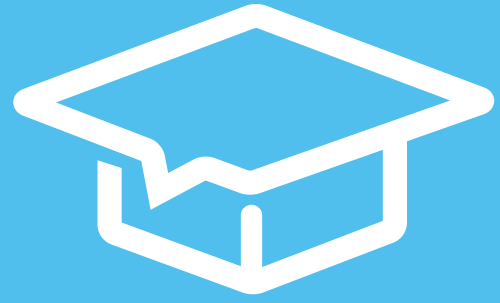
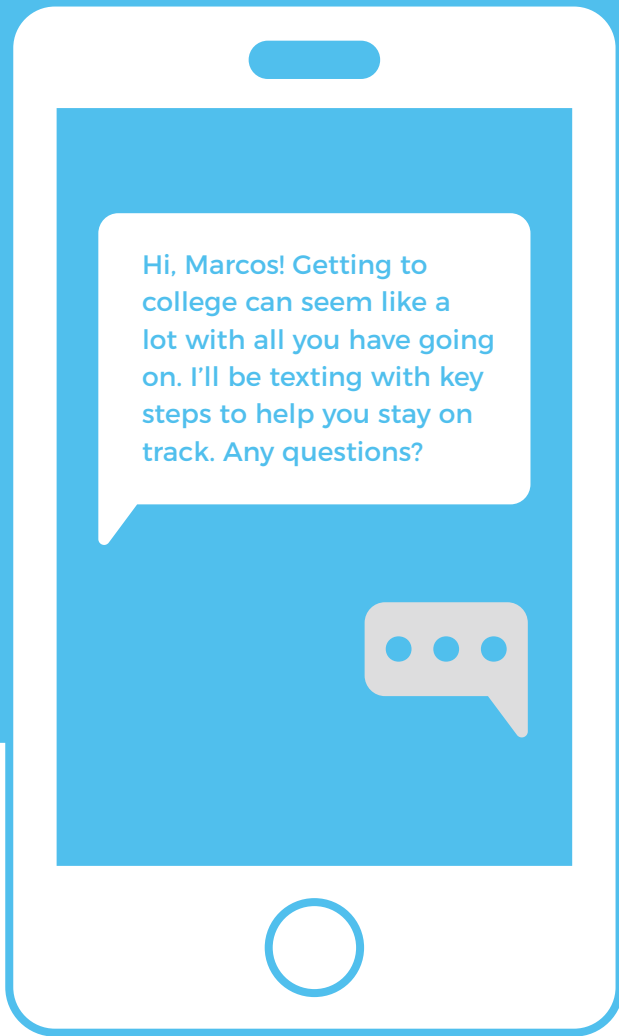


Appendix G: Information Packet



Text Ed

Introducing Text Ed

Applying to college is complicated. But recent research has shown that short, action-oriented text messages can help people focus on critical tasks at the right times. Building on this promising research, Text Ed is an exciting opportunity for Educational Opportunity Centers to try a text messaging system designed to help clients more successfully navigate the college enrollment process, and to help staff communicate more easily and efficiently with clients. This project is funded by the U.S. Department of Education and run by expert leaders in higher education, social policy, and behavioral research.

How It Works

Participating EOCs will get access to an easy-to-use online text messaging system. Experts on the project team will design a series of text messages that will be sent to clients automatically at strategic times throughout the year. If clients text back, EOC staff will receive and respond to those client messages as needed through the text messaging system.

The content of the text messages will be designed to help guide clients through the procedures of getting into college. Messages will:

- Provide timely reminders to help clients stay on track with college application steps;
- Encourage clients to attend specific EOC events;
- Troubleshoot logistical and life issues, such as childcare, transportation, and balancing school with other aspects of life;
- Address common concerns about returning to school later in life; and
- Facilitate efficient communication between EOC staff and clients.

Benefits to You and Your Clients

Clients will automatically receive timely, relevant and research-based advising support through action-oriented text messages, with the goal of improving their ability to successfully complete college enrollment steps.

EOC staff will have free access to a customized, user-friendly text messaging system. Staff will be able to stay in touch with clients who can't frequently meet in person, ultimately enhancing EOC services. Having client messages go out automatically can free up staff to focus on other important aspects of their work.

Project Goals

As part of the demonstration, a rigorous study will examine whether the text messages increase FASFA completion and college enrollment among EOC clients. The findings will be useful to EOCs and to the broader TRIO community interested in program improvement.

Expectations of Participating EOCs

EOCs that participate in the demonstration will want to enhance their client advising through text messaging. EOC staff will collaborate with the project team to share information about the EOC's services and events so that the text message content is well-aligned with the EOC's other programming and supports. EOC staff will also partner with the project team to ensure that necessary background data is collected from clients at intake (mostly what clients already provide), and that clients eligible for the study are given an opportunity to participate. Clients who agree to participate will be assigned through a simple lottery to either receive the support typically provided by the EOC, or to receive the support typically provided, plus the text messages. EOC staff will be trained on how to use the text message system so that they can easily respond to client messages online. The project team will be there every step of the way, providing training, tools, and ongoing support throughout the demonstration.

Timeline

Participating EOCs will partner with the project team during the summer and fall of 2017 to get ready to start using the text messaging system in spring 2018. EOCs will use the text messaging system through summer 2020.

Don't miss out on this great opportunity!

Only a limited number of EOCs from across the country can join Text Ed.
The recruitment process has already begun, so visit the project website
TODAY to find out more information.

