpacks.
- ◆ Give hugs and kisses goodbye.
- ◆ Leave for the bus stop (or walk to school) in time to arrive at least 10 minutes before they are required to do so.



Make mornings enjoyable family time and send your children out the door feeling rested and prepared for the day ahead.

Who can find the time to keep up with their kids lives?

www.FindYour25thHour.org

Is your child transitioning to middle school?

By Alissa McBride, MSW, Community Prevention Coordinator

The transition from elementary to middle school is a time for mixed emotions for children and parents. New friends, new teachers and a new school bring both excitement and anxiety.

Middle school students are expected to take on more responsibilities and perform to a higher academic standard. As if that weren't enough, they are making these adjustments while maturing physically and starting to think of themselves as individuals outside of their families.



What parents can do to help with the transition to middle school:

- ◆ Be sensitive to the anxieties that your child may have about moving to a new school setting.
- ◆ Help your child turn his/her anxieties into positive actions by learning about school rules, schedules, locker procedures, and the availability of assistance when they need it.
- ◆ Develop a partnership with your child's teachers in this effort.
- ◆ Recognize that becoming comfortable in a new school is an ongoing process.
- ◆ Provide your child with manageable tasks that will help him/her develop organizational skills and responsibility.
- ◆ Encourage children to try new things and to regard failure as a necessary part of learning and growing.
- ◆ Attend school functions and stay involved in your child's schooling.
- ◆ Support your child's efforts to become independent.
- ◆ Be alert to signs of depression or anxiety and seek help if you need it.

While all transitions create challenges, they are also exciting periods of growth and change. Don't forget to enjoy your child as he/she begins to develop into a young adult.

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Communities That Care (CTC) is a risk-focused approach to reducing adolescent problem behaviors through community mobilization and planning. Local citizens and community leaders work together to identify the risk factors that increase the likelihood of problem behaviors developing and enhance the protective factors that can shield youngsters from problems. The risk and protective factors are used to implement a comprehensive plan to step ahead of the problems with far-reaching and long-lasting solutions.

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Free Application for Federal Student Aid



The FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) is the first step in the financial aid process. It is used to apply for federal student aid, such as grants, loans and work-study. In Pennsylvania, information from the FAFSA is used to award other types of aid as well, including the Pennsylvania State Grant.

REMEMBER
THE FAFSA IS FREE.
 There's no need to pay anyone to help fill it out.

There are plenty of free resources available to help you with the financial aid process:

- FAFSA.gov
- PHEAA.org/FAFSA
- studentaid.ed.gov

Checklist

What do I need to complete the FAFSA?

PERSONAL DOCUMENTS

- Social Security Number
- Driver's license number and state of issuance (if any)
- Alien registration number or permanent residence card (if you are not a U.S. citizen)

PROOF OF INCOME

- Taxable income from 2013W-2 forms or other records of money earned or received
- Untaxed income, including workers' compensation; child support; housing, food and other living allowances; or veterans benefits, etc.

* Use income records from the calendar year that is prior to the year you plan to attend school.

TAX DOCUMENTS

- 2013 Federal Income Tax Return (IRS tax form 1040, 1040A, or 1040EZ) if you were required to file (**NOTE:** If you complete your FAFSA online, you have the option of automatically retrieving your income and tax data from the Internal Revenue Service and having it transferred into your FAFSA. The IRS Data Retrieval Tool is the preferred method to complete the FAFSA.)
- Foreign tax return or a tax return for Puerto Rico, Guam, American Samoa, the U.S. Virgin Islands, the Marshall Islands, or the Federated States of Micronesia or Palau

* If you have not yet completed your tax return, you can still submit your FAFSA using best estimates. After you submit your tax return, correct any income or tax information that is different from what you initially submitted on your FAFSA.

ASSETS

- Bank statements
- Business and investment information; business and farm records; stocks, bonds, and other investment records (as applicable)

IF YOU ARE A DEPENDENT STUDENT, YOU WILL ALSO NEED:

- The Social Security Number(s) of your parent(s)
- The income and financial records (as listed above) of your parent(s)

These materials have been developed and paid for by the Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance Agency (PHEAA) for informational purposes. Although the information contained in this document is believed to be accurate at the time of printing, PHEAA does not guarantee its accuracy. You should independently verify that this information is correct.

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