

Sec. 61.0776. CENTER FOR FINANCIAL AID INFORMATION. (a) The board, in cooperation with public and private or independent institutions of higher education, the Texas Education Agency, public school counselors, representatives of student financial aid offices of any institutions, regional education service centers, and the Texas Guaranteed Student Loan Corporation, shall develop a center for financial aid information. The center shall disseminate information about financial aid opportunities and procedures, including information about different types of financial aid available, eligibility requirements, and procedures for applying for financial aid. The center shall also provide information to prospective students about the Teach for Texas grant program. The information must emphasize the importance of teaching as a profession.

(b) To assist the board in developing information provided by the center, the board shall create and appoint an advisory committee that consists of experts in financial aid administration, public school counselors, and other persons who can provide insight into the informational needs of students.

(c) The board may designate an institution of higher education or other entity with appropriate facilities and resources to operate or house the center. If the board designates a public nonprofit entity created by the legislature to operate or house the center, the board may reimburse the entity from money appropriated for that purpose for the costs incurred by the entity in carrying out the activities of the center under this section.

(d) The center shall maintain a toll-free telephone line that is staffed by persons knowledgeable about financial aid information in this state.

(e) The center shall, based on the advisory committee's recommendations, publish information concerning financial aid opportunities in this state and shall:

(1) furnish a written copy of the information to each middle school, junior high school, and high school counselor in this state; and

(2) post the information on an Internet website accessible to the public.

(f) The board, in cooperation with the entities specified by Subsection (a) and the advisory committee established by Subsection (b), shall develop a comprehensive financial aid training program for public school counselors, employees of student financial aid offices of public and private or independent institutions of higher education, members of appropriate community-based organizations, and other appropriate persons. The board may adopt rules as necessary to administer the training program. The board shall design the training program to:

(1) use the information required by Subsection (e) and any other information necessary to carry out this subdivision:

(A) to inform persons receiving the training concerning:

(i) the opportunities available to students for obtaining financial aid, including eligibility requirements; and

(ii) the procedures for obtaining financial aid; and

(B) to provide sufficient and accessible detail to enable the persons receiving the training to provide timely and consistent answers to the questions of students and their parents, conservators, or guardians concerning the opportunities and procedures;

(2) teach methods to enable the persons receiving the training to effectively communicate financial aid information to students and their parents, conservators, or guardians;

(3) support and promote the dissemination of financial aid information to students and their parents, conservators, or guardians throughout local areas; and

(4) publicize the training and make the training easily available to public school counselors and other appropriate persons throughout this state.