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**FINANCIAL AID AWARENESS MONTH EVENTS CAN HELP STUDENTS GET TO COLLEGE**  
**Illinois Student Assistance Commission promotes free financial aid events and resources**

CHICAGO – February is Financial Aid Awareness Month, and an important time to remind Illinois families that despite the rising cost of tuition and fees, financial aid can help make college possible, especially for families with the most financial need. The [Illinois Student Assistance Commission](#) (ISAC) is pleased to announce free workshops throughout the state to help families navigate the financial aid process, including help filling out the [Free Application for Federal Student Aid](#) (FAFSA)—the form that determines a student’s eligibility for most federal, state, and college financial aid programs.

“For families who think college may be out of reach for them financially, it’s important to recognize that Illinois students who filed the FAFSA in 2014 are receiving more than \$1.5 billion in state and federal aid this school year,” said Eric Zarnikow, executive director of ISAC. “In addition to helping families understand the types of aid that are available, we want to help students complete the FAFSA as early as possible, especially because demand far exceeds available funds for certain state grants such as the Illinois Monetary Award Program, as well as for some institutional aid.”

Financial aid and FAFSA completion workshops across the state will offer direct assistance to families in completing the form, as well as provide a comprehensive overview of the financial aid process so families have the opportunity to take advantage of as much aid as possible. Those attending the workshops are asked to bring records of income, investment and asset information, as well as Social Security, driver’s license and alien registration numbers (if applicable). Many workshops are supported and/or conducted by the [ISACorps](#), a group of recent college graduates who act as near-peer mentors, working directly with high school students and returning adults across the state to help with the college-going and financial aid process.

In addition to workshops offered throughout Financial Aid Awareness Month, students can find more free assistance and locate potential scholarship dollars through the new [ISAC Student Portal](#). The online Portal provides free best-in-class applications and tools to help students find colleges and scholarships, learn about the financial aid process, access a host of career and job resources, and manage their money and student loan debt. In addition, students can keep on top of FAFSA filing deadlines, create customized alerts, and locate financial aid and FAFSA workshops in their area by downloading ISAC’s free smartphone app for Android devices, [B4College Alerts](#), available through the [Google Play Store](#).

The FAFSA completion effort in Illinois is part of larger efforts across the nation to increase the number of high school students who fill out the FAFSA. The White House is supporting these efforts through the First Lady’s [Reach Higher Initiative](#) and [FAFSA Completion Challenge](#)—schools that grow their FAFSA completion rates and document it creatively in video can win a visit or special video message from the First Lady.

“ISAC is pleased to be in the forefront of FAFSA completion efforts in Illinois,” said Zarnikow. “We are committed to helping to reduce financial barriers so every student has the choice of whether to attend college.”

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A list of free financial aid workshops is attached. Check out ISAC's website for daily updates on [workshops and events](#), and to get direct assistance from the [ISACorps member](#) in your area. ISAC also offers assistance through the agency's call center, 1-800-899-4722 (ISAC).

#### About ISAC

The mission of the Illinois Student Assistance Commission (ISAC) is to help make college accessible and affordable for students throughout Illinois. ISAC provides comprehensive, objective, and timely information on education and financial aid for students and their families--giving them access to the tools they need to make the educational choices that are right for them. Then, through the state's flagship Monetary Award Program and other scholarship and grant programs ISAC administers--totaling more than \$380 million in academic year 2014-15--ISAC can help students make those choices a reality. [www.isac.org](http://www.isac.org)

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