PROJECT SOAR

STUDENTS + OPPORTUNITIES + ACHIEVEMENTS = RESULTS

About Project SOAR

The Resident Opportunities and Self Sufficiency (ROSS) for Education Program, also known as Project SOAR (Students + Opportunities + Achievements = Results), is a new HUD demonstration program that provides grant funding to public housing authorities to deploy education navigators to help public housing youth ages 15 to 20 and their families apply for the U.S. Department of Education's Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), as well as assist with financial literacy and college readiness, post-secondary program applications, and post-acceptance assistance.

SPRING UPDATE

As the weather turns warmer and we start looking forward to our summer plans, it is important to remember that spring is a crucial time for students.

For seniors who have been accepted into a program in the fall, there are several administrative tasks they will need to complete in order to enroll. High school juniors should be developing a list of possible colleges, attending college fairs, and starting to prepare for college entrance exams.

It is not too early for high school freshmen and sophomores to begin their planning. They can meet with their Education Navigators to think about possible career paths and what they can do to set themselves up for success.

Make the most of spring. I am looking forward to seeing you all at the Project SOAR convening, June 13-14, 2018 in Washington, DC.

Thank you and keep SOARing!

Maria-Lana Queen
Project SOAR Program Manager

SPOTLIGHT: CHICAGO HOUSING AUTHORITY

Connecting with students can be difficult given all of the things they have to balance in their lives. In Chicago, Project SOAR students attend over 109 different Chicago public schools. Given the large number of different schools, Education Navigators focus on the 18 CHA properties selected for Project SOAR as the primary place to connect with students and their parents.

As more students become engaged in a variety of different activities, Education Navigators have used a range of strategies for 'how' and 'where' to connect with youth and families from their caseload.

A couple of their key strategies include:

- Maintaining Regular Office Hours on Property

- Connecting to Events and Activities that Students Attend

- Collaborating with Community Partners

- Accompanying Case Managers on Door-to-Door Outreach

- Reinforcing In-Person Messages with Print, Email & Text Reminders

Learn more about CHA Education Navigator experiences on Page 2!

SOAR students on a tour to North Park University on February 19, 2018

ON-SITE OFFICE HOURS: WITH GRANT VITALE

By holding regular office hours in the Computer Lab at Dearborn Homes, I was able to connect with Isaiah, a 10th grader and future entrepreneur. He is very interested in starting and owning his own business. I have been counseling him on postsecondary opportunities that align with his interests. He is interested in the Partners in Education Program where he can earn his Associates degree in business at the Chicago City Colleges, and then transfer to a four-year institution to earn a bachelor's degree. Through these on-site office hours, we've formed a connection and I've been able to encourage him to participate in our other programs and events. Isaiah has already participated in two college tours offered by Project SOAR, including Governors State University in November 2017 and the North Park University in March 2018.
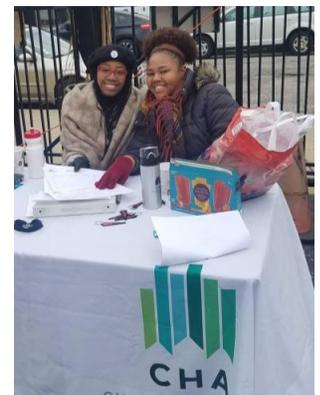
> There are multiple ways to engage. Take a look at these 3 examples from Education Navigators with the CHA!

COLLABORATE WITH COMMUNITY PARTNERS: *WITH SYMPHONI HENRY*

Through Project SOAR, I have connected with Centers for New Horizons (CNH), a provider in CHA's Case Management program. Centers for New Horizons' strong relationship with the Bronzeville community has helped me reach students on my caseload and form connections with other local organizations. In particular, CNH's Youth Outreach Specialist, Ashley, has been a very important asset to the Project SOAR program. As the Outreach Specialist, Ashley plans various youth events and activities aimed at increasing educational access and opportunity for students. Some of the collaborative events we've had include, CNH Octoberfest, Teen Valentine's Day Dance, and a Project SOAR and Youth Team Meet and Greet. These youth-focused events provided an opportunity for me to enroll students in the SOAR program, sign students up for events and college tours, and connect parents to college counseling resources. Additionally, the collaboration has allowed me to reach a large percentage of my Project SOAR caseload through door-to-door outreach, event engagement, and parent interactions.

Education Navigators Symphoni Henry with Centers for New Horizons staff at an Octoberfest event.

