

# PLANNING A SUCCESSFUL FINANCIAL AID AWARENESS PROGRAM

## Deciding on a Date, Location & Time

### DATE:

- Recommend date(s) for financial aid presentation(s) which suit your school's needs.
- Consider holding the program during late winter/spring for juniors so that they are ready to complete their FAFSA early during their senior year. Another option would be to hold a combined Financial Aid Night/FAFSA Completion Workshop during the fall for seniors.
- After you narrow the time frame, you need to look carefully for potential conflicts that would prevent people from attending. You probably won't be able to avoid every possible conflict, but if you find a date when there are no major events affecting your school's population, you are more likely to draw a crowd to your financial aid program.

### For example, consider:

- Does the date conflict with any holidays, religious observances, hunting season, or planned school closings? Attendance and focus are usually down around these times.
- Are school sporting events or other extracurricular activities being held that day? If so, will their start and end times conflict with the times of your event? How much of your potential audience will be involved?
- Are there any major community-wide events occurring on that date?
- Is the date far enough in advance that you have time to publicize the program? If possible, try to schedule the event up to a year in advance so that you have plenty of time to get it on the school website, calendar and publications.

### LOCATION:

- Is the facility in a convenient location?
- Is the room large enough to comfortably seat the number of people you expect?
- Can the room's lighting be adjusted when using audiovisual equipment?
- What are your audiovisual needs (PowerPoint, projector, laptop, etc.)?
- Is a microphone needed?
- Is there a screen that's at least 8' x 8' (preferably 10' x 10')?
- Is the temperature of the room adjustable?

### TIME:

- Set a time that is convenient for both your students and their families.
- Set a time for the program to end. People usually like to know in advance how long they need to stay. The amount of time you schedule for the program will depend on what activities you have planned. Try to stick to the times you publicize.
- Typically, starting between 6:00 p.m. and 7:00 p.m. works well. However, in some areas, a weekend or an afternoon program might be more effective than an evening program.
- Is the facility/room available for the date(s) you have in mind?

# Announcement & Promotion of Your Event

Get the word out about your financial aid awareness program early and in as many ways as possible. The target audience should be 9<sup>th</sup>–12<sup>th</sup> grade students and their parents/guardians. Hearing this information more than once is to everyone's benefit and ultimately acts as a "de-stresser" for the parent because they will know what needs to be done and when it needs to be completed.

Consider sending an email or postcard to parents, or contacting them directly by phone with a pre-recorded message. You could also post event information on your school's marquee and website. Check with local newspapers and radio/television stations, to see if your event can be included in any community calendars.

## OTHER IDEAS:

- Hang flyers and/or posters around your school.
- Post announcements on the school's public address system.
- Put advertisements and/or articles in the school newspaper.
- Place a notice in the parent/teacher/student association (PTSA/PTO/PTA) newsletter.
- Add a message at the bottom of report cards about upcoming events.
- Offer door prizes, raffles or drawings (scholarships, movie passes, gift certificates, etc.).
- Serve food/refreshments.
- Provide a baby-sitting service.
- Give extra credit for students who bring one or both parents (or caregivers, as appropriate).

## MAKE SURE TO INCLUDE:

- The key subject points that will be covered in the program (types of financial aid, how to complete the FAFSA, etc.)
- The date (and if applicable, the snow date)
- The location, including the address and room number
- The start time and program length
- A telephone number to call for more information
- You might also want to include the presenter's name and affiliation, parking instructions, child care information, any documents or information attendees should bring, and other important details.

# Organize for Success

If possible, consider joining with a neighboring high school for more efficient use of everyone's resources. It helps to be organized if you want to produce a useful awareness program. Create a checklist to itemize the tasks you need to complete. Remember, with good planning, your awareness program is sure to be a success. Good luck!

Visit [PHEAA.org](https://PHEAA.org) for additional information & resources.

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