TextEdProject.com

or

TO CONTACT THE TEXT ED PROJECT TEAM DIRECTLY:



TextEd@mdrc.org



1-800-221-3165
Ext. 4543

The Text Ed project
is funded by the
U.S. Department of Education



And led by MDRC

mdrc
BUILDING KNOWLEDGE
TO IMPROVE SOCIAL POLICY

The MDRC team brings over 40 years of experience in working collaboratively with partner organizations to design and test innovative strategies for supporting low-income populations. The research team is committed to bringing the best of existing research into practice at each participating EOC.

Text Ed Frequently Asked Questions

How will participation in this project benefit my EOC clients?

Clients who join the project will have the opportunity to get timely, relevant and research-based advising support through text messages, in addition to the support that all clients typically receive – with the goal of improving their ability to successfully complete college enrollment steps.

How will participating in Text Ed benefit my EOC?

During the demonstration, EOCs and their staff will receive free software, training, and assistance to implement an innovative approach to communicating with their clients through customized, action-oriented text messaging. Having messages go out automatically can free up staff to focus on other important aspects of their work.

How will the text messaging system work?

Participating EOCs will get access to an online text messaging system that staff can access on their computers. Experts on the project team will design a series of text messages that will go out to EOC clients automatically at strategic times throughout the year. If clients text back, EOC staff will receive and respond to these messages as needed, using the text messaging system. Staff won't need to give out their personal phone numbers or have to use cell phones for typing.

Will my EOC incur additional costs for participating?

EOCs that participate in this study will not incur any financial costs.

What is the time commitment for supporting the implementation of Text Ed?

While the text messages will be sent automatically, staff should plan on spending some time monitoring incoming responses from clients and responding as appropriate. Monitoring and responding to the messages should take approximately 30 minutes per day or 2.5 hours per week across all staff involved. Staff will also receive approximately 3-4 hours of training in addition to ongoing support from the Text Ed Team.

Which clients are eligible to join the study, and are they required to do so?

The demonstration is designed for new EOC clients who: (1) are 18 and over; (2) go through the EOC's intake process during the study's rolling random assignment period; (3) have a high school diploma or equivalent and are not already enrolled in college; (4) wish to enroll in college by fall 2020; and (5) are willing and able to communicate in English with their EOC via text message. These clients will be given the choice to join the study; if they choose not to, they will receive the typical supports and services that the EOC offers.

Which EOC clients will receive text messages?

Clients who join the study will go through a simple lottery to determine which type of support they will receive. Roughly half of these clients will receive the support typically provided by the EOC, and the other half will receive the support typically provided, plus the text messages. Using a lottery allows the project team to test whether the text messages improve clients' outcomes.

What client data will the project team require from EOCs that join Text Ed and what will EOC staff need to do to facilitate this?

The study will require data that we believe many EOCs already collect about their clients, such as their cell phone number, date of birth, indication of high school diploma or equivalent, where they are in the college-going process (e.g., FAFSA filing, selection of an intended postsecondary institution), and relevant life circumstances (e.g., children in the home for whom child care would be needed). The study team will also seek the Social Security Number of each client who joins the study. EOC staff will collect these data from clients through a Baseline Information Form that will be completed as part of the program's intake process and provided back to the project team a few times a month, either through an online platform, by uploading documents to a secure website, or by using pre-paid, pre-addressed mailing envelopes provided by the team. We expect that this process will take an average of 20 minutes every week during the study period.

Will other data be collected and how much staff time will that involve?

The project team will periodically obtain study participants' enrollment status directly from the National Student Clearinghouse (NSC), financial aid data from the Federal Student Aid (FSA) Office, and text messaging records from the text messaging provider. There is no additional work involved on your part. However, EOC staff will have the opportunity to regularly update relevant information, as available, about clients who are receiving texts through the Text Ed technology platform. We expect that process will take an average of 20 minutes every other week during the study period. EOC staff will also have the opportunity to share information with the Text Ed team about their program's "business as usual" practices in a 75 minute phone interview. The information collected in this interview will also be used to ensure that the Text Ed text messages are customized to the needs and contexts of their site.

How will the project team protect the privacy of my EOC's clients and staff?

Protecting your and your clients' privacy is very important to us. Reports about this study will summarize findings across study participants and will not associate responses with any specific EOC sites or individuals. We will never share information that identifies individual clients or staff with anyone outside the project team, except as required by law (for example, if we learn that keeping information confidential would put someone in danger). For all data collection activities, data will only be obtained for clients who agree to join the study and will always be transmitted and stored securely.

What outcomes will the study examine, and how will the results be shared?

The study will examine the impact of the text messaging program on EOC clients' college enrollment and FAFSA completion. The results will be published in a final report freely available to the public and will be provided to participating EOCs. The project team will also produce a practitioner guide that describes the text message system and how to implement it, which will also be publicly published and shared.

What criteria are being used to select EOCs to participate in Text Ed?

EOCs must not already have a substantively similar text messaging system in place, must demonstrate capacity to implement the text messaging system well, and be willing to have their clients engage in a lottery-based study. The project team also hopes to include EOCs from different geographic regions and of different institution types.

Who can I contact for more information?

FAQs and other project information will be regularly updated on the Text Ed project website. Please visit TextEdProject.com for more information. If you'd like to contact someone from the project team directly, please email TextEd@mdrc.org or call 1-800-221-3165 x4543.