

## **Stand by Me NexGen: Best Practices Guide**

Even in our small state, each high school has its own unique culture, which means that a Stand By Me NexGen partnership with each school is also unique. However, there are best practices that can be applied to ensure each partnership's success. The following guide is informed by over a decade of SBM NexGen experience in the field, along with the successes and feedback of school districts statewide. May it lead to continued success!

### **How can Stand By Me NexGen stand by you?**

#### **1. Understanding Financial Aid**

- a. As financial aid evolves, SBM NexGen stays informed:
  - i. Financial Aid Updates
    1. Our experts stay up-to-date with regulations on and changes with federal financial aid, and we pass along and apply that knowledge
      - a. Regular updates from SBM NexGen help inform administrators, students, and their families on financial aid processes and requirements
- b. Providing Resources
  - i. SBM NexGen can provide physical and digital resources for distribution

#### **2. Ongoing Partnership**

- a. A partnership with SBM NexGen means 'availability' and 'accessibility':
  - i. Regular Communication
    1. The SBM NexGen Director is available by email ([cdunt@standbymede.org](mailto:cdunt@standbymede.org)) and phone (302-841-9913) to support you and your students whenever needed
  - ii. Flexibility
    1. SBM NexGen offers in-person and online support to meet student needs via workshops, 1-on-1 appointments, and informational resources

#### **3. Overcoming Obstacles**

- a. SBM NexGen can assist with challenges such as:
  - i. Availability and Accessibility
    1. SBM NexGen can support school staff in providing post-secondary guidance to students and families with minimal oversight
      - a. SBM NexGen facilitators are all trained financial aid experts and are supported by the Delaware Higher Education Office
  - ii. Building Trust
    1. SBM NexGen's expertise and record of service puts families at ease when going through the post-secondary funding process
  - iii. Translation and Interpretation
    1. Use available options for translation and interpretation (see below section)

### **Key Elements for a Successful Event with SBM NexGen**

The following elements typically lead to successful event implementation:

#### **1. Clear Communication**

- a. Scheduling: Keep event timelines clear
- b. Reminders: Send timely reminders to students and parents
- c. Emails: Maintain regular email updates

#### **2. Frequent Advertising to Students and Families**

- a. Marketing Toolkit: Utilize our Marketing Toolkit and "Download Useful Guides" section of our website to share helpful and timely information with students and families



### 3. Offering Avenues for Interpretation

- a. When students have language barriers, special accommodations can be made
  - i. SBM NexGen has Spanish-speaking FAFSA experts
    - 1. If unavailable, partner with agencies like "Back to Basics" to assist non-English-speaking families

### Practical Strategies for School Integration

The following is but a small sampling of things that have proven successful over time:

- 1. Daytime and Evening Workshops
  - a. Offer workshops of up to three hours at various times of day to accommodate different student and parent schedules
    - i. A "senior class strategy," where we work with your entire senior class in-school over several days, has proven very effective in schools statewide
    - ii. Designated weekly, in-school FAFSA workshops have been well-attended in various schools
    - iii. Offer multiple events throughout the year for greater coverage and support
      - 1. One student's FAFSA may take several sessions to complete
- 2. Offer Individual Support
  - a. Allow and encourage students to make individual appointments with SBM NexGen during the school day
    - i. In-person appointments can be made, when feasible, and online appointments can be made at [uwde.org/fafsa](http://uwde.org/fafsa)
      - 1. Students/parents can also dial/text 211 to be connected to SBM NexGen
- 3. Communication to Students
  - a. Share events/updates via Schoology (or other learning management platform) and post SBM NexGen materials and other financial aid information in conspicuous places
  - b. Consider adding our scheduling link to your email signature line and/or to the school's learning management platform
- 4. Collaboration with Guidance
  - a. Employ a holistic approach by involving all counselors and Student Services staff in supporting students alongside SBM NexGen
- 5. Invite SBM NexGen to Events
  - a. Invite SBM NexGen to other events and activities, such as lunchtime tabling, Senior Parent Night, and Graduation practice

**By following these Best Practices, your school can foster a strong partnership with SBM NexGen to support students' post-secondary success. For more information, or for further assistance, please contact Cory Dunt at [cdunt@standbymede.org](mailto:cdunt@standbymede.org).**