CONNECT TO EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES: *WITH ASHLEY THOMPSON*

Meeting students "where they are" is one of the most important roles of being an Education Navigator. In creating spaces to interact with youth and families, there must be flexibility in time and location. One of the best practices I've done to meet youth is by attending community events to spark general conversations about college. One of my partners, Near West Side Community Development Corporation, hosted a basketball tournament for youth. Throughout the event, I had a chance to support the youth playing in the games, but also talk with them about exploring college and the processes related to being a college athlete. At the event, I held a table with college brochures, pamphlets, and general information about the application processes, along with collateral to share. As youth and community members stopped by the table, information and donated prizes were provided for awareness. Attending community events are important to create visibility among students and families.

Education Navigator Ashley Thompson recruiting students at a high school basketball tournament.

RESOURCES FOR YOU

You may be familiar with many of the resources available to help students plan and succeed in their postsecondary journey, but do you know about resources that can help you to be a more effective Education Navigator? There are multiple organizations that provide free training and resources for academic advisors and counselors. Take a look at some of these options.

National College Access Network (NCAN): NCAN has a range of resources for helping you and your students. Check out a few key resources.

For printable college planning timelines:

http://collegeaccess.org/RevisedTimelines

Essential websites for advisors, low-income students, and more:

http://collegeaccess.org/websites_for_advisors

The College Board: The College Board offers a range of support for advisors and students.

For an introduction to different resources, like tips on fee waivers:

https://professionals.collegeboard.org/

For websites, reference guides, and handouts for parents and students:

https://counselors.collegeboard.org/resources

A tool for you and students to keep track of college planning activities:

https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/

Teens at a Valentine's Day Dance co-hosted with Centers for New Horizons.

Encourage your students to apply to multiple postsecondary education programs even if they have an idea of where they think they would like to attend.

JUMPSTARTING THE COLLEGE SEARCH

Many students only apply to one postsecondary program. While some students know the schools they want to attend, you should encourage them to apply to multiple programs. Experts advise that students apply to a mix of reach, fit, and safety schools.

Reach: The student's academic performance is lower than the typical admitted school. The student is not likely to be accepted, but it is worth applying to at least one.

Fit: The student's academic performance is about the same as the typical admitted student. The student is likely to be accepted.

Safety: The student is almost certain to be accepted.

There are multiple tools that can help guide students through the process of developing a list of schools and understanding how they compare to admitted students. For example:

https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/find-colleges/

https://collegescorecard.ed.gov/

Encourage students to submit applications to at least three or four schools. Multiple application fee waivers are available. Also, don't forget to send the FAFSA to all schools on the list! It is free to send the FAFSA to 10 schools if students complete it online.

UPCOMING DEADLINES

Project SOAR Convening

- June 13-14, 2018, Washington, DC

Financial Aid

Pennsylvania

- Most financial aid applications due May 1, 2018

Other grantee states

- Apply as soon as possible, financial aid funds may be limited. Check with individual schools for more information.
- Even if some state and local deadlines have passed, students can still qualify for federal financial aid

Test Registration and Timing

SAT

- May 5, 2018 next scheduled test
- May 2, 2018 registration deadline for June test
- June 2, 2018 test date

ACT

- May 4, 2018 registration deadline for June test
- June 9, 2018 test date

Postsecondary Planning for Students

10th Grade

- Take PSAT
- Meet with your school counselor to discuss colleges
- Think about career options after high school

11th Grade

- Go to college fairs, develop a list of interesting schools
- Register for and take college entrance exams
- Find scholarships for which you may be eligible

12th Grade

- Visit colleges that have invited you to enroll
- Compare financial aid offers
- Contact financial aid offices to discuss next steps

Share Your Story!

If you have an example of a challenge you have overcome or a success story you would like to share, let us know. Post suggestions to Yammer or contact your grant manager or the Project SOAR Program Manager.

We will try to tailor future news letters based on your feedback.

- The Project SOAR Team

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Don't forget to make use of the many free online resources available.

Stay on top of key activities with Department of Education **checklists for success**:

- https://studentaid.ed.gov/sa/prepare-for-college/checklists/

Find **free test prep resources** available at Khan Academy:

- https://www.khanacademy.org/

Find scholarships to help pay for school:

- https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/scholarship-search
- https://www.careeronestop.org/toolkit/training/find-scholarships.aspx

Compare colleges and make a list of possibilities:

- https://collegescorecard.ed.gov/