APPLYING TO COLLEGE

CONSIDERATIONS WHEN APPLYING TO COLLEGE

+ JUNIOR AND SENIOR YEAR CHECKLIST
Under the McKinney-Vento Act, every local educational agency is required to designate a liaison for homeless children and youth. The local educational agency liaison coordinates services to ensure that homeless children and youths enroll in school and have the opportunity to succeed academically.

Click HERE to find the contact information of your local homeless education liaison.

Note: This contact information may change frequently due to staff turnover. If you have problems finding the right school district homeless liaison, please contact your state homeless education coordinator.

Things to consider when deciding which school(s) to apply to:
- Is it 2 year or 4 year? Is it public or private?
- What are the tuition, fees, and scholarship opportunities?
- What is the application and the deadline? Can you use the CommonApp?
- Is it accredited (meeting the standards of a recognized reviewing agency)
  - Look up the accreditation of prospective universities here.
- Diversity and size of the student body
- Housing, meal, and transportation options
- Resources available on campus such as academic support, mental and physical healthcare, housing and food access, and social-emotional support.
- Degree options available
- Campus security and safety
- Location of the college in reference to your support system and what the local town and geography can offer.

www.schoohouseconnection.org/Applying-to-College
TIPS & TRICKS

- Ask your High School counselor or McKinney-Vento Liaison about fee waivers for college applications and SAT/ACT exams. These will allow you to apply and take tests for free!
- Ask your school about resources available that would allow you to visit colleges you are interested in attending. If you’re unable to visit in person, consider spending time looking at the college’s social media accounts, website, online newspaper, Youtube channel, etc. so that you can get a feel for what it would be like to attend. Some colleges are also offering an option called YouVisit, which will allow you to take a 3D virtual tour of the college while an enrolled student provides commentary on the spaces you’re looking at.
- If available, connect with career counselors and college readiness advisors offered through your high school or in the community.
- Create an email address that consists of your first and last name at an email server (for example, janesmith@gmail.com). This will look professional and allow you to access all of your important documents in one place. Just make sure that you are checking this email address regularly so that you don’t miss anything important.
- Begin requesting letters of recommendation and drafting college essays early so that those writing the letters have ample time to provide high quality letters and you have time to review your essay drafts.

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JUNIOR AND SENIOR YEAR CHECKLIST: APPLYING TO COLLEGE

- If possible, in the fall of 11th grade, take the PSAT/NMSQT so that you will qualify for scholarships and programs associated with the National Merit Scholarship Program. If possible in the spring of 11th grade, take your first SAT/ACT.
  - Register and take the SAT/ACT. Check with the colleges you are interested in to determine which test you will need to take.
    - SAT fee waiver information can be found [here](#).
    - ACT fee waiver information can be found [here](#).
- There are fee waiver options available that will allow you to take these exams for free. Reach out to your counselor or liaison to talk about how to access a fee waiver.
- Ask your counselor or liaison about any resources that would allow you to visit a few of the colleges that interest you. If you are unable to visit in person, you can look at each college’s website, social media accounts, youtube channel, etc. to get a feel for the campus environment and what is offered at each college. While you do this:
  - Make a list of colleges that most interest you.
  - Add the application deadline for each of these colleges.
  - If you have a “first choice” college, try to apply by the college’s early application deadline to demonstrate your interest to the admissions office.
  - Look at the application requirements (Essay, Letters of Recommendation, Official Transcript, SAT/ACT, etc.) for each college and consider making checklists of the requirements for each college to which you plan to apply.
- At the beginning of senior year, create an FSA ID by following this [link](#). This will allow you to login and apply for FAFSA as well as view your FAFSA documents. You will want to make sure that you use an email address that you can access, and securely save your login information.
  - Fill out the FAFSA as early as possible. The application opens on October 1st of each year. For more information on applying for FAFSA, visit this [link](#).
  - If you do not have a parent or guardian to assist you with filling out the FAFSA, consider letting your guidance counselor know. Often they are willing and able to sit with you and help you fill out the application. You can also ask your McKinney-Vento liaison for assistance. Liaisons are required to advise and prepare students experiencing homelessness for college including providing determination letters so that unaccompanied homeless youth can receive independent status for financial aid (learn more about financial aid [here](#)).
- Request recommendation letters as early as possible. If possible, you will want to give your recommenders a month to have the letter ready to send.
- When communicating with the Financial Aid or Admissions office, use an email address that you know you will have access to and check it often. If you are able to create an email address that consists of your first and last name at the email server (for example JaneSmith@gmail.com), it will look professional and keep all of your important documents in one place.
- Apply for scholarships. StudentAid.Gov offers a free search engine found [here](#).