

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



Questions about myOptions Encourage

What is myOptions Encourage and Encourage?

myOptions Encourage and Encourage are a suite of free postsecondary planning resources. Encourage is a free student app that provides support and advice to help students define their goals, outline their personal journeys, set milestones, and prepare for postsecondary success.

myOptions Encourage is an educator platform that provides student-level and aggregated, real-time dashboards and reports, as well as insight into the students' plans, aspirations, and opportunities.

What are the benefits to students and educators?

Students - All participating students will be matched to appropriate colleges, universities and educational organizations nationwide through a data driven algorithm on their interests and preferences. They will also have access to their free personalized online profile where interested member institutions can view their preferences and interests and begin connecting with them. Additionally, students will have online access to free college planning resources and information including, selected scholarship opportunities, financial aid, ACT/ SAT entrance requirements, and other planning activities through the Encourage App. Students are able to update their preferences and other data as their interests change or their knowledge about the process increases. They also have access to valuable information about paying for college, types of institutions, career exploration, how to apply to college, and much more.

Educators and School Counselors – Educators that participate in the myOptions Encourage Post-Secondary Planning Program, will be provided with a personalized report that details how their school's results compare with others around the country. They will also gain access to a myOptions Encourage educator account, which provides tools for progress monitoring and data visualization reflecting student-planning activities. This information can help evaluate and improve school programs. Counselors will find the service particularly helpful as a supplement to their college and career counseling programs. The custom content created by myOptions Encourage for each student can be used by counselors and educators to not only begin conversations with students about exploring their college options, but to also provide a valuable tool in helping to narrow down the most appropriate institutions that fit each student's needs.

How is the privacy of students protected?

Students will receive information relevant to their postsecondary plans while ensuring that their privacy is protected in strict accordance with the guidelines set forth in The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). **Student information is used only for educational purposes. No student data is released to commercial marketers.**

Compliance is maintained through a compliance officer who evaluates all requests for use of the data to ensure that student information is only being used under the ESEA guidelines. In addition, an independent Advisory Council provides oversight to make sure that all practices follow the approved guidelines.



Questions from Educators and Counselors

What if I need more forms?

If you need additional forms, call us toll-free at 1-877-409-6366 or email us at educators@myoptions.org. We'll be happy to promptly mail you more forms.

If I can't get them done by the deadline, can I get an extension?

We want to be flexible with your busy schedule. Just call 1-877-409-6366 or send an email to educators@myoptions.org and let us know if you feel that you need additional time.

What do I do with unused forms? Do you want me to mail them back to you?

There is no need to return unused forms. Please recycle them or pass them on to another teacher who can use them.

Is participation mandatory?

Students participate voluntarily and at no cost, enabling them to receive information which is related to their educational needs and helps them plan for the future. The most important benefit of participating is the information that students will receive from suitable colleges and universities.

Which grades should participate?

The student forms are intended for distribution to all 9th, 10th and 11th grade students and any 12th graders still needing assistance in selecting a college education or career path. We also encourage 8th graders to participate as many educational organizations and the U.S. Department of Education recommend that college readiness should begin in middle school.

Do my students need to fill out the personal information section?

In order for a form to be processed and for a student to receive valuable information from colleges and universities, the student's personal information is required. As previously stated, the student's information is not shared with commercial marketers and participation in the program is voluntary.

Who will have access to the students' personal information?

Besides receiving communications from Encourage, students who participate can expect to hear directly from colleges and universities suited to their interests and selected through a unique matching process, as well as educational and career service providers offering products and services such as college admissions services, financial aid, career information, extracurricular enrichment and recognition programs. Student data is strictly protected and will not be made available to any company or marketing service that does not provide educational information or assistance.

Is parental consent required?

Parental consent is not required because it is a voluntary program and students' personal information is not released to commercial marketers offering to sell non-education-related products and services.

If my students filled out one of the forms last year, do they need to do it again this year?

Yes, it's important that we get their updated information so that they can continue to receive appropriate college and career information related to their selected preferences. However, one time a year is enough.

How long before we receive the College Match and Scholarship Opportunities Reports?

Within 4 weeks after we receive the completed student forms, you will receive a communication providing you with information on obtaining the College Match and Scholarship Opportunities reports in your myOptions Encourage account.

Who did you get approval from to send these forms to me?

We have partnered with your educator, student organization or District Superintendent on this important research project. The program is completely voluntary and all of the information collected is for educational and research purposes only.



Questions from Students

How will myOptions Encourage help me?

All students are invited to join Encourage (<https://encourageme.com/>) by completing a student profile. Our system is set up to match students' interests and aspirations to colleges that best match what they are looking for in a college.

All participating students receive a **free** online Encourage account, detailing colleges and universities that fit their individual needs and interests including selected scholarship opportunities. This program allows students to proactively further specify their preferences and needs for information about financial aid, ACT/ SAT entrance requirements, and other planning activities. Students are able to change their preferences and other data as their interests change or their knowledge about the process increases. They also receive a monthly email which gives students information on topics such as preparing for college, financial aid, sources for college information, and the application process along with many other relevant topics for today's college bound student.

What is the purpose of the student form?

The student form is intended to gather the essential information necessary to create a FREE Online College Planning Profile in the Encourage program. Having this information about you allows us to develop personalized planning information for you, including a list of colleges that match your profile and to connect you with institutions that are looking for students like you. After your account is created, you can change your preferences and other data to reflect your current interests and can receive an updated list of college matches and selected scholarship opportunities.

I am not a senior. Can I still get information from Encourage that will help me right now?

You will find lots of information for each class (8th - 12th grades). There are planning calendars, as well as a variety of articles providing general and specific college planning information. Although you will not begin the application process until your senior year, it is almost never too early to begin thinking about college. Even in middle school, students can gain valuable information that will help them make wise decisions later about which colleges will suit them best.

How can I manage the communication I receive from Encourage?

A student can manage their email preferences through their college planning account on the Encourage App. Any email messages that you receive from Encourage or interested colleges and universities will meet the established guidelines of permission based email messaging, meaning that there will always be provisions for you to opt out. You can also opt out by sending an email to help@encourageme.com indicating the desire to be removed from future emails, mailings, or both.

You may request to close your account at any time by sending an email to mrc@myoptions.org with the subject "Close my account". This will remove your profile from the site and you will no longer be able to log in to view your matches or other saved information. You will be removed from all future communications from Encourage.



Have additional questions?

If you have further questions or would like additional information, please contact:

Peggy Jansen

High School Liaison

peggy@myoptions.org

877-409-6366 toll free

682-205-1418 direct line

or email to educators@myoptions